

## General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

### Hidden Treasure

From the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties, Urgyen Sangharakshita led many seminars on a wide range of texts for invited groups of [Order members](#) and [Mitrās](#). These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Triratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

The seminars were all recorded and later transcribed. Some of these transcriptions have been carefully checked and edited and are [now available in book form](#). However, a great deal of material has so far remained unchecked and unedited and we want to make it available to people who wish to deepen their understanding of Sangharakshita's presentation of the Dharma.

How should one approach reading a seminar transcription from so long ago? Maybe the first thing to do is to vividly imagine the context. What year is it? Who is present? We then step into a world in which Sangharakshita is directly communicating the Dharma. Sometimes he is explaining a text, at other times he is responding to questions and we can see how the emergence of Dharma teachings in this context was a collaborative process, the teaching being drawn out by the questions people asked. Sometimes those questions were less to do with the text and arose more from the contemporary situation of the emerging new Buddhist movement.

Reading through the transcripts can be a bit like working as a miner, sifting through silt and rubble to find the real jewels. Sometimes the discussion is just a bit dull. Sometimes we see Sangharakshita trying to engage with the confusion of ideas many of us brought to Buddhism, confusion which can be reflected in the texts themselves. With brilliant flashes of clarity and understanding, we see him giving teachings in response that have since become an integral part of the Triratna Dharma landscape.

Not all Sangharakshita's ways of seeing things are palatable to modern tastes and outlook. At times some of the views captured in these transcripts express attitudes and ideas [Triratna has acknowledged as unhelpful](#) and which form no part of our teaching today. In encountering all of the ideas contained in over seventeen million words of Dharma investigation and exchange, we are each challenged to test what is said in the fire of our own practice and experience; and to talk over 'knotty points' with friends and teachers to better clarify our own understanding and, where we wish to, to decide to disagree.

We hope that over the next years more seminars will be checked and edited for a wider readership. In the meantime we hope that what you find here will inspire, stimulate, encourage - and challenge you in your practice of the Dharma and in understanding more deeply the approach of Urgyen Sangharakshita.

*Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team*

## **The Third Order Convention, 1976:** ***“Unity and Diversity in the Spiritual Life”***

***Those Present:*** *The Venerable Sangharakshita, Lokamitra, Khema, Vangisa, Subhuti, Sagaramati, Ananda, Siddhiratna, Uttara, Chintamani, Vessantara, Nagabodhi, Ratnapani, Dharmapala, Padmapani, Devamitra, Kulananda, Mangala, Abhaya, Anoma, Marichi, Dhammadinna, Gotami, Aloka, Devaraja, Jinamata, Mahavira [and probably others as names were not announced at the start of the Convention].*

### **[Tape One]**

**Sangharakshita:** It seem that everybody is present who is supposed to be present as far as we know. So we'll start the proceedings forthwith. And according to the printed Convention programme there should now be an address by me. But I hope no one is expecting a sort of formal address. What I really should have written was simply '*opening remarks*'. That probably would have been more appropriate.

So just a few opening remarks before we go on to deal with the main items of this first plenary session. And first of all a welcome to everybody. I am very glad to see so many people present. I can't say from all over the world unfortunately, but certainly from all over the UK. I had a rough head count quickly, and it does seem that well over half the Order is actually present which is quite good. Those so many are able to be present, quite a few are unable to be present, and we certainly do think of all of them. I am sure many of them are thinking of us at this time, especially I believe in New Zealand, those thoughts are very much with us. They have a sort of virtually mini Convention of their own in the course of their second national annual retreat. And we must have read the report of that which appeared in an issue of '*Shabda*' not so long ago. So we are thinking of them and they are thinking of us. And especially we think of the one or two who, I believe, are unable to be present due to illness or ill health. I am thinking in particular of Sanghamitta and people like that also who we think of very much and send them our thoughts of metta, that they may soon be well.

Now this is our third annual Convention; it is only the third one that we have had, even though the Order was started as long ago as eight years. And since our first Convention which was in January 1974, not very much more than two years ago, the Order has grown considerably. You may recollect or you may not recollect, that three months before that first Convention at the beginning of 1974, Suvratta gave us some

quite interesting statistics. He reported that, as far as he had been able to ascertain, at the end of 1971, the total number of active Order members, that is not including those

who have virtually dropped out, at the end of 1971, the total of active Order Members was eleven. It seems a long time ago. At the end of 1972, the total number of active Order members was nineteen. By the end of 1973 - that is only just before the first annual Convention - it was twenty-nine. And at that time also, that is to say at the end of '73, Suvratta indulged in an estimate, an estimate of what the total number of Order members would be, active Order members would be, by the end of 1975. In fact he gave two estimates! One he called a 'cautious' estimate, and the other he called a 'wild' estimate. His cautious estimate for the total number of Order Members by the end of 1975, and in case anyone is not aware of the fact, we are now in 1976 [*Laughter*], his cautious estimates of the total number of Order members at the end of 1975, was forty. Well there is more than forty people present now. His wild estimate was eighty. So actually we have very nearly fulfilled his wild estimate - very, very nearly. There are now in the world, so far as I have been able to ascertain [*Laughter*], 75 active Order members, 75 active members of the Western Buddhist Order. And of these, 59 are citizens of the UK, 10 are New Zealanders - so you see the New Zealanders come a quite respectable second. Three are Finns; there's one Malaysian/Chinese; one Order member is American, and one is Dutch. So you can see there is the beginnings of an international Order. There are 58 Upasakas and there are 17 Upasikas. I don't know what the average age now is. I was hoping that the Registrar would be able to tell us about that in his report. We will see what happens when that report is called for.

Further, in the January 1975 issue of '*Shabda*', Suvratta gave some more interesting statistical details. He informed us that the Order was doubling in size every 17 months.

It had achieved what he informed us was called 'exponential growth'. Some of us weren't quite clear of what that meant, but I gather it meant a rather dramatic expansion. And Suvratta also predicted, at that time, that if this trend continued, that is to say this trend of doubling in size every 17 months, by the end of 1980, there would be one thousand, two hundred Order members. Personally, I think this trend has not continued for two definite reasons. It's been, as it were, deliberately slowed down. But we shall perhaps go into that a bit later on in the course of the Convention. At the same time in the course of this little statistical report - number two - Suvrata warned us of the danger that sheer numbers would outstrip spiritual vitality. This is one of the topics, one of the points, that I will be examining in Plenary session seven on day four.

So from this very brief account, from these very few facts, we can see that the Order is clearly not only a going, but also the growing, concern. So perhaps it is not surprising that all the questions which we shall be discussing in the course of this Convention, our Third Annual Convention, are very much connected with the question of growth, the growth of the Order, and indirectly of course, the growth of the movement, both horizontal growth, as we may call it, lateral expansion, and also vertical growth, in other words, true development, especially of the individual.

Now this Convention, as I expect everybody has realised, is only half the length of the previous one - four days instead of eight. And we are therefore dealing only with really essential topics. In other words topics which are of particular importance to the Order and to individual Order members, that means, at this stage of the Order's development.

Tomorrow morning, in Plenary session three, we will be looking at the Unity of the Order, with special reference to class and nationality. We have seen that the Order is in fact growing, and growing in a sense quite rapidly. And as the Order grows, it will come to include people of more and more different class and national backgrounds. And this fact may possibly give rise to a certain amount of tension. So we should consider the matter now while it isn't any real problem. And in the afternoon tomorrow, at Plenary Session four, we shall be considering visualisation practice. Visualisation practice, we may say, is an expression of unity in diversity, and diversity in unity. Because there are many different visualisation practices. Practices visualising Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and so on, of many different kinds. But all these figures, all these forms, all these Buddhas, all these Bodhisattvas, they are all expressions in different ways from different points of view, different angles, all expressions of one

and the same Enlightenment experience. One and the same ineffable Buddhahood. And this Enlightenment experience is the common aim of all individual Order members.

So inasmuch as we have this common spiritual aim, we form a brotherhood, we form a spiritual fellowship and we are linked to one another. It is very symbolical, by the way, that we are sitting in a circle. Maybe one day there will be too many of us, and the circle maybe will stretch all the way to Archway. So we obviously couldn't conduct our Conventions in that fashion, but for the time being we can. And this very meaningful - we're a circle because we are linked; we are interlinked, linked by the bond of metta - friendliness.

So at this same session tomorrow afternoon, we are going to consider the Order Metta Bhavana. And lastly tomorrow afternoon we are going to consider the dedication of 'Sukhavati', especially the dedication of the image that will be at 'Sukhavati', because this is something that concerns, as you will find, not just that particular Centre but the whole Order. It will be something in which the whole Order should and will participate. Exactly how, we shall see when the time comes tomorrow.

Now the Order grows as more and more people enter it, obviously, as more and more people commit themselves to the Three Jewels. And clearly it is of the utmost importance that the commitment should be genuine, should be authentic. So on the Thursday, the Plenary session five, we are going to consider qualifications for Upasaka/Upasika Ordination. But even before you get to ordination, before you get even to considering it, there's a preliminary step, and that is Mitraship or Mitrahood. And we know, I am sure, the better the Mitra, the more qualified the Mitra, the better the Upasaka or Upasika, the more qualified the Upasaka or Upasika. So we are also going to consider in this connection the qualifications for becoming a Mitra - we have to clarify those still more - and also naturally for becoming a Kalyana Mitra. In the afternoon - still the day after tomorrow, at Plenary session six we shall give the reports of the Convenor of Mitras and the acting Convenor of women Mitras, and we shall consider then the functioning of the Kalyana Mitra system.

Now there is a well known proverb attributed to Napoleon, that the army marches on its stomach. We also know that the Buddha himself before his Enlightenment, went forth from home into homelessness in a chariot drawn by horses. And in much the same way the Order functions in the world through the 'Friends'. The Friends are the

horses, if you like the Windhorses. So in the evening of day three, office bearers of the FWBO Councils will get together under the chairmanship of Lokamitra to consider administration and organisation. And the keynote of the discussion, I hope at least, will be the more spiritual we are the more efficient we are.

And this brings us to day four, the last day. In the morning in Plenary Session seven, I shall be commenting on a few points raised in 'Shabda'. As well as perhaps, if we have time, letters to me, personal letters to me, points on which there has been perhaps a certain amount of misunderstanding, or at least not a very clear understanding. And then in the afternoon, in Plenary Session eight, we'll be dealing with something which very much concerns the growth of individual Order members. We shall be dealing with vows. And here again we encounter the theme of unity and diversity in spiritual life in respect of vows.

So except for the third day, there will be no sessions in the evening. Only on the third day there will be the session dealing with administration and organisation. And this is deliberate, this fact that there are no other sessions in the evening, so as to allow time for Order members to get together individually and in small groups as they may feel inclined.

So this is the programme that we shall be trying to get through. These are the themes, these are the topics, for discussion. So we come on now to this morning's topics or this morning's themes. We are going to receive now some, at least, of the reports from Order Office bearers. I am going to ask Khema, as Convenor of the Order, to give us first of all, her report. And at the end of each report of course there will be discussions. Anybody can ask any question on the report or the matter of the report that they wish to do.

**Khema:** First of all, briefly, over the last year I don't have any news to report as all I've been doing is organising the Convention. But that does have certain areas (unclear) which is where Order Members don't respond to me asking them to book in advance and paying and so on. Especially as it means extra work which is just a bit of a nuisance. So just a request that, as years go by, the Order member takes a bit more responsibility for paying in advance and so on. I think you know the story well enough.

In general I've been thinking that I'd like to see, if not immediately, then maybe within a few years at least, that the job of the Convenor is much bigger in a sense than it is at the moment which is just organising the Convention. But so that it begins to encompass things like correspondence with Order members who aren't in touch with a Centre, who are on their own or travelling around, or something like that. So that there is a continual correspondence with people who don't have much contact with Order Members. That it's somebody who knows where Order members are and if you are moving or going abroad sometimes, that you always keep in touch with that one person. So that there is somebody who knows where everybody is. Although obviously this isn't going to be entirely possible, and somebody who rather than just arranging the Convention, also arranges seminars, retreats, order retreats, maybe even Order Days if there are large numbers of Order Members. So that it's a fuller job than it has been at the moment, which has just been a Convention organiser. And possibly to maintain that knowing where everybody is, the Convenor is also the Registrar. It would be quite a simple matter to be so. Possibly even at some time, editor of 'Shabda' as well so it was a complete full-time job. That there is one person in the Order who is working full-time totally for the Order in a very sort of practical way. But as yet I don't think there is anybody who has that time or who can do it. And certainly as Convenor, if I stay as Convenor for the next year, I won't have time for more than just organising the Convention as I have done this year. Correspondence among Order Members and so on does take up quite an amount of time. So maybe next, it's something to think about rather than repeat it all. That's really all I've got to say.

**S:** Would anyone like to ask for further clarification on any point before we come to actual comments or further suggestions? *[pause]* Do you have any comments? *[pause]* Just one point occurs to me. As far as I recollect I think it was originally intended that the Convenor's job should be in fact a fuller one as you outlined. But there has been simply the difficulty of finding someone able to devote the time to that.

It also seems to me that in fact it should be the Registrar anyway - whether the Registrar is the same person as the Convenor or not - the Registrar who does, as it were, keep tabs on Order Members and know where they all are and have all their addresses.

**Khema:** I don't think that is the case at the moment.

**S:** Right.

**Khema:** Hopefully it will be so in the future.

**S:** But it does seem that until such time as we have more Order Members with more time that the job of Convenor will have to be virtually limited to the convening of the Convention itself. But it would be good if the Convenor whoever that is, was able to take on the responsibility for organising Order Retreats especially and such things.

[Pause]

**Vangisa:** I think that a possibly interesting point was raised here, and that is that one of the functions in a certain way, imperfectly so far as moving towards a kind of perfection of operations. But this (unclear) of Operations does assume fairly small numbers. Once you get into the thousands, tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands, which of course is what you have had with bhikshus in the East. Literally you have hundreds of thousands of bhikkhus wandering around all over the place and obviously there is no central guide as to where they all are.

**S:** But they do write to one another. There are lots of bhikkhus in India that I haven't seen for ten years, but I know where they all are because we let one another know and take advantage of the international postal system.

\_\_(**Man**)\_\_: I would like to suggest, Bhante, that it would be a good idea if all the Order Members would write, say once a week, or some laid down time to the Order to let them know or just write about something that is interesting, or any kind of news to do with the Order or to do with the Dharma or to do with something they've been doing in the past few days or weeks, so that could be the Registrar who knows where everybody is. That's.....

**S:** But a lot of correspondence does go on within the Order that we do know. Some Order Members are very active correspondents and write to a number of people, a number of other Order members. But what doesn't always happen is that people's latest address gets to the Registrar. Because if, for instance, the Secretary wants to know, or to check up what is the latest address of an Order Member, the natural person to ask is the Registrar. So if one does change one's address, it is very important regardless of whether or not you may be communicating with, you just write direct the Registrar. At least send a postcard and let him know what your present address is. Or that you

will be at another address say for three months or for one week or whatever it is. I think this is the most important thing at the moment in this connection; that the Registrar has all this information and doesn't have to ask around for it.

**Lokamitra:** I think, it seems to me, that the Registrar has to take initiative sometimes in this. I mean there have been Order Members travelling around who, I think, haven't received '*Shabda*' because Sanghamitta hasn't know their address, Suvratta hasn't known their address. But it's been quite possible to find out their address, and actually write to them. I found this.....

**S:** But still one must insist the ultimate responsibility is on the individual Order Member himself or herself. The individual Order Member is no less responsible than the Registrar. The Registrar is simply to keep the file of the information sent to him. So one must insist that Order Members have that degree of responsibility to send him their change of address, which sometimes isn't done.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: Maybe the Order Members aren't aware of that, if they're not in direct contact.

**S:** of what?

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: That they have to send their addresses...

**S:** Well, I would have thought it was common sense if you wanted to keep in touch with people which presumably you do.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: Someone like Dharmajyoti who just doesn't know who the Registrar is! It's a possibility.

**S:** But they have a Registrar now in New Zealand and he keeps in touch with him. I've got three addresses for Dharmajyoti, but apparently Nagabodhi (*unclear*). There's no lack of letters and parcels from him even though it's rather difficult to send a letter to him. [pause] Anyway that's more about Registrars, let's come back to Convenors. It does rather look as though this idea or suggestion of the Convenor of the Order doing more just remains for the time being a counsellor of perfection until we have more available people.

**Aryamitra:** Have we looked for anybody?

**S:** I think that Khema did not only look but asked for someone in 'Shabda'. Someone to help take over.

**Khema:** No. I asked for someone who'd like to help organise the Convention. I didn't ask for .....

**S:** Ah. Did you get any?

**Khema:** No.

**Aryamitra:** Maybe now the decision could be made.

**Khema:** I think to be Convenor, it is quite important to be in London at the moment.

**S:** This comes up under a separate heading when we come to the appointment of office (*unclear*) .....

**Subhuti:** Perhaps at the moment in fact we don't really need that much more than we have at the moment. The system as it is now.

**S:** I don't know. I get the impression sometimes that things are quite untidy. For instance, I will be talking about one particular thing later on. That is these visualisation seminars and so on for Order Members. Well, at present, I have to organise them myself on a sort of *ad hoc* basis. It would be much easier if the Order Convenor was able to take over responsibility for that. Yeah? It would save me a certain amount of trouble.

**Subhuti:** Is there anything else of that kind?

**S:** Well even the study retreats for Order Members for instance. That has also being done on an *ad hoc* basis or it has been so far. That could also be very conveniently done by the Order Convenor.

**Aryamitra:** I think also having one person who is responsible or takes the responsibility for keeping in contact with Order Members that are a bit on the outside.

**S:** That is a point mentioned by Khema which is very important - yes.

**Aryamitra:** Because what quite often happens is somebody in the Order sort of slips away or is going through something and everybody says, you know, maybe somebody ought to write to them. But nobody ever does, or when it's a bit too late. And if somebody took that responsibility, just to keep an eye out.

**S:** I think that would be a bit difficult for the Convenor. I think that perhaps this is something which is more the responsibility of the local Chapter. We are thinking of the Order everywhere. Possibly I am as much in touch with Order Members as anybody.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: Also if you have a person like that you can very easily pull out of any feeling of responsibility you might have for that person.....

\_\_\_\_(*woman 2*)\_\_\_\_: Should that person, the convenor, help us as well - if there's somebody we need to write to maybe, 'Would you like to do it'? It's that they're taking the responsibility to begin with to make sure that person is written to. They may then find somebody else to actually do it if they're more suitable or something like that.

**Aryamitra:** Does that mean you leave something up to everybody and nobody?

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: That's if anybody wants to. Sometimes just wanting to write to that person.

**Dharmapala:** But how is the Convenor to know that these people are sort of losing or .....in the first place. If that person's in London and the Convenor is somewhere else. [*Pause*] I think it is better to come back to the local Chapter to deal with it by the people that he is involved with.

**S:** There is of course also the question of people who aren't regularly involved with any local Chapter. Perhaps the Convenor of the Order will be more responsible for such people. Could be know who they are. [*Pause*] Any other point or comment that came out of the report?

**Vajradaka:** A thought that came out just in connection with what we have been talking about. Maybe since recently quite a lot of Order Members have been ordained

having come through the Kalyana Mitra system. But if they begin to drop out, then the people who were their Kalyana Mitras could keep in contact with them and also relay back to the Convenor too, what is happening on that score, keeping this Kalyana Mitra-Mitra contact going.

**S:** That sort of difficulty in any case though tends to arise more with people who have been with us for some time rather than with the newer Order members - it does seem. The system now seems to be working much better.

**Vajradaka:** Yes. But even with the older people, there was a kind of unofficial Mitra partnership. There were certain Order Members who that person felt an affinity for, and it was sort of unofficial.

**S:** I think in one or two cases they just gave up more or less in the end because there was no response. There still are very very few people now in this category anyway. *[Pause]* But when we do come to consider the question of the appointment of the Order Convenor for the coming year, we need to bear in mind all these points. Those which have been raised by Khema and they should be raised in the course of this business.

**Uttara:** May I suggest that you, that if there are any more thoughts about the function of Convenor, whoever has them can put them into 'Shabda'.

**Subhuti:** Can I suggest, Bhante, that if there is.... It seems to me that this sort of post is only going to be filled if the need is there. And if there is something that does need to be covered by somebody - you talked about the seminars and the visualisation groups - is it possible that the machinery, the retreat machinery at Archway could handle that? I think that's basically again.....

**Lokamitra:** That's what we have done up to now. We've organised all of the whole of the seminars with possibly one or two.....

**Khema:** The retreats tend to get done anyway. I just don't think I have been able to give it as much as I could have done. If I haven't had a lot of other things as well. And possibly, you know, somebody else might be able to give it more. You know, I'm not sure.

**S:** This also raises a much more general question and there are quite a few things which I've been doing up to the present but which I want gradually to hand over to other people, partly because they are expanding things now in as much as everything is expanding. It becomes more and more difficult for me to handle, and also because I have become more and more occupied with other things.

**Lokamitra:** I'd have thought the machinery at Archway can certainly handle.....

**S:** I think I'd rather keep separate the planning, let us say, of the Order retreats and so on. The actual machinery at Archway could be used. You don't have to have your own Order *biro* supplies and things like that. But the planning should be separate. And then the Order Convenor could consult with me about the programme of say Order retreats and visualisation seminars and so on, and then apply to this the same machinery to make it.....

I think we'd better go on now. We should really have here a Registrar's report from Suvratta.

**Marichi:** Suvratta's not coming. He's not coming.

**S:** He did say that he wouldn't be coming or? .....

\_\_\_\_\_: Suvratta is away.

**Lokamitra:** I spoke to him on Monday and he said he wouldn't be coming..

**S:** He didn't prepare any? .....

\_\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: No.

**Khema:** I think I can speak to a certain extent that the Registers we talked about at the last Convention, the only one that he has done is that short one that was in 'Shabda' .....

**S:** Yes

**Khema:** The other one Suvratta didn't do at all.

**Ananda:** I had a little talk with him, Bhante, not very long ago about the whole business of the register, and he seemed very confused what he thought he ought to be doing. And it was a very odd sort of encounter because I don't think he really wanted to do it. Actually I doubt if any one else could do it.

**S:** Thought he did say very definitely at the last Convention that he was very keen on doing it. He did have a talk with me about the register some time ago and I told him to sort it out.

\_\_\_\_\_: That's what I said.

**Aryamitra:** I just had a little bit of correspondence with him. Apparently he's going to computerise all the addresses and dates, and he said he could see it could be reproduced printing-wise - machines that print out from computers.

**S:** Why I think it's not..... I don't know anything about computers, but it seems to me it's just a question of maintaining a simple card index. There is not even a hundred of us, a card, one card for every Order Member. You change the card as they change their address and so on and so forth. And then you just type, as I do, their new addresses to the next one. I must say that.....

**Aryamitra:** I think he likes playing with computers. Suvratta likes playing with computers.

**S:** Well that's all right [*Laughter*], but it's hardly relevant.

**Aryamitra:** Why I brought it up was because he is doing something he is involved, he is doing something as Registrar.

**Khema:** Well I don't think he is actually. I know he says that but for instance the booklet is 18 months out of date. You know it's got 30 Members who aren't in it. The little address list is already pretty much out of date. A lot of people have moved.

**S:** We did emphasise at the last Convention that we needed something quick. We just needed names and up to date addresses.

**Khema:** When I did the address list, I had to really push him for about three weeks to get two addresses from him to finish it. And I find it really.....

**S:** Personally, my own feeling is that the whole business about the register etcetera is very unsatisfactory. This is my personal feeling, I'm sorry to say. I feel frankly quite disappointed that there is not even any message from Suvratta about the Register, or at least a written report if he can't be personally present. It does seem quite disappointing.

**Lokamitra:** It seems that he's just not able to continue as Registrar effectively.

**S:** But then if it's not as you say (unclear). Anyway since he isn't here we don't have a report we can only pass on and sort of reconsider the matter when we come to consider the appointment of Registrar for the forthcoming year. But this is an absolutely indispensable piece of equipment that every Order Member needs - an up to date list of the names and addresses of all other Order Members. It just can't be too strongly insisted upon.

**Vangisa:** It is also quite.... the computer raises the question... the fact that present Order Members with any particular office may like playing around with computers. You have to think about the successor to the card index.

**S:** Yes

**Aryamitra:** I presume that once you have set it up, you just press a button and get the information you want.

**Subhuti:** We haven't got a computer! [*Laughter*]

**Sagaramati:** Knowing a little bit about computers, I would say it's completely and utterly out of the question. [*Laughter*]

\_\_\_\_\_: ..... conversing in indigenous gossip.....

\_\_\_\_\_: Digital gossip! [*Laughter*]



\_\_\_\_\_: ..... computers.... might just be an addressing machine which they will completely. it does automatically.

**Ananda:** No, his idea is that when you, every new Order Member is given a reference number [*Laughter*] and you put the thing in. And the computer automatically puts it into alphabetical order.

**S:** I can do that with one hand! [*Laughter*]

**Subhuti:** Maybe you're a computer, Bhante! [*Laughter*]

**Sagaramati:** Well sometimes you have to make a card out anyway, don't you?

**S:** We know that technology often gets in the way. Anyway let's pass on. I am hoping now for a report for the Editor of 'Shabda' in one form or another.

**Lokamitra:** I have a letter from Sanghamitta.

*Dear Bhante and Order Members*

*As many of you have already learnt, I was compelled for health reasons to relinquish the editorship of 'Shabda' towards the end of March. I took this step with the greatest reluctance because, judging by the favourable comments, I felt I was making a worthwhile contribution to the activities of the Western Buddhist Order. However, due to the uncertainty of my health, I decided that the continuity of 'Shabda' was the paramount consideration.*

*First of all I must thank Ashvajit for taking over the completion of the April issue at such short notice. I must also thank him for replacing two vital screws in the duplicating machine [*Laughter*], which have been causing many problems since it came (unclear). Any success which attended my efforts was due in no small measure to the co-operation of contributors in observing the 15th of the month deadline, or, if this was not possible, giving me ample warning that a contribution was on its way.*

*Contributions, brackets - (double spacing please) - end of brackets, received before the deadline are of course even more valuable in averting a mad rush towards the end of the month. It's only from experience as editor, typist, publisher, and distributor, that one appreciates how little time there is to get 'Shabda' out for the first of the month. In the interest of my successor, these points are of the utmost importance in view of the fact that the volume of contributions is clearly going to increase. In fact the point has been reached when 'Shabda' deserves better production facilities.*

*One difficulty was the failure of some Members to notify the editor of changes of address. Very early on I tried to get the correct New Zealand addresses but it was not until last month that the problem was resolved after past issues sent to the addresses supplied were returned to me. Prompt notification of change of address saves a lot of disappointment, time, and expense. On the subject of expenditure, the cost of producing approximately 80 copies of the 'Shabda' per month is £12-£13, the largest single item by far being the postage.*

*I wish whoever is asked to take over from me every success. I am sure they will find it, as I did, a challenging but rewarding task.*

*Wishing you all a successful Convention.  
With metta,*

*Sanghamitta*

*PS This is not an afterthought, but I do wish to sincerely thank my husband for his patience and practical assistance. It has been valuable.*

**S:** I think first of all, perhaps we should record a hearty vote of thanks to Sanghamitta for having edited 'Shabda' for I am not quite sure how many months, but quite a number. Is it a year now?

**Subhuti:** Just almost a year. [*pause*]

**S:** Almost a year. Any comments on Sanghamitta's report on 'Shabda'? On 'Shabda' itself?

\_\_\_\_\_: Just a general comment. I find 'Shabda' absolutely invaluable.

**S:** I am astonished I must say to find it only cost £12 or 13 a month to produce. I would have thought it was much more.

**Sagaramati:** It is! *[Laughter]*

**S:** How much is it then?

**Sagaramati:** I reckon it's somewhere near £17.

**S:** That's not bad even so.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: That's to produce and post?

**S:** Yes, because he says that postage is the biggest item. That's very good though because as the number of copies goes up we are going to need a little extra paper and a few more stamps. And issues have been getting considerably bigger.

**Vangisa:** In view of that, I would like to make a comment. 'Shabda' came into existence over two years ago. It started off as a simple little sheet.

**S:** Communication Sheet! Started by Ananda.

**[End of Side One Side Two]**

**Vangisa:** And it became 'Shabda' at the first Order Convention. That I understood was quite a small thing. Now with very much more potential contributors, it does seem to be on the verge of moving into a different category. It's not really a communication sheet any more. And not only does it look as though it's going to become a bigger job, obviously it would also need some real and definite editing. In a way it could become a mixture of really good positive contributions and a kind of agony column inclusion in it.

**S:** Just a minute, just a minute. I think.....I personally feel what is important about 'Shabda' is it is uncensored. Not even censored by the editor. In other words not edited in a sense.

**Vangisa:** When we had, what was it in 1974? - 29 Order Members and.....now that we have got 75.

**S:** I have no objection to an agony column, because if Order Members are in agony, we must know it! *[Laughter]* After all 'Shabda' is not for....not even for the Friends - it's just for us.

**Vangisa:** Is 'Shabda' in its present form any longer capable of doing that?

**S:** It seems to be doing it.

\_\_\_\_\_: It does!

**Vangisa:** Well it does up to a... but.....

**S:** What I mean is I think we should resist any temptation to tidy 'Shabda' up.....because who are we tidying up for?

**Vangisa:** But it's going to get bigger and bigger, that's the point!

**S:** I don't think it will absolutely indefinitely get bigger. It certainly is getting bigger and bigger but I think we have to be very careful not to introduce any element of virtual censorship or dressing up. Because, if it looks all untidy, you get the impression that lots of Order Members are in a real mess, well it's good that we should know that. It may be that some Order Members write much more frequently than others. They may not be very representative. But I am sure other Order Members will make allowances for that fact.

**Ananda:** I'd like to support that very much. I feel that censorship is .....

**S:** I'm using the word 'censorship' not very strictly but I am sure Vangisa wasn't suggesting any actual censorship, but I think a touch of that will inevitably come in.

**Vangisa:** What I'm really saying basically is that just at this time it seems right to do a little rethink on the function of '*Shabda*' compared with its original function. Whether it is still doing that and whether it can still go on doing that.

**S:** Certainly we can rethink. But I think that nonetheless that it is fundamental to the idea of '*Shabda*', that it should be just an open communication from individual Order Members to all the other Order Members. Whatever they are thinking, feeling, whatever they feel like sharing. They may write bad English; it doesn't matter. The editor doesn't have to tidy it up. The editor hasn't been tidying it up. They may give expression to *miccha ditthis* . That is quite possible, and sometimes happens. The editor should not interfere, however much the editor disagrees; or however much you all disagree. It must be printed. Then it can be corrected if necessary, either by some other Order Member writing in or by me. Or if they give expression to a completely neurotic state of mind, well that's fine! We all know then and we can [*Laughter*].....

**Uttara:** I personally find it rather boring. You know, getting all the time this similar line of thought going on. Though it seemed as though some form of trend of thought. And I felt well..personally for my own help I felt it would be have been a better medium as a communication for some form of teaching.

**S:** But we do have that too. We have decided to have the extracts from the seminars.

**Uttara:** Well even that..I find that it doesn't relate to me.

**S:** Then you should write to '*Shabda*' and say that. Now you are now saying it which is as good as writing to '*Shabda*', except it doesn't reach those who aren't actually present. But write to '*Shabda*' and say.

**Uttara:** It's just recently the thoughts that came when I knew we were going to talk about it. I'll have to think about it.

**S:** At any rate it's all being recorded now, what you say. [*Laughter*] And (*unclear*) in the end. Does anybody else find '*Shabda*' boring, if you do?

\_\_\_\_\_: Sometimes.

**Ananda:** I personally feel it .....

**S:** In the some way that you find sometimes other Order Members boring. [*Laughter*] It's no more or less than that!

**Ananda:** When I feel it's boring it's when I feel people in the Order aren't saying what they feel truly. When there is a certain amount of unconscious apathy.

**Siddhiratna:** I don't think it's ever been clear that '*Shabda*' was never censored.

**S:** It hasn't been made clear?

**Siddhiratna:** No, I never really understood it.

**S:** Because certainly to the best of my recollection, it was made clear at the beginning. I certainly spoke in those sort of terms. Of course you weren't ordained then, so you weren't present to hear that. In fact this was very much my own idea, that the editor - in fact it was clearly stated - the editor was no more than the sort of post box. Received everything, and simply saw that it was printed and distributed. But not to arrange it or tidy up any contributions.

**Siddhiratna:** Is there any selection going on? I mean eh..

**S:** Not even selection.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**S:** Well, if you got a great pile of material it can't all go into this issue, of course you must leave some over. I think strictly speaking, as far as possible, what comes in to the editor first, should go first into '*Shabda*'. So there is not even any unconscious selection on the part of the editor. I think this is quite important. I am sure that Sanghamitta followed all this quite faithfully. She did once or twice hold something over, but purely for reasons of space. But there is always the possibility of unconscious exclusion for the time being, sort of thing. But everything got in eventually. Even some contributions that I personally considered a bit boring, but never mind! If that particular Order Member had been with me and talking in that way maybe I would have found that boring too. But Order Members have a right to be boring! [*Laughter*] I won't say they have a duty to be boring! [*Loud Laughter*] ..... exercise your rights by all means. Bore one another silly! [*Laughter*]...

**Vangisa:** I don't know if they have a right to be boring every month! *[Laughter]*

**Chintamani:** You have a right to be boring until you are told to shut up. You have a right to be boring until you are told to shut up .....until you have proved to your own satisfaction that you are being boring.

**S:** Order Members have got the right to write into 'Shabda' and say 'Well look we've had enough of such and such a topic. I don't want to hear any more about neurosis'. You then might get a number of other people writing in saying that neurosis is the most fascinating..... *[Laughter]*. But however you feel, write and tell all the other Order Members through the medium of 'Shabda', and your own unbounded contribution will sooner or later appear without any editorial tidying up.

**Vangisa:** There's another possibility as well and that is that there are probably some quite good things that don't get sent to 'Shabda'. For instance there is an odd little article by a New Zealand Order Member, in the New Zealand Newsletter for instance which perhaps would be worth reproducing in 'Shabda'.

**S:** I would say even there, if you feel that someone's contribution should be reproduced in 'Shabda', you should send it to the editor with your own little introduction - 'I saw this in such and such. I thought it worth reproducing. Therefore I am sending it to you'. So that the editor is not even there exercising any selectivity. Everybody knows that it originally appeared somewhere else and such and such Order member has sent it in because he liked it. Not that the editor has that responsibility, no. Unless in the editor's individual capacity - the editor writes well 'I saw this somewhere. It's by an Order member, I like it and therefore I will include it, but that's in the editor's individual capacity, not as editor. I think we must be very careful about this.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: I was quite concerned to hear how most of New Zealand haven't been receiving 'Shabda'.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Haven't been?

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: Haven't been, Yeah.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: It's being due to I think wrong addresses and so on. But that's probably the reason why we haven't had any contributions from them. One person hasn't had his since August last year.

**Vangisa:** Who is getting them?

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: Well I don't know who is getting them or receiving them - not regularly.

**Vangisa:** ..... go astray.

**Lokamitra:** They get sent back to us.

\_\_\_\_\_: Do they?

**Lokamitra:** Well, if they are in contact with the centre in New Zealand, they can all receive one, can't they?

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: Well I don't know. It depends if anyone in the Centre gets one. It is very erratic.

**Lokamitra:** It does seem that Sanghamitta, through her health has not been able to cope with it, however much she has the desire to do so. Therefore someone with more abilities should be asked to do it.

**S:** Well, we will deal with that when we come to it. Any further comments on 'Shabda'?

**Vimalamitra:** Yes. Perhaps a little kind of heading to 'Shabda', setting down the point of 'Shabda', and the fact that it is uncensored. It does save them telling numerous new Order Members what 'Shabda' is about.

**Aryamitra:** You mean it's always printed with the cover.

**Ratnapani:** If you call the editor the compiler or the collator, I imagine that takes care of it.

**Ananda:** There's another little point which I would like to bring up and that concerns 'Shabda' as a medium of communicating events - retreats, obviously the Convention and things like that. I feel it has rather failed in this function.

**S:** Yes, that's a very important point, because the 'Newsletter' comes out every three months. If you want to tell people about something - at least Order Members about something - that's happening next month, you can do it through 'Shabda'.

**Ananda:** Yes, That is very important. As soon as something is planned, it can be printed in 'Shabda'.

\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: What sort of things?

**Ananda:** Anything, any activity, any retreat that concerns and involves Order members. Things that Order Members might want to communicate to Mitras.

**Khema:** Can you be specific? I mean, what has not appeared in 'Shabda' under that heading?

**Ananda:** I can't be specific. I felt that over the past 12 months there are things that haven't been in it.

**Khema:** Well I have made damn sure that any Order retreats and Order days and anything concerning that whole area, have been put in.

**Ananda:** Well it's possible that I have just been misreading it, but.....

**Khema:** Well I think that's a bit.....

**Vessantara:** Are you simply talking about Order retreats or Friends' retreats?

**Ananda:** No, anything.

**S:** Anything in which Order members might be concerned.

**Khema:** I mean if one has to print all the retreats that are going on at all the different Centres for all Order Members concerned, it will take up so much space!

**Lokamitra:** It's not even printed in the 'Newsletter' now because it's so much space.

**Ananda:** I feel that more could be done.

**Khema:** What I mean is there any really....

**S:** I think it probably is important with regard to something which is arranged at short notice, which hasn't appeared in the 'Newsletter' and which needs to be made known among Order Members, so that they possibly can communicate it to others.

**Khema:** But, I think we have to define what we are actually talking about. Because retreats, general retreats, aren't even put in the 'Newsletter'. What is put in the 'Newsletter' it is 'please refer to the secretary of the respective Centre for retreat information'. So what are we actually....

**Ananda:** Could it not be changed, to actually include it. Like have a page dedicated to forthcoming events, retreats, in 'Shabda', every month.

**Khema:** But I don't see it applies to all Order Members.

**Gotami:** I think if there are ordination retreats, it doesn't matter whether.....we certainly don't hear about them up in Glasgow. We come down and find lots of new Order Members. We don't know anything about them. It would be nice to hear about them.

**Vangisa:** But these are always reported in 'Shabda', certainly after they're ordained.

**Gotami:** Afterwards, yes, but if you want to go on the retreat to see the person being ordained then you can't, because you don't even know about it.

**S:** That person.... you might be a friend of the person being ordained. But for some reason or other, you hadn't been informed by anyone individually that that ordination is going to take place.

**Lokamitra:** I think another good thing is that if there's say maybe five Order Members that are going to be away for two weeks in such a such month, it's worth knowing that. If they were all away on retreat, not a Mitra retreat if no ordinations

have been taking place, maybe a beginners' retreat. I think its worth knowing the whereabouts of Order Members if you need to contact for communication etc.

**Khema:** We've got to remember that '*Shabda*' is worldwide, it's not just local. For people in New Zealand to know that so and so is away on retreat for a week in London is pretty irrelevant and it's taking up quite a lot of space.

**Lokamitra:** But the majority of Order members are in the UK. Also you could have a page for all future activities. It would be useful for all Centres.

**Ananda:** I remember we discussed this at the last Convention and we agreed, or all suggested....that retreats which concern everything in England which didn't go to New Zealand.

**S:** This implies a certain amount of collaboration for ordinations.

\_\_\_\_\_: Surely!

**S:** With someone being responsible for compiling this list and sending it every month in good time to the editor of '*Shabda*'.

**Subhuti:** In fact the minutes of the Centres are all circulated and it should be the responsibility of the secretaries of the various Centres to inform their own Chapter members of what is going on in the Centre. It's all there.

**S:** Yes, that's true. You just need someone making a digest of whatever is relevant for '*Shabda*'. Then sending it to the editor.

**Khema:** Well it's not even necessary really to put it in '*Shabda*', because it's sent to all Centres anyway.....

**S:** But there are lots of Order Members who don't receive copies of minutes, and who don't have access to them, perhaps?

**Khema:** But there are not that many associated with the Centre where the.....

**S:** I just feel it would be very handy if you just had a sheet which you could look down and don't have to look through lots and lots of sets of minutes, which are quite voluminous nowadays. We have so many different Centres and Branches.

**Ananda:** There are a lot of Order Members who are not connected with a Centre. I think it's a significant number who can make it worth doing.

**Manjuvajra:** Maybe it's more relevant that they should be in contact with what's going on.

**Sona:** Up until recently there have been about six Order members in Norfolk and never seen minutes from any other Centre. And.....

\_\_\_\_\_: The digest of those minutes could be (*unclear*)

**Sona:** They are now. That's only in the last few months. Previous to that I don't think I have ever seen minutes for the year that I was living in Norfolk.

\_\_\_\_\_: Well you must find the person they were sent to.

**Sona:** I didn't even know they were sent to Norfolk in fact.

\_\_\_\_\_: Well, the Secretary....

**Sona:** Because there wasn't a secretary in Norfolk.

\_\_\_\_\_: The Secretary of the Norfolk Branch has always received minutes.

**Sona:** But there wasn't a Branch in Norfolk.

**Devamitra:** I received minutes in September.

**Aryamitra:** But maybe it could be a separate sheet. This is something that '*Aryatara*' people are doing, to begin to start a Newsletter going down there. And would start by just producing an information sheet of activities that are happening in Surrey and at other Centres, so that our Members can know what's going on.

**S:** I would extend this comment actually to the 'Newsletter' itself. I did get the impression that, as I think back to earlier days, that one used to know a lot more about what was actually going on than one does now very often. I know there is more going on. It's much more difficult to compile the information and so on, but I feel that this is what has been happening.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: Most of the retreats don't figure in the 'Newsletter' in advance because they are already booked up or they're for Mitras only and people...

**S:** That in a way is good. But there is also a negative side to it. That people who are not actually in that sort of personal contact just will never get a chance to know about something or to book.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: Well anything which is open to anyone outside the Mitra systems is advertised.....

**S:** Well Mitra system things obviously seem.....

**Nagabodhi:** What I do now is say I am advertising for example the beginners' courses on this summer retreat, general retreat, specifically, as well as the European retreat. But there are going to be a lot of weekend retreats in the coming months. And I just simply say that there are going to be lots of weekend retreats. If you are interested please contact the Centre nearest you.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: Sorry I wasn't aware that you had changed that policy, because I was always putting in dates when they were available. When they weren't available we offered them a print date when they didn't go in.

**S:** I think the more information we have actually available the better. I don't think it's a very good idea just to print 'ring in for information'. That's much too general, as it were.

**Nagabodhi:** Then I really must declare here and now that people must be much more conscientious about sending me information. I have to sort of go on my knees and worse to get even a few articles and news over three months.

**S:** I think when we come to appoint an editor for 'Shabda', I think the point could well be made that if the editor is unable to do it himself, or herself, find someone willing to take responsibility for collating this sort of information which is useful for all Order Members from all the different sources such as sets of minutes, the 'Newsletter', and so on.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: Unless each Centre simply sends in a programme, and the editor himself puts it together.

**S:** It will be up to the editor to get it together in one way or another.

**Lokamitra:** I personally, Bhante, would question whether some or most of this information is useful to the majority of Order members. Certainly Mitra retreats would be of interest to those Order Members where there is a Mitra system functioning. But other than that I can't see very much relevance.

**Aryamitra:** Well whether it's in 'Shabda' or the 'Newsletter', I do feel it should be, we should have it in circulation.

**Lokamitra:** Certainly in the 'Newsletter', but I can't see the reason for.....

**Aryamitra:** I tell you the reason I have and that is quite often I want to contact some other Order Member and I don't know that they are two weeks, three weeks in Glasgow, or somewhere.

**S:** Or they're leading a retreat somewhere.....

**Aryamitra:** Yeah, they're leading a retreat. There might be five Order Members leading or taking a retreat.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: So that means that the information you want to go into 'Shabda' not only what dates the retreats are, but actually who is on them.

**Aryamitra:** Yeah, I think actually when it is on.

**Lokamitra:** You can always write to them, you know.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: I have a feeling it's going to be very difficult .....

**Lokamitra:** Or ring them up, if they don't.....

**Aryamitra:** You don't even know if they are on retreat; you might ring them every day for two weeks, yeah?

**Vangisa:** It is really a plethora of information which can be self defeating. One wonders when somebody's back, somebody who does not know the fact of what is going on. What is available..... that you just give up, you know.

**S:** One isn't thinking of all the facts, one is thinking of, for instance, what is going to be happening next month, which might be of interest or concern the Order Member reading '*Shabda*' this month, either so that they can know what is happening and possibly apply to go on it or make a note that somebody is going to be away or something of that sort.

**Vangisa:** I think that when we get to the stage when we want to know where other people are all the time, it just becomes bloody impossible...

**Ratnapani:** But I think in attempting to contact an individual, any individual, in or out of the Order, you accept the fact that they might not be home. *[Laughter]* You might write them a letter to.....

**Aryamitra:** No you don't. You see it might be very logical what you are saying, but I expect Order Members to be there. They're committed. They've all got jobs to do. Nobody is sort of travelling around just like that. You know. Somebody has got a post. You expect them to be there. Sometimes you ring up the London Centre and nobody is there. It's stupid. You do sort of expect someone is going to be there and you want to know whether they can see an Order member.

\_\_\_\_\_: get a reputation

**S:** I know I have had that experience from Norfolk many a time, trying to get through at '*Pundarika*' and carefully calculating ten minutes or five minutes to seven, just before the meeting or class, and there is no reply to the telephone. I had this experience quite a number of times in the course of the last few months. I didn't

particularly mind. It could have been that they away somewhere or other but one wouldn't expect that.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yeah, I mean.....

**Ratnapani:** This is about people not answering the phone at '*Pundarika*' (*unclear*) I don't see where notes in '*Shabda*' can help....

**S:** We weren't originally talking about people so much as events. The events is the more important thing I think. I think there should be something in '*Shabda*' - a sort of diary if you like - a diary of events which are going to be happening in different places. The most important ones, anyway in the coming month.

**Lokamitra:** Can we perhaps define this a little more clearly so that.....

**S:** Well certainly Ordination retreats.

**Lokamitra:** Ordination retreats.

**S:** And also there should be the information who is going to be ordained. Yes? At least you might want to send them your good wishes.

**Ananda:** Visualisation seminars, study groups.

**S:** Well no, those are by invitation. And things which are by invitation only should need not be listed. The things which are open and to which the Order member might like to apply for.

**Aryamitra:** Mitra retreats.

**Vangisa:** And presumably you want to know who is going on them.

**S:** No, I think to know who is going on them is impossible. It would be desirable perhaps but not really possible.

**Vangisa:** But in any case this business of knowing where everybody is, I don't think it matters how much information you give.



**S:** Well I am not talking about people as I said, but about events. I think you need to know what is actually happening. For instance it would be quite interesting if say people down in London knew what retreats were going to take place in Scotland. They might at least once in a while go up there and join the retreat there, and if they knew it was going to be in say three weeks time, four weeks time, they could book and arrange to go up there. I think more of this sort of thing is necessary. I am sometimes a bit in the dark about what is happening. I get all the minutes but I have to read through all of them, and sometimes it's many pages, to find out what is really going on. It would be quite convenient to have just a simple list month by month. I think one page of '*Shabda*' would be enough - the barest information. For further details you could just ring up, once you know there is going to be something on somewhere on such and such dates. But certainly all the open retreats, at least that, or any special celebration. For instance, just to give an example, there was that reception for the publication of '*The Thousand Petalled Lotus*' in Brighton. This is the sort of thing that could well appear in '*Shabda*', listed the month before, so that anyone from Norfolk, or even Glasgow, or anywhere, can come down and come to something of general interest. Otherwise you don't know about it until afterwards, if you come to know at all.

**Ratnapani:** I think further when...a lot of people have thought about the idea but nobody has actually done much coherent travelling from Centre to Centre, but when somebody is doing that it will be absolutely vital for them to plan their journeys so they don't arrive when nothing is happening, or they can plan to arrive when something particular is happening.

**S:** Or when everyone has gone away for a weekend retreat.

**Ratnapani:** Yes.

**Aryamitra:** Or when five Order members are away on some retreat [*Laughter*] If there are two retreats going on, there's ten Order Members away.

**Ananda:** Especially when they are in your own Centre!

**Aryamitra:** Yes [*Laughter*]

\_\_\_\_\_: It would be very useful to have that in Chelmsford! [*Laughter*].

**S:** I think we can leave those particular points to whoever becomes editor of '*Shabda*' and take due note of and make whatever arrangements he can to give us whatever information is reasonable without taxing the information machinery. Any other point about '*Shabda*'? Content, style? Contributions?

**Ratnapani:** I sometimes feel desire for more uplift and a little less complaint in '*Shabda*'. It does seem to be biased more towards the complaint than the uplift, but I suppose if none of us have got anything uplifting to say then '*Shabda*' won't be, you know, will be that way round.

**Dharmapala:** I feel that '*Shabda*' is still only just finding its feet in terms of really communicating. I think that it's taken a couple of years to do that. I think it's just really beginning to get real in depth sort of responses now. I can see that continuing.

**Ananda:** It would be really nice to have a - every so often - a page of photographs of Order Members who were visiting the country.

**Lokamitra:** I would like to just challenge that remark from Ratnapani. There is nothing of complaint in this recent '*Shabda*'.

**Ratnapani:** That's very good. [*Loud Laughter*]

**Lokamitra:** It's very rarely that I find a complaint in there, I think.

**Ratnapani:** It just must have that style (*unclear*)

\_\_\_\_\_: Well!

**Dhammadinna:** I think it's very nice it's got double spacing. But it does take up more paper as a consequence.

**Aryamitra:** There is a point that if people send things into Sanghamitta or the editor, and they have already typed it, and she has got to go and type it onto a stencil, for tuppence or whatever you can buy a stencil and type it onto a stencil.

\_\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: She does compile it.

**Aryamitra:** Ah!

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: And it wouldn't necessarily travel either.

\_\_\_\_\_: Pardon?

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: Stencils would not necessary travel through the post too well.

\_\_\_\_\_: Ah, OK.

**Nagabodhi :**Something I've noticed, just observed, is that well maybe it's because it's the printed word, although it's uncensored and uncut, people seem to be quite oblivious to most of the information that's carried in it. Everyone's asking for more information, or some people are. But every time, nearly every Order day, something comes up. And someone says 'I don't know about that'. And a chorus of voices say 'It was in *'Shabda'*'. It seems people don't take that kind of information seriously. They read the articles but information I think a lot of people just don't use it.

**Vajradaka:** Well if a chorus of people say it's in *'Shabda'*, then it's a lot better than it used to be! [*Laughter*]

**Nagabodhi:** It's the same self-righteous chorus! [*Laughter*]

**Aryamitra:** This is the trouble I think. That people who are right at the very heart of organisations forget the people on the outside, but who are in contact don't know what retreats are going on.

\_\_\_\_(Woman1)\_\_: I mean look at this. After writing a request in *'Shabda'* for bookings and money in advance, there has been very little response, so I mean did nobody read that?

\_\_\_\_(Woman2)\_\_: I got very little response after my notice too.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: That's money!

\_\_\_\_(Woman1)\_\_: And Nagabodhi writing about *'Newsletter'* contributions.

**Ananda:** But at least it was in *'Shabda'*! [*Laughter*]

\_\_\_\_(Woman1)\_\_: Get it in whatever it is. It's the response that's important, it's meant to be communication.

**Ananda:** Well at least if it's in then you've got a chance that people can respond to it if they want! [*Laughter*]

\_\_\_\_(Woman1)\_\_: I think that....a complete waste of time, you know.

\_\_\_\_\_: You can always.....

**Ananda:** The answer is not to not have it in.

**Nagabodhi:** The answer is that people take note and they read a bit more seriously.

\_\_\_\_(Woman1)\_\_: And apply it to themselves and not apply it to everybody as if it just applies to somebody else.

**Lokamitra:** There is an important point here that we should all be reading every word of *'Shabda'*. It sometimes is a bit of a bore, and keep up our *'Shabdas'* so that we can refer back. I think that's absolutely important, that everybody should have read it. It should all be of vital interest to us all.

**Vangisa:** It would be a particular editorship - editing while reading!

\_\_\_\_\_: Why is that?

**Vangisa:** It may not be edited at source, but it can be edited at the consumption end.

**Ratnapani:** Usually it's the appeals and the dates that are all edited out.

\_\_\_\_\_: Exactly, on one end.

**Vessantara:** Perhaps the editor of *'Shabda'* shouldn't be called the editor. Perhaps should be called *'Shabda'* compiler.

**Aryamitra:** The Producer!

**Vajradaka:** Or compiler. Connections.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: The other thing I been wondering about is how necessary it is in 'Shabda' is always a report of the Order day at 'Pundarika' or 'Aryatara'.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: I think it's essential, absolutely.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: But we don't report order days in other places.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: But perhaps we should do. On Order Days we should.

**Ananda:** Do they have other Order Days in other places?

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: Well I'm sure they do in New Zealand.

**S:** It's not a question of should we have. It's if they send, it's printed. Yeah!

**Subhuti:** That really sums up the discussion on 'Shabda'. That statement.

**S:** It is quite clear from the fact that we do print reports of Order days here and there, that reports of Order days are printed, and I myself sent for publication Akshobya's report on the annual national retreat together with all the discussions in New Zealand.  
[Pause]

**Dharmapala:** I think that if everything gets printed as it comes in, I think just the increase in volume there will make more people wary of what they are actually contributing, and it would be a quite a natural sorting out before it gets written after a while..... [Pause]

**S:** Any further points about 'Shabda'. [pause]

Right, let's pass on then to the next report. That's from the Master of Ceremonies. That's Ashvajit.

**Ashvajit:** I did produce or I wrote a little article yesterday. I now feel it's a bit dry but I'll read it and see if it provokes some response.

*"We practise in the FWBO a relatively small number and variety of rites and ceremonies. That there is a small number of such rites, such ceremonies is a good thing for the world at large has become plagued with ceremony. Ceremony has become so all pervading in fact that we are heartily sick of it. So sick of it that precious few people appear nowadays able to bow even before the Buddha. That we practise ceremony at all, however, is an excellent thing which is at best a way of directly experiencing our emotions and expressing our emotions and in a manner that is both helpful and beautiful. But there is a word of caution to be uttered here. In the Vimuttimagga it says that virtue that is connected with rites and ceremonies is dependent upon opinions. In other words, the mere performance of ceremony does not impart virtue, true virtue that is. One may of course acquire a reputation for competence in the leading of ceremonies, but this is merely conventional in the sense of being subject to the tastes and whims of one's audience. So if these change, if public opinion changes, then one's reputation, one's conventional virtue goes to. Rites and ceremonies are thus not ends in themselves. They are, as I have said, a skilful means of experiencing and expressing our emotions, especially our more spiritual feelings, our more devotional feelings, and also an aesthetically pleasing means for preparing ourselves for meditation and bringing it to a conclusion.*

*However I suspect that our ceremonies, our chanting, our Pujas, would be most efficacious, most virtuous, only if our practise of Buddhism is based upon something more reliable and solid than mere competence in ceremonies, although this is not excluded. I imagine that the virtuous Order Member, the effective Order Member, would at least be competent in the performance of all our usual ceremonies.*

*What seems to be most important in the context of the 'Friends', is that those who lead Pujas and chanting and so on, should be as closely in touch as possible with the spirit of the way things are done throughout the Movement. This becomes increasingly difficult as the*

*Movement expands, but large gatherings of the Order and itinerant Order Members bringing about cross fertilization, help to ameliorate this situation. Another essential factor - perhaps a difficult one to gauge - is one's devotion to the Ideal. This cannot be put on or assumed but seems to be the natural outcome of the depth and thoroughness of one's practice and the extent to which it has extended, as it were, to one's fingertips. But if real devotion is there, it will surely be evident.*

*Important technical practice be borne in mind by efficient, path(?), clarity of enunciation, pitch and volume of the voice. Also bodily attitudes, position, rigidity etc. Then again one's emotional state. If one is very unsettled, disturbed, not feeling well, it is perhaps best to ask another Order Member, if one is available, to substitute. Although if there has been adequate preparation such a state of affairs should not occur.*

*Idiosyncrasies of pronunciation should be avoided and where noticed, should be pointed out as soon as a suitable occasion arises afterwards. The Shrine should be inspected before any celebration either by the Order Member leading or by a competent shrine attendant to see that everything is in order. Neatness, cleanliness, and appropriateness of dress is another factor to be borne in mind. The standard of Friends' ceremonies has definitely risen. Only a few years ago, chanting was often ragged and strident with idiosyncratic pronunciation, poor sense of rhythm and pitch. This has now changed very much and quite a few members of the Order are leading things in such a way that it's a joy to participate, rather than a penance. [Laughter]*

*The standard of the shrines has also risen, although we should beware of becoming too fussy. Attention needs to be paid to colour, proportion, cleanliness and so on. Absolute geometrical positioning is not, however, necessary, or even desirable. We are not aiming at a clinical laboratory effect; but at a sense of beauty and appropriateness.*

*Care should be taken in the selection of readings for Pujas. One cannot always rely on immediate inspiration to find an appropriate text, though this sometimes works. With regard to festivals, the organisation of these is best left to the Centre, Branch, or Chapter concerned, having due consideration for the facilities available and the appropriateness of the activities proposed. Thought should be given to the event a sufficient number of days beforehand, so that materials, food, etc can be got together; advertisements prepared and distributed if necessary.*

*The dates of the major festivals - that is Buddha Day, Dharma Day, Sangha Day, Padmasambhava Day, the Buddha's birthday, Parinirvana Day, FWBO and WBO Day - occur either on fixed dates during the year, or on dates varying to coincide with the full moon. These dates will normally be announced in the January issue of 'Shabda', to remind those Order members who are not familiar with the method of calculation. Meditation on the meaning or significance of the Festival to be celebrated, will help to ensure that the right sort of atmosphere is generated.*

*We return finally to our central act of Ceremony, the Puja. It occurs to me that, ideally, it does four things simultaneously; it demonstrates spiritual emotion; gets rid of negativity; it produces a devotional attitude; it conduces to Enlightenment."*

**S:** Any further elucidation required?

**Lokamitra:** Did you check on the date of Padmasambhava Day?

**Ashvajit:** No I have to do that. I will do that before the end of this session.

**Lokamitra:** Also, in the last Convention, it was suggested - some people felt they'd like to celebrate the date of the Buddha's leaving home. Did you manage to find out the date of that?

**Ashvajit:** No, I am afraid I've not done any research on that.

**S:** It would be a full moon day, not an actual date.

**Ashvajit:** The date of the Buddha's leaving home.

**Lokamitra:** And also we need clarification I think on which full moon day the Parinirvana day is.

**Dharmapala:** I don't know how reliable it is but in *'The Light of Asia'* it mentions the name of the full moon on the event of the Buddha's Enlightenment.

**S:** Or in the *Lalitavistara*. [Pause]

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Could you expand a bit on the first few comments you made about modern life being riddle with ceremony. (Unclear)

**Ashvajit:** I think its more an attitude. What I mean by ceremony is not necessary a fixed form, but an attitude that one has to do things in such and such a way. A sort of rigidity or fixity.

**S:** A formalistic way.

**Ashvajit:** Yes.

**S:** It isn't quite the meaning of the term 'ceremony' in the sense, say, of 'Master of Ceremonies'. Presumably you are not Master of Ceremonies of that sort.

**Ashvajit:** I don't claim to be Master of any Ceremony.

**S:** Well you ought to be! [Laughter]

**Ashvajit:** A Master of Ceremonies is one who supervises.

**Lokamitra:** You are. You're the Order Master of Ceremonies. You should be supervising the Order Ceremonies.

**Aryamitra:** You might be an apprentice.....

**Ashvajit:** I am just a beginner. I've not had the job very long. I'm still learning. If anybody has any hints or suggestions about ceremonies, about the way things are done or should not be done, of course they would be very welcome.

**S:** I think the standard has improved actually. Has anyone got any comments on the more general aspects. Leaving the immediate matter of Ashvajit's report. We won't by the way be having any session on Pujas and ceremonies, so if you have anything to say about this topic from a general point of view then this is the appropriate slot for it.

**Chintamani:** I have got an idea for Pujas as regards retreats. That is that at some time we make three portable shrines. One suitable for men's retreats, one suitable for women's retreats and one suitable for Ordination retreats. As far as I know, there is only one Ordination retreat at a time in the UK. That takes care of one shrine. Well the details would have to be worked out but they could be designed around a specific image, have appropriate colours and so on. And then whenever there is a retreat, you just come and pick up your box which has got everything inside it and take it off, open it out and there it is.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: But there are quite often lots of retreats on at the same time.

**Chintamani:** Yeah. These would be major retreats. The Ordination Shrine - there would be only one ordination retreat.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: Yes, but there are quite of ordinary retreats on at the same time.

**Chintamani:** Yes, well the details can be worked out.

**S:** The idea..... I mean improvisation is good but sometimes it means that you are left without a really good image for a particular retreat or without a set of seven bowls when they are being used elsewhere.

**Vangisa:** I think there seems to be a certain inherent danger in this production of standardised equipment. I don't want to say anything more in depth here, except a certain unease of opening the box and there is everything ready.

**Marichi:** There is even more unease when you go to the retreat and open the box and there's nothing there! [Loud Laughter]

\_\_\_\_\_ : ..... a fluorescent orange (*unclear*) [*Laughter*]

**S:** It was suggested different sets for different purposes designed according to different needs. So you don't get violently clashing shrine requisites presumably.

**[End of Tape One Tape Two]**

**Lokamitra:** Such as?

**Vangisa:** We could up with a certain amount of mass production. We could have a little industry turning out shrines for every occasion.

**Chintamani:** Not if they're hand made....

**Vangisa:** It's just the implications, the possibilities.

**Chintamani:** As far as I know, it's a very very old and traditional practice.

**Dharmapala:** When you said one for a women's retreat and one for a men's retreat, did you mean that numerically or because they should actually be different because it's a men's retreat? Could you say more about that?

**Chintamani:** Oh! Well not having experienced a women's retreat, I can't say how a woman's shrine should be like but.

**Dharmapala:** But you've indicated that there is a difference and that you're suggesting that they should be made so there must be some idea.

**Chintamani:** Well this is only from reports that I've had, that the atmosphere on women's retreat and men's retreats can vary quite a bit, can be quite different, can be quite distinctive. There's no value judgement. It's just they are distinctively different. Possibly the approach on a women's retreat and the approach on a men's retreat may be different according to the needs of the people there. So it would seem to be right to have a shrine which pointed you in the right direction and used the approach that is there.... (*unclear*).

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: But surely the needs are different on women's retreats and different on men's retreats.

**Chintamani:** Oh yes, and then you get down to the individual shrine. It's made up of ..... (*unclear*).

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: Could I suggest that the Order uses the five Dhyana Buddhas, the different colours that go with the Bodhisattva, the consorts of Buddhas in relation to the difference of the male and female in the Order between us. We use the colours of the different Buddhas, the yellow, the traditional golden colour, the red for Amitabha, and the blue for Akshobya and.....

**S:** You mean if you have, say, Amitabha, have everything in red. You mean like that.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: Yes. Have the actual colour for the Buddha statue or the Buddha image or the Buddha picture. That could be related to this difference between.....

**S:** Presumably if, for instance, you felt that the image of Amitabha was suited to a particular type of retreat, then if you had the image of Amitabha it would only be appropriate to have the accessories belonging naturally to Amitabha. For instance you might have some peacock feathers, if you happened to have peacock feathers on other grounds of course, or you might have the red lotus and so on. This is what you mean.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: .... a wider expression within the Dhyana Buddhas, the consorts, the Bodhisattvas.

**S:** In other words, everything in keeping.

**Vangisa:** There's an important distinction I feel here. That is that this idea which I've referred to (*unclear*) is creative. Once it becomes standardised it is no longer creative. What is in fact being done is to reduce one's own creative impulse as a justification for removing everybody else's creative impulse.

**Chintamani:** No, wait a minute. You just said that the idea of the Dhyani Buddhas was a creative one but the Dhyani Buddhas are a standardisation and therefore you dismiss them....

**Vangisa:** Because there's a particular image involved, a particular vision of a shrine, is something that has arisen spontaneously, to some extent anyway.....

**Chintamani:** That's what I did.

**Vangisa:** OK, right but it is in each of you, each individual, at the moment, this is a creative impulse, if you like or a tendency. It seems to me all wrong to use this as a justification for cutting out other people's creative tendency. Because it is good doesn't mean....

**Aryamitra:** Standardising. European standardising.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Lokamitra:** Surely then Chintamani perhaps could draw some plans of these and it would be up to people to adopt them if they....

**Dhammadinna:** There's no reason..... One doesn't have to take this portable shrine if one doesn't want to. If it's there it's good.

**Vangisa:** The portable shrine that Chintamani has mentioned has been in use for ages, is a different thing, I'm sure. It's.... I don't even think it's perhaps something drawn up to a certain definite plan. The plan is probably an individual thing.

**Chintamani:** Well iconographically they conform to certain....

**Vangisa:** Well of course, yeah, but an individual has a particular shrine. He doesn't go along to a shop and buy a category 'Y'....

**S:** Actually he does have a little catalogue. [*Laughter*]

**Ratnapani:** I think what all this points to in more general terms is that we feel a need for more varied equipment for shrines; more varied images; better images than we've got. We have used some rather unpleasant, in many people's eyes, images and we've certainly used very unpleasant cloths and tatty bits and bobs around it. It's that somewhere, somebody - perhaps its the retreat organiser or secretary thereof - needs

to acquire, keep, iron, polish - I suppose it would need to be in each Centre - somebody actually needs to do that. I suppose it could be anybody; anybody could spend a small amount of time doing it, so that the retreat at the last minute isn't " Oh my God, where's a bit of rag to hang over the table when we get there," which, I haven't been around London for a time, but it did seem that way sometimes in the past. So there was always either with Chintamani's way or Kassapa's way, there was a vast selection of things, but there were these available, and kept, and preserved and respected, and they (*unclear*) for your retreats looking after the shrine.

**Manjuvajra:** It strikes me that what's important here is not really so much the organisational side but there's a growing consciousness of the importance of the shrine and the relevance of the symbols placed on it. You know, they're not just a load of junk thrown on the table. Depending what images you put on there you're going to affect the atmosphere of the shrine room. And we're realising now how important that is. And so we need some kind of standardisation there. You can't....

**Vangisa:** What is needed is awareness, I think we need to develop our own individual creativity, which we are doing. It doesn't reach a certain point and we say right, that's it, we're perfect now. we can go on doing it this way forever.

**Vessantara:** ..... you're knocking down things which we're nowhere near to reaching. I don't feel that we're at the moment anywhere near to being standardized in that way that. What we're talking about is having a greater freedom of choice and also having things better kept, better looked after.

**Vangisa:** But I think we're confusing two issues. We're confusing matters of ordinary organisation and just sheer inefficiency with the whole question of a standard design of shrines.

**Chintamani:** I read somewhere that.... I don't want to drag the whole conversation into a terrible sort of heavy discussion on art [*laughter*] but I read somewhere that the sort of tendency for everybody rushing around keen to express themselves, and just the fact that people are expressing themselves is a good thing, is a sign of decadence in art. One needs objective standards, and that yes, it's wonderful if people express themselves and I've seen it but it can produce the most revolting shrine. They've expressed themselves and that's fine.

**Vangisa:** I think it's once again a different issue altogether. Something quite different.....

**Aryamitra:** Can I say you're arguing about something that hasn't been proposed. Chintamani hasn't proposed that he designs shrines, and that you use only those shrines at all. That if we have a portable shrine, you can take them or not. You can either take them for convenience or you can make your own out of curtains or whatever might be available. I agree with you, Vangisa, I prefer to build my own shrine. I have used bits and pieces when you get to retreats and build your own shrine. That's not the question that's come up here. I think you're arguing about something that hasn't been proposed.

**Lokamitra:** I think we ought to ask Chintamani to prepare roughs of these three shrines. I would be really interested to see them, or maybe Chintamani in conjunction with Aloka.

**Siddhiratna:** Presumably there's a certain amount of stuff you need on the shrine such as seven bowls, an incense holder, candles and a rupa. There must be an inventory of things required for a shrine, and if that's got together, and a number of them, how the individual retreat organiser or retreat leader cares to arrange them is up to him.

**Manjuvajra:** That's an interesting topic. I mean how much right does any particular individual have to decide that about a shrine. Because obviously, if you're laying out a shrine in a certain state of mind you're going to lay out a shrine from that state of mind.

**S:** Are you speaking now of laying it out say for a retreat?

**Manjuvajra:** For a retreat.

**S:** It is the overall responsibility of the person leading the retreat. It is part of his general responsibility for the retreat as a whole. He considers who he has on the retreat, what sort of shrine would be suitable. Suppose, for instance, it's a beginners' retreat. They know very little about Buddhism. Well then he's quite careful to see that the Shakyamuni image is there. You don't have a Tantric image with eight arms and four heads. Other Order members may fully appreciate the significance but the retreat leader would understand that that isn't suitable for beginners etc. If he knows that quite

a few people on the retreat aren't all that fond of what they call rites and ceremonies, he'll keep it all very simple. If he knows on the other hand that there are people who appreciate richness of ceremony and so on, then he'll make the shrine room a bit more rich and so on. So the overall responsibility is definitely the retreat leader's.

**Vimalamitra:** Perhaps we could do with a few sheets on colour relationships of various Buddhas and forms and requirements for shrines. Perhaps something like that generally which would be helpful to everyone and would offer some more conformity with plenty of choice with it.

**Chintamani:** It seems to be one of the most woolly areas of the movement.

**Vessantara:** I don't think it's simply shrines. I feel in ceremonies too, I'm beginning to feel there's a greater need for a diversity of ceremonies.

**S:** Could you enlarge upon that?

**Vessantara:** Yes. I think from time to time we cook up ceremonies which we produce. Like in Brighton we've had a New Year ceremony where people burn things symbolic of their unskilful acts over the past year. And certainly there seems to be a lot of - speaking now for Brighton and also for myself - I feel I would like an increasing richness, I would like an increasing variety of possibilities, possible ingredients in Pujas and other ceremonies, which aren't there, but I don't feel very happy when I cook up something up for the occasion. I'd like to have something which was in a sense standard to the movement as a whole.....

**S:** If you feel a need for a particular ceremony, and you suspect that that is something that could be useful for the movement as a whole, then the best thing to do is to raise that with me. And make sure any suggestions that aren't as it were, the tradition, and see what can be done. For instance, something like this has already happened, because you may remember at the last Convention we did discuss the question of a simpler Puja for beginners. So this has now been devised and I've been trying it out a little bit. We did just recite the words this morning at 'Sukhavati'. It isn't just for recitation, there are other items incorporated, but it's meant as a very simple Puja which beginners can be introduced to before they are introduced to any other kind of Puja. Certainly before they are introduced to the Sevenfold Puja which is not suitable for beginners really at all. So this has already been done. We've had not very much



feedback yet about how people feel about this particular beginners' Puja, but whatever feedback there has been, has been quite positive. And in fact it has already been introduced in Finland, the Finnish version, which is where the original suggestion came from. (*unclear*) So this sort of thing can be done.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: I've occasionally felt that I can't chant, I want other material to chant.

**S:** Yes. When you say material, do you mean Pali or English material?

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: Pali, and maybe English too.

**S:** There's quite a lot. We have, I believe, started chanting or including in the Puja the English version of the Ten Precepts.

**Vessantara:** I also feel that there should be an English version of the Five Precepts. They are very positive, I think for beginners especially (*unclear*)

**S:** Well this is a positive suggestion. It does look like as though eventually quite a lot of things will go into English, at least as an alternative possibility.

**Siddhiratna:** Can I ask, Bhante, why at the end of the Mantras after *Om Shanthi, Shanthi, Shanthi* we have to chant the Padmasambhava chant. And just speaking personally, I always find that a bit jarring when I get to the end of the Puja or what I feel is the end - *Om Shanthi, Shanthi Shanthi* which goes very quiet; then to have to get back into something which is quite a lively chant like Padmasambhava. If it has to be done, could it not included somewhere else in the Puja as a whole.

**S:** I Don't know. I think, if I remember rightly, we did experiment a bit originally, but I think the general feeling then was that it came best in the end. Is that still people's feeling or not?

**Ananda:** I don't like it at the end.

**S:** You don't?

(*Various unclear comments*)

**Vajradaka:** I always preferred it before the concluding mantras and then all of a sudden it became standardized (*unclear*)

**S:** When was that?

**Vajradaka:** I can't remember exactly.

(*Various unclear comments*)

**Vajradaka:** No, I think after that.

\_\_\_\_\_: ..... after the seminars it was at the end.

**Siddhiratna:** I don't think it was standardized at the end - it just seemed to sort of fall that way.

**Ashvajit:** It seems to me to be more appropriate in a way to have the Padmasambhava chant at the beginning.....

**Siddhiratna:** Yeah.

**Ashvajit:** ....as an expression of one's devotional attitude.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: Of the Puja?

**Ashvajit:** At the beginning of the Puja.

**Ratnapani:** What I found quite effective - we're passing out suggestions here - is substituting the non-musical, as it were, Padmasambhava mantra in the ten with the musical ones, or whatever it's called, and then ending with the final two. That seems to be very coherent instead of having two lumps, whichever way you shift them round it still feels a bit funny putting it in the middle.

**S:** I think what originally happened - when I say original I mean originally before I left London - I think we had the Puja ending with the concluding mantras and the *Shanthi*. And then there was the meditation, and then when we came out of the meditation, there was the Padmasambhava Mantra. I think this is what happened.

**Siddhiratna:** The mantras were before the meditation?

**S:** Yes, the concluding mantras, that is the seven mantras ending with the *Om Shanthi*, came before a period of meditation and when we came out of the meditation, then there was the Padmasambhava chanting. So this is what happened.

**Siddhiratna:** Somebody else, I think it was Ratnapani, suggested that you have the meditation which ends and then perhaps that particular Padmasambhava chant comes in. Then you perform the Sevenfold Puja which enables you to end with *Om Shanthi, Shanthi, Shanthi*.

**S:** Yes. I see the point of ending with the *Shanthi*. But if you have a period of meditation after that, then the Padmasambhava Mantra can well come after the meditation. But if you don't have a period of meditation, then it may be felt that it's more appropriate to end with the *Shanthi*, because you can subside away as it were.

**Siddhiratna:** It seems to be habit now that we do have *Ti Ratana Vandana*, Precepts, meditation, then Puja. That seems to me the pretty standard format.

**Dharmapala:** I think I agree that it is the silent period after the mantras that is missing. (*unclear*) It does pull you out of one mood into another almost. But even if it's just five minutes that can make all the difference.

**S:** Right, yes.

**Ratnapani:** Do we at any Centres now have a puja before a meditation? (*unclear*)

**S:** Since we've on the topic, how do people feel about this? Since I've been away from London, I think there's a certain amount of diversity of practice, which isn't necessary a bad thing, but what do people feel about Puja first and then meditation, or meditation first and then Puja; that is when do you have both?

**Lokamitra:** For general classes it's quite difficult for people to sit through a decent period of meditation and a Puja together. So normally at Archway we have something like a break.

**S:** The beginners' Puja, by the way, the new one, is very short. Even including the slight ritual element, chanting of mantra and offering flowers. Even including that and reciting it quite slowly, it's altogether not more than fifteen to twenty minutes. Possibly just over twenty minutes.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: I would prefer the Puja after the meditation, because the word *Shanthi*. doesn't it mean, it denotes or connotes the ending, universal peace. If you recite the words *Om Shanthi, Om Shanthi* before the end of the Puja it's not relative in a sense, it's the form of an ending.

**S:** Well it always is the end of the Puja.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: *Om* is the universal sound. *Shanthi* I think is peace, universal peace. So you are ending on a correct note, of universal peace - that should be the ending. I think a Puja should be followed, should be the ending. Maybe after the Puja a short meditation. But I think the Puja with the beautiful ending of the slow chanting of mantras forms the natural ending.

**S:** I think, if I remember rightly, quite often I was taking myself, the Puja at Centre House after a lecture, we had a meditation after the Puja, but with the mantras right at the end. Do you remember that? Yes?

**Aryamitra:** You mean finish the Puja, then.....

**S:** Finish the Puja, that is to say the last verse of the Sevenfold Puja. Then we sat for what may have been five minutes, ten minutes; it may have been much longer. Then there were the mantras concluding with the *Shanthi*.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: I think that would be the best

**S:** This is what we used to do at Centre House I remember.

**Padmapani:** Did that include the Padmasambhava Mantra?

**S:** At that time, no it did not. At that time we had not started chanting it.

**Aryamitra:** But it could be one part, if you like, to do the Puja as usual and instead of doing *Shanthy* then doing Padmasambhava, do it the other way round. And then when the Padmasambhava dies away, do the *Om Shanthy*.

\_\_\_\_\_: (unclear)

**Aryamitra:** If you have it previous to the Padmasambhava.

**S:** Assuming that it's an Order occasion and people can sit the requisite length of time, how do people feel about this Puja and then meditation. I mean as opposed to meditation and then Puja?

\_\_\_\_\_: Much better.

**Devamitra:** Well I personally always find it very difficult to sit that long. I much prefer to be able to meditate first and then do the Puja afterwards. If I do a Puja first and then meditate, it seems like an infinite age of time!

**Aryamitra:** It seems that one doesn't have anything to work with if you meditate after the Puja. It's like if you sit first, you meditate, and then you decide you've got something. You are maybe in touch with yourself more for the Puja. Then when the Puja is finished, it seems much more of a rounding off, a refining of the energies through what might have come up through meditation. The other way round seems a bit odd. One does the Puja and you're just left.

**S:** But in a way the traditional attitude would be, you do the Puja first; the Puja is as it were, a more crude practice, it's external. You are actually making physical movement, you are actually speaking aloud. And having done that you go to the further, or higher level of meditation. This is the more sort of traditional approach.

**Lokamitra:** Sometimes what we do is after the Heart Sutra, we have a meditation, a forty minute meditation or whatever, and then do the Puja.

**Vangisa:** I quite like (unclear)

**S:** Meditation certainly comes in very appropriately after the Heart Sutra. There's no doubt about that. And then the Transference of Merits applies to everything that you've done that day, including the meditation which is very good.

\_\_\_\_\_: And also we used to do (unclear)

\_\_\_\_\_: It wouldn't be desirable to have a lengthy meditation after the Puja.

**S:** Well depending on the actual situation.

**Vangisa:** Five minutes (unclear)

**S:** So does that leave us simply with the question where do we put the Padmasambhava chanting?

**Kulananda:** Couldn't that go just before the seven concluding mantras after the Transference of Merit? I thought that's where it did go actually.

**S:** No, when we first introduced it, it came right at the end.

**Uttara:** The way I sometimes used to do it was I go through the mantras and the mantra I'm going to do, I start to chant it, do whatever I'm going to do one hundred and eight times, then go back on with the other ones, so that when you come to the appropriate mantra you're going to chant you.....

**S:** There is also of course the point that one doesn't have to do it all in the same way exactly every time. These are all important components: recitation of the Puja; making of offerings; chanting mantras to a musical tune; readings; meditation, and one has to organise these elements in a suitable manner according to the nature of the occasion. But probably it would be a good thing if there was something relatively standard for use on Order occasions.

**Vangisa:** There's one elaboration occurred to me. And that is at the point 'Going for Refuge', certainly at Order meetings - possibly in private practice if they ever have such a thing - there could be an opportunity for a more elaborate 'Going for Refuge', it could be completely silent. It could be completely silent meditation.

**S:** I'm not quite sure what....

**Vangisa:** Instead of just repeating the words, *Buddham Saranam Gacchami* and so on, you'd pause after it so that one could develop the state of mind of Going for Refuge and preferably as a form of meditation. Or even a meditative form of Going for Refuge...

**S:** I think you just have to be careful that people don't feel that there's a hiatus - the Puja has, sort of, stopped.

**Vangisa:** I wouldn't think it would be a good idea for ordinary general (*unclear*). I'm just making a suggestion at an Order level.

**Dharmapala:** Can I suggest that in this context where you Go for Refuge that you do a salutation (*unclear*) and make that more of an active Going for Refuge.

**Vangisa:** It is in the pure form of words, just the words apart its traditional value is adequate.

**Ashvajit:** There is some specific practice for that, one of the Four Foundation Yogas. If you want to develop that for yourself.

**Aryamitra:** Can I just come back to what you were saying, from what you said about doing the Puja before meditation. Is it looking at the Puja much more as preparation for meditation?

**S:** Yes. This is very much the traditional view. I'm not saying it's necessarily the right one, but this is the view.

**Aryamitra:** It seems a bit odd that we do it afterwards; after our meditation practice.

**S:** But originally as far as I recollect when I used to lead the Puja after the Centre House lectures, we had the Puja followed by a short meditation. But even if of course we had a beginners' meditation class it was primarily a meditation class and then of course we had a Puja for those who wanted to stay on. Many wouldn't want to stay on. That's how the Puja came to be after the meditation. Not so much after the meditation, but a Puja after a meditation class.

**Aryamitra:** So in the (*unclear*) meditation classes on Tuesday nights, it would be worthwhile at least trying having the Puja before.

**S:** One could certainly do that to see whether it wasn't a more suitable way of doing things. It's open to one to experiment a little in that way. That's the responsibility of the person conducting the class to discover the best way of doing it.

**Mangala:** I've often heard people say in fact that they can sit there after Pujas - these are relative beginners as well.

**S:** There is this point that if you've got a beginners' meditation class, and you don't want to, as it were, make the Puja a part of that class. Well you have a little break and then the Puja has to come afterwards, just because you are not making it part of the meditation class. So then, yes, the Puja comes after the meditation, but you can still conclude with a five minute meditation, even though you did have a meditation class earlier on in the evening.

**Mangala:** I remember going back to some of the early retreats at 'Keffolds' even, that at the evening Puja the shrine would be just glowing. It was just really calm and very.....

**S:** A lot people used to sit on for quite a while didn't they?

**Mangala:** It seemed to be like, it's all happened during the day. There had been a lot of energy and at last it's beautifully calm. There's just nothing to say or do, just sit there and experience it.

**S:** Yeah, right. There is that point that you mention, just to sit there and experience it, because very often, it's not a question of doing your meditation after doing the Puja. The Puja creates a certain atmosphere and you just want to go on sitting and enjoying that atmosphere. You are naturally absorbed in it, you may not be doing any particular practice at all. You just feel like going on sitting and sitting.

**Siddhiratna:** I think that's where the Padmasambhava chanting would upset that.

**S:** Yes that's true.

**Siddhiratna:** That's why it's often very difficult to sit there after the chanting because it's so lively.

**S:** Yes.

**Aryamitra:** There's probably calls for both. That's why I brought up the fact that I feel there's nothing to work with after a Puja. It's nice just to sit there, but you can't do a practice really as such.

**S:** In a sense you don't need to.

**Aryamitra:** Yes, but it's good to be able to. It's a bit like this. It's a bit like you say "after yoga, I can sit much better." But it's like one's already done maybe one and a half hours practice to refine one's energy of course you can, but I think we've got to learn to do it from different angles, from just sitting right from work or whatever, so that we don't have to do a Puja first; we don't have to do yoga first and we don't have to just go and sit and do a meditation practice.

**S:** Well it really comes back to much the same point as was made in connection with the shrine. You've got a certain number of elements, and it's your responsibility in your individual practice to combine them in the way that suits you and helps you best, and if you're responsible for leading or conducting a retreat or Puja or whatever one is to give very careful thought to what is best and be very aware of that, not simply continue some particular pattern that is laid down. You may decide to do that, in fact you may decide almost every time, but one should remain aware of the possibility of varying things, and changing things around a bit in accordance with the sort of people that you've got in the situation. Though not to express oneself, of course; in accordance with the needs of the situation and the people there, not to develop your own way of doing the Puja or anything like that.

**Vangisa:** It seems to me that we have had so much (*unclear*) at the end. We also (*unclear*) association with the end of the day. I know (*unclear*) specifically morning Puja. But is it necessary that the Puja is, as we do it even more, completely more appropriate to the evening than it is to say first thing in the morning?

**S:** My personal feeling - I'm only offering this as my personal feeling - is that Puja seems to come in more naturally at the end of the day; but not so late that you're

already feeling tired. And I think that simply for the morning, a rather vigorous not to say rousing chanting like the *Vandana*. something of that sort. More purely just chanting, a vigorous rhythmical chanting.

**Uttara:** In connection with the *Vandana*, sometimes I feel that the, well not this morning but, when you were chanting it what came afterwards, the Dharma, Salutation to the Dharma, Salutation to the Sangha. Sometimes I felt it would be good if it was, each section was started with the *Namo Tassa* again, *Namo Tassa* into (*unclear*)

**S:** That isn't traditional.

**Uttara:** Ah!

**S:** Again, no reason why one shouldn't do it; but it isn't traditional.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: I must say that at Archway we have a regular morning meditation followed by a Puja and although I had an initial resistance to the idea, I must say. But when I took it I did find it very good and I quite like the idea now in fact.

**S:** When you say Puja, you mean the Sevenfold Puja?

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: Yes.

**S:** Perhaps we should that because it is just over, in fact, time for lunch. But before we do adjourn for lunch any other points about ceremonies which people feel are important.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: Are we clarifying where the short Puja is going to be used?

**S:** Yes, it is meant as a beginners' Puja or a Puja for beginners and the idea is, as it were, that if you've got say some people have been coming along to a beginners' meditation class, they're relatively innocent of Puja. They may not know very much about Buddhism. They may, for instance, be more interested in meditation. But you'd like to introduce them to the Puja and you've talked to them in a general way about the significance of Puja and devotion in spiritual life, you've tried to lead them a bit in that direction. So you're giving them their first taste of Puja. So you want to make it as acceptable as possible and not to include any element that is going to put them right

off, either in the actual words they say or the things that they do. So this beginners' Puja is devised simply for this sort of situation. Which doesn't mean that regular people and Order members can't use it. Of course they can but it's particularly geared to the needs of beginners and the ideas expressed are clear cut traditional Buddhist ideas.

\_\_(Woman)\_\_: When is it going to be available?

**S:** Well, I've been trying it out a little bit, and just sort of testing people's responses. If the overall response is positive as it seems to be so far, then it can be printed in 'Shabda' with a little guide as to how it is to be used, when the chanting of the mantra comes in and when the offerings are made and when the reading - there's also a reading because very often the beginner thinks, "well there should be something that we can understand" - some teaching as it were. So there is a place for a short reading, selected by whoever is leading the Puja. Those who've heard it so far, are there any comments on it? Some have heard it only just chanted straight through, or recited straight through, without the ritual elements.

**Aryamitra:** The one we did this morning, was it complete?

**S:** That is complete except that there will be, when it's done as a Puja, there'll be a reading inserted, the chanting of the *Om Mani Padme Hum* and those beginners who wish will be free to come up and offer either a flower, or a candle or a stick of incense, or just one of these according to the discretion of the person leading it.

**Vajradaka:** It was taken very well when we did it at a retreat, a weekend retreat recently.

**S:** How did they get one?

**Vajradaka:** Because they were sent to Helsinki and I photocopied it in Helsinki and took it with me and gave them each a copy.

**S:** And it went down well there?

**Vajradaka:** Yes.

**S:** They do tend to be rather difficult people who reject things they don't quite like or understand.

**Vajradaka:** Yes.

**S:** Right.

**Vessantara:** I wondered about the word '*Bodhi*' used as opposed to '*Enlightenment*' (*unclear*)

**S:** Yes. I thought about that. Partly the rhythm and partly also it does seem a very basic Buddhist word even though it's Sanskrit and Pali, because it's directly connected with the Buddha. I did consult a few other Order members about this and the general feeling was that we might allow '*Bodhi*' to remain but I don't know if anyone else has any idea about it?

**Vangisa:** I think '*Enlightenment*' can be a very misleading word for beginners.

**S:** Yes.

**Vangisa:** It's completely (*unclear*) interpretation.

**S:** Yes.

**Abhaya:** I was wondering about the word "human" instead of "man".

**S:** Yes, I did think about that. But again rhythm, and I wasn't quite happy with "humans" and "human being" seemed to take it out of the realm of poetry, as it were. But I see your point, yes.

**Ashvajit:** I don't know why it had a strange feel, felt strange. "The Buddha was a man", is it. I felt a bit.....something reacting there.

**S:** Ah.

**Ashvajit:** I know he was a man.

**S:** Right, yes. But it is really an unaccustomed idea in a way, just to think that the Buddha was a man, a human being. He wasn't a god, or didn't pretend to be a prophet or anything of that sort.

**Ashvajit:** Quite important really.

**Uttara:** Could it not..... I was going to say an "individual" .

**S:** No. It hasn't got overtones, not in poetry. *[pause]* Any other points in connection with ceremonies?

**Vajradaka:** Yes. Something that was quite interesting when Buddhadasa came to Helsinki. The first Puja that he attended, he said: "Well, how do you do the chanting here? I'll just sit in and just listen." And so Bodhisri did the chanting of the Padmasambhava mantra. I think it was actually an Order meeting. And then he said: "Well, we're doing it another way in Brighton. I'll chant it to you and then we can decide here which way we are going to do it here." And so then he chanted the mantra in a different way and we all felt that we would try that way for a while, and so that way is now being used. And that seems to be quite a good and valid thing to do, that when someone goes to another Centre or another Chapter of the Order, not just to assume that they all do it the same, that your way is right.

**S:** Certain basic things should be the same.

**Vessantara:** I do notice differences for instance in the of the *Om Mani Padme Hum* chant between different Centres. It's quite different.

**S:** Otherwise, if it hasn't been discussed, the rule is do it the way that the Centre you are at is doing it. Don't say "Oh we do it differently at my Centre." Do it their way until there is an opportunity to discuss it, if there is any such difference.

**Ratnapani:** The only criterion is "the feel" isn't it? The individuals gathered together can discuss the feel. None of us really know what's right.

**S:** There's been quite an improvement in the chanting since last year's study retreats. On those retreats, it was at times quite bad in the beginning. It seems to have been pretty much sorted out since then.

**Vangisa:** There's still some very peculiar pronunciation in Pali. For instance saying "Dhammang" instead of "Dhamman."

**S:** That's true; that's mixing up Pali and Sanskrit.

**Vangisa:** Exactly, yes.

**S:** Actually., if it was Sanskrit, it wouldn't have the nasalisation at the end. It would be "Dharmang" not "Dhamman." You can either have "Dharmang" or you can have "Dhamman". *[Transcribers note: the word "Dharmang" is spelt here as it sounds (and is not a proper Pali word). It is written as "Dhamman"]*

**Vangisa:** It's a hybrid word. There one or two others like "Dakkhineyyo"

**S:** "Dakk~~h~~ineyyo" *[pronounces it properly]*

**Vangisa:** Everybody for years always said "An-jelly-karaniyo". *[Laughter]*

**S:** Anjalikaraniyo *[pronounces is properly]*.

**Vangisa:** "An-jelly-karaniyo".

**S:** Well its the natural tenancy of their minds towards the "angelic"! *[Laughter]*

**Chintamani:** I don't know if any of you knew Atyananda, the ex-Indian bhikkhu. He's pretty good on Pali pronunciation. Maybe we.....

**S:** I rather doubt that.

**Chintamani:** Really.

**S:** Yes, Bengalis have got their own way of pronouncing Sanskrit and Pali *[Laughter]*. They say 'Dhonor' instead of 'Dhammo' *[Laughter]* 'Dhonor' they say,

“Bhuddhor” and so on, yes. They turn all the “r”s into “or”s. Just one of the things they do. Instead of saying “Bhagavan” they say “Bhogovor”. *[Loud Laughter]* It might be correct, having come from Thailand but please don't take (*unclear*) especially tribal things, he's got his own tribal dialect, you see, mixed up with his Bengali anyway. No, be very very careful about that. If he was an Indian authority, the sort of person will never (*unclear*) a Brahmin from Benares. He's always perfect *[Laughter]* whatever his doctrine may be like, regardless of his (*unclear*).

**Vangisa:** I think we should aim for a kind of literate Anglicised version.

**S:** We've already got it. We've already got it.

**Vangisa:** I mean read what it actually says there and also make sure it's printed right. And listen to what people around you were saying when you first came along.

**S:** Yes, sometimes a few people do actually mispronounce in a quite definite way. but not very many.

**[End of Side One Side Two]**

**Vangisa:** But it spreads.

**S:** I'm afraid it does.

**Manjuvajra:** When I came and I did the Puja yesterday, Friday night at Archway, I was stunned by the way that you did it. If that's the general way the Puja's done, and the chanting is done in London.

**Vangisa:** (*unclear*)

**Siddhiratna:** Was it good or bad?

**Manjuvajra:** Particularly the *Ti Ratana Vandana* and the Five Precepts. I do it completely differently.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Ananda:** Having a puja tape might be an idea, which was done a long time ago. We had it available.

**S:** Is it by me?

**Ananda:** Yes, and it's got all these things on it.

**Nagabodhi:** I use it but I must say.....

**S:** Everybody should check up then.

**Nagabodhi:**..... I found your chanting - it might have been technically correct in some ways but I did find it a bit idiosyncratic and maybe that (*unclear*) *[Laughter]*.

**Vangisa:** Mine is definitely idiosyncratic!*[Laughter]* I can't do anything about it.

**Ashvajit:** Can I make one small point that we raised at last year's Convention in which we mentioned a festival to commemorate Chih-I, either Chih-I or Tsong-kha-pa as representatives of the path of regular steps.

**S:** Yes.

**Lokamitra:** It wasn't suggested that we celebrate that, but if we do celebrate a Chinese festival then Chih-I .....

**S:** A Chinese Master.

**Lokamitra:** ..... would be appropriate one.

**S:** I think it arose in the context of Bodhidharma's festival. Someone suggested earlier on, it was felt that he was not very representative and not really historical anyway. But that could be however looked into certainly.

Any further points?

**Manjuvajra:** How about births, deaths and marriages? There was mention of it on the last Convention.



**S:** Yes.

**Manjuvajra:** But I don't know if anything's been done.

**S:** When you say 'done', do you mean ceremonies performed or compiled?

**Manjuvajra:** I understood that ceremonies were going to be compiled.

**S:** Yes, this is quite true. We did. I think that we did decide within the next year - that is from the last Convention. I have this in mind myself - with Devamitra. I must say though - thinking aloud in this respect - I haven't been at all happy with the old so-called 'marriage ceremony'. We have used it, the Indian ceremony that I introduced myself. I've been feeling less and less happy with it because it seems less and less appropriate to our actual... well to actually what happens, when it does happen which isn't very often. Anybody else got any feelings or thoughts about this while we're on ceremonies?

**Ashvajit:** I don't think actually we should encourage marriage.

**S:** Well then now you're cutting the ground from under the feet of this particular ceremony.

**Ashvajit:** Well, I suppose sometimes one might be manoeuvred into a situation where you just had to.

**Chintamani:** As brief, simple and as truthful as possible.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: I think marriage should form a basis, if you're going to get married, and it should be on some form of teaching.

**S:** But the traditional Buddhist view common in the East, is that there is no such thing, strictly speaking, as a Buddhist wedding ceremony. Marriages are, as it were, a purely secular and social matter. But as in the case of all other relationships just like any secular and social activity you may like to orient that in a spiritual direction ultimately and ask a blessing upon it from the representatives of your tradition, your teachers, your Dharma brothers and sisters, that sort of thing.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: Of course the practices within the marriage will have to be sorted out according to the teachings of the Dharma.

**S:** This takes us somewhat beyond ceremony. It's just the ceremony side that we're concerned with at the moment. We've had, by the way, one or two name giving ceremonies, to come to another, well not exactly another end but [*Laughter*] (*unclear*) They've been kept quite short and simple. It's becoming, in one or two cases, quite delightfully simple. Someone just turns up with a baby - Sona and Srimala just did that - they just turned up with their latest baby [*Laughter*] and I just recited a few verses, and saw the little creature for the first time and gave the name, and that was that. And that seemed a very nice way of doing it. Quite short and simple and all that was needed.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: In Buddhist countries they do have a sort of a laid down understanding as regards marriage.

**S:** They do. I think that we'll have to leave that for the moment because now we are on the ceremony. But has anyone any thoughts about the Buddhist ceremony for marriage, any further comment on what I said. Does anybody else feel that, that was no longer appropriate or do you feel that it is?

**Dhammadinna:** I've only seen one and it seemed quite long and not terribly English.

**S:** Well it is the Indian ceremony which we are doing.

**Dhammadinna:** Not really that appropriate.

**Vangisa:** It's a really ethnic thing.

**S:** Well ceremonies usually are, quite rightly so. Therefore we need, in a way, more English ceremonies for this type of thing anyway.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes.

**Marichi:** The one I saw seemed that it would be very strange for those who weren't Buddhists and quite difficult for them to join in (*unclear*).

**S:** Well that would apply to any Buddhist ceremony, wouldn't it.

**Marichi:** Yes, but the spirit of it should be able to come through in a way that was....

**S:** I think it does, because, for instance, I did perform such a ceremony, the full length Indian one minus the specifically Buddhist bits, in New Zealand for a couple who weren't Buddhists; but they wanted a ceremony. It was a quite, sort of, in a way, pathetic situation, so I stretched a point and just performed an Indian ceremony for them. Their overall attitude was very, very good. Their mental attitude to the whole thing was very good and positive and spiritual, I felt. And they had a lot of their friends who normally weren't connected with Buddhism or anything Indian in particular, except a bit of yoga; and certainly they all appreciated it very, very much.

**Marichi:** Was it largely in Pali and Sanskrit or was it largely in English?

**S:** Oh yes, all in Pali, but they seemed to appreciate it very much indeed and be quite touched by it.

**Vangisa:** The thing about any kind of marriage ceremony, whether it's done in English or in an Indian Language, is that it just assumes a certain inevitability - marriage - and this is a normal and perfectly natural and almost inevitable thing to do. It is in the best interests of yourself, society, and all the rest and I think one would need to get away from that in order to (*unclear*) at all.

**S:** Indeed.

**Vangisa:** Have you got any other (*unclear*)?

**S:** In other words what you are really asking is is it ever really a voluntary choice in the full sense of the term?

**Vangisa:** Exactly, yes.

**Chintamani:** It seems to me, that if you wanted to get a marriage ceremony together, the thing to do is to really define the function of marriage and just write a ceremony outlining that in clear, simple terms.

**Lokamitra:** Well everybody knows exactly what's going on anyway! [*Laughter*]

**S:** It can be a bit difficult because your honest feeling about it might be that it was a great mistake and you have just to say frankly to the people: "Look, this is a mistake." [*Laughter*] Whatever the ceremony, whatever the situation, the two must fit. But it must be very clear what, in fact, you are blessing.

**Dharmapala:** I think, maybe, we need to stop calling it a marriage ceremony and just call it a blessing.

**S:** Of what? [*Laughter*]

**Dharmapala:** If a couple come together and say we're going to live together and we want to .....

**S:** Yes, but the question arises what kind of relationship are you blessing? Any two people can set up house together and share a room. So what kind of relationship? This is what one has got really to be frank and clear about. What is one actually being asked to bless?

**Sagaramati:** A sexual relationship.

**S:** So then if that is so, then the question arises, well in what sense is one blessing that?

**Sagaramati:** Well, I don't think you can.

**S:** Well, there you are! [*Laughter*]

**Manjuvajra:** I think you can to a certain extent. You can say that this is a certain kind of hunger that needs satisfaction [*Laughter*]. (*unclear*) [*Loud Laughter*] If you go round, as it were, eating here, there and everywhere, then you're going to lead yourself into sort of vast confusions and difficulties and all sorts of problems. But if you decide to eat from the same plate, as it were, then everybody else has to not eat from there, [*Laughter*] and as such I think marriage is a good thing.

**S:** What you have said is quite clear and logical and it brings us right into another topic that we'll be talking about and that is vows. In other words, you take it as a kind of vow: this is what you are really saying. Just as for instance in the case of food: all right you decide you need to eat; you like eating, but you limit it in certain ways. For instance, you don't take animal food. You're a vegetarian or you might, say, in certain circumstances fast for a week or a day. Or you might limit yourself in other directions so as to bring your appetite ultimately under control. So that is a kind of vow. So in other words, you are defining marriage as a sort of vow, and any blessing that is given to it is given to it as a particular kind of vow. That seems quite useful.

**Vangisa:** There's one difference between sex and eating. That is that if we don't eat, we die. The same can't be said literally for sex.

**Lokamitra:** It can! If you don't indulge then the human race will die out!

**Vangisa:** Well, yes, but that's a quite a different matter altogether. We're talking on the individual basis. Whether you or I make these choices is a matter of no importance to the survival of the race. But it does matter that we eat something, from time to time anyway.

**Manjuvajra:** Well sex is more altruistic than eating. You're not concerned with your own survival. You're concerned with the survival of the race!

**Nagabodhi:** Bloooahh! [*Very Loud Laughter!*]

**S:** Perhaps we'll end on that note!! [*Laughter*]

## **BREAK**

## **Next Session**

**S:** The Librarian's Report.

**Ananda:**       *The Librarian's Report*

*There's two phases of the work on the library that's going on at the moment. Phase one has been*

*completed: that is the classification of all the books. That stage has now just very recently been finished. And I've produced a little booklet, a leaflet, describing the system that's being used from the library. And if anyone is interested, particularly librarians of different Centres, then a copy of this will be available for anybody who wants to know about it. The intention being that we could extend the system to be used in all FWBO libraries. The second stage we're now beginning which is the cataloguing, and we've just very recently got one of our Mitras, Frances Gritton, who has undertaken the complete job of cataloguing the entire library and producing card index files for all the books. That's quite a long job, so he'll be occupied with that for several months. That's really all there is to say about the work that's been done on it.*

**S:** Anything about accessions?

**Ananda:** Accessions? What does that mean?

**S:** Books added to the library.

**Ananda:** Oh Additions!

**S:** Yes. [*Laughter*] That's a term that librarians use!

**Ananda:** Ah, I'm obviously not a librarian. Additions. We do need some very important basic volumes which we haven't got.

**S:** I was asking first whether during the period under review, there's been any increase in the total number of volumes?

**Ananda:** Not since the last Convention.

**Aryamitra:** Well there have. Books do arrive.

**S:** Have they?

**Ananda:** Not to my knowledge.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*).

**Ananda:** Well just the odd one, yes. [*Laughter*]

**Subhuti:** "Famous Fishes of the World"! [*Laughter*]

(*Various Quiet and Unclear Comments*)

**Nagabodhi:** Somebody actually.....

**Ananda:** Can I just finish reporting first. There are some basic books that we really do need which I feel.... - well, there's two things we can do. Either Order members can donate the cost of them or give the actual books if they want, if they have them. Or we can arrange some finance to cover the buying of books from the Order. That's something we can discuss maybe afterwards. But things like '*Bodhicaryavatara*' we haven't got, '*The Door of Liberation*' we haven't got. A certain recent publication, you might have heard of called '*The Thousand Petalled Lotus*' we haven't got, and a dictionary, things like that. Very, very essential basic things. If anybody wants to give any of those they'll be very much appreciated.

As far as I know at the moment there's no funds from the Order have been earmarked for library use.

That's really all I have to say. Work is going ahead pretty steadily.

**Marichi:** Is this cataloguing a new process or a continuation of an old process. Madeleine has been .....

**Ananda:** Ah. It's a continuation of that, a refinement. We've been refining all the time. It's now in its sort of finalized stage.

**Nagabodhi:** Somebody did donate the '*Bodhicaryavatara*' to the library. Druvah did; but it never actually got to the library.

**Ananda:** I didn't even know about that.

**Nagabodhi:** If anyone has still got it, I think they should produce it pretty soon.

**Siddhiratna:** Druvah gave that to me to be given to the library. Its the Marion Matics.

**S:** Yes.

**Siddhiratna:** I'm afraid that ..... I'm sure I gave it to somebody but I can't remember who.

**Ananda:** You didn't give it to me, mate.

**Siddhiratna:** I gave it to you?

**Ananda:** No, you didn't.

**S:** You mean someone at '*Aryatara*'.

**Siddhiratna:** I'm afraid I can't remember now at all.

**S:** I've a vague idea I saw one there last time I was there.

\_\_\_\_\_: It might have been (*unclear*).

**S:** No, I'm sure.

**Mangala:** Actually in the shop? There's a copy at '*Sukhavati*' which is in a room which I took when..... It was there when I arrived. And I used to share the room with Ashvajit and he left and it's still there, and I see that it's still there so presumably it doesn't belong to anybody. So even if it isn't the one, I think it could well be the library copy, it's been there for so long.....

**Ashvajit:** That was donated by Lance Wills.

**Mangala:** Was it? [*Laughter*]

**Ashvajit:** For 'Sukhavati' library.

**Ananda:** That's really all I have to report actually apart from finance for books which is a problem. Several branches and secretaries of Centres have asked me if they can have the (*unclear*) book for their own libraries. I've said I'll leave that until the Convention and sort this out.

**Lokamitra:** There's several points from the last Convention. One is you were going to make a complete record of rupas, thangkas, and ritual objects in the Order's possession.

**Ananda:** Yes, we have that.

**Lokamitra:** You have already done that.

**Ananda:** Yes.

**Lokamitra:** And deposited with the Registrar?

**Ananda:** Yes.

**Lokamitra:** And then the thangkas. Maybe you could just report what's going on there.

**S:** Because this is all (*unclear*) report (*unclear*).

**Ananda:** Well the only thing that I remember that I said that we've got to do is produce a cabinet, a display cabinet for the old thangka of Tsong-kha-pa which has now been done. That's really all I have to say on the thangkas apart from the investigation of methods to preserve them which I think I reported on that at some stage. Maybe I'll say it briefly for the benefit of everybody else. I went to the British Museum and saw the head of the Oriental Antiquities Department, and they are still having the same problem that they don't have any solution to it themselves. What they do is to store them in the dark and nobody sees them; nobody touches them; nobody is allowed to see them unless they've got a special warrant. It's quite useless and I don't think there's any point in us (*unclear*)

**S:** This is one of the reasons why we have the curtains before them.

**Ananda:** There are still the influences on things like that. There's humidity and ultraviolet light, the movement of air, and things like that.

**Lokamitra:** You were going to report on the best way of preserving this thangka. Have you considered that?

**Ananda:** Of displaying them?

**Lokamitra:** Of preserving and displaying them.

**Lokamitra:** Yes, will they display as I've mentioned. There's no solution as far as I know yet. I'll be continuing to be in touch with the different.....

**S:** Or really, no solution apart from simply storing them.

**Ananda:** Right. If you display them then they are going to eventually deteriorate over time. We've built a display cabinet for the old one which is the most fragile one. The others I think are much less fragile.

**S:** Anything else as regards archives or collection of material (*unclear*)

**Ananda:** Not that I can think of.

**Subhuti:** What about slides?

**Ananda:** We are building up a collection of slides. There now exist about 150 slides in the archive representing all our retreats and activities from 1968 or 1969. Plus we have several books of cuttings.

**Mangala:** We haven't really decided what's the best thing to do with the thangkas, have we? Is it best to store and keep them in the dark or to leave them on display and have them deteriorate?

**Chintamani:** I'm sure there must be some method...

**Ananda:** Well as I said they're investigating it and I'm in touch with them. And as soon as they come up with an answer, then I'll try ....

**S:** In some ways it's not even good to keep them rolled because you can't really roll them perfectly. You can't help creasing them because they're not absolutely symmetrical.

**Ananda:** Yes.

**Marichi:** Perhaps, if they could be stored like the Tsong-kha-pa one in a glass case with a cover. And then are seen from.....

**S:** The two smaller ones, by the way, are contemporary ones and aren't really that particularly good. I think it's really only the Tsong-kha-pa one that we need to bother about. As regards the other two we ourselves within the movement can produce better ones.

**Aryamitra:** Maybe we should just store them in the dark for the time being because displaying them with a cover over the top is a bit meaningless, isn't it. What you display is a piece of cloth

**S:** That's true.

**Aryamitra:** I feel we should store them in the dark somewhere for the time being.

\_\_\_\_\_: Well it's much easier to bring them out on ceremonial occasions.

**S:** Don't forget that rolling them and unrolling them is one of the worst things you can do.

**Manjuvajra:** Not rolling them, storing them flat. Only it's much easier just to pull back the curtain when somebody says have you got the.... .....behind glass.

\_\_\_\_\_: Why?

**Manjuvajra:** Because if it's on the wall in a frame with a curtain across it you just pull back the curtain (*unclear*)

**Aryamitra:** I see, under the glass.

**S:** I think they do have this in museums don't you?

**Ananda:** At the moment we don't have any proper place to store them even in the dark. So I think they are as safe as they are anywhere now as they would be anywhere until such time as we get a place in which they can be properly kept.

**Ashvajit:** Have we not got someone present or in the movement who would be capable of making a suitable frame with glass for the thangka in question?

**Ananda:** I've made one for the Tsong-kha-pa.

**Padmaraja:** The ones that are behind glass are very beautifully mounted, aren't they?

**S:** They're just framed.

**Padmaraja:** Framed.

**S:** And we've put them away from the light, they are shielded from light.

**Aryamitra:** It seems then that, like Manjuvajra said, they are still in frames with glass, and the curtain is on the outside of the glass. (**S:** Right) The way I visualised it was having that piece of silk down in front of it and behind glass and I thought that was a bit pointless. But if we have it open and behind glass with a really heavy curtain in front of it.

**S:** That would be quite good. Well that is probably the best one can do.

**Ananda:** I'm doing that with the older one. but is it considered necessary to do that with all of them because that would be quite expensive.

**S:** I would say not. I would say the other two aren't (*unclear*)

**Ananda:** It costs about between eight and ten pounds to make a frame for it.

**S:** But the Tsong-kha-pa one is certainly quite (*unclear*)

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: Is everything now insured?

**Ananda:** Yes. Well except at 'Aryatara'. [pause]

**Mangala:** Did you have someone come and value everything?

**Ananda:** Yes we have. We originally evaluate the (*unclear*)

**S:** Did you say that you had them insured on your own valuation?

**Ananda:** Yes.

**S:** Is that wise?

**Uttara:** Insured them in Mangala's name(*unclear*) [Laughter] .

**S:** Insurance companies don't usually do that because we have insured everything which is at 'Albermarle', and the insurance people insisted that they were professionally valued and we got certificates for them all and then they were insured.

**Subhuti:** They will accept your own valuation but it's a very dangerous thing to do because they are bound to dispute it if there is any claim made. It must be professionally assessed.

**Lokamitra:** 'Aryatara' in fact were going to do this very soon after they had them insured.

**S:** We got it done quite easily. You have to pay a fee which isn't all that much. But we had most of them done at 'Sotherbys' which is the only place apparently able to value thangkas. Images can be valued in several places but only 'Sotherbys' can value thangkas.

\_\_\_\_\_: They charge about one per cent of the .....

**S:** I don't know what the percentage was but it was a quite reasonable ..... I don't remember. Vajrakumara got it done. I think it was maybe in the region of thirty pounds of the total value of stuff about £5000.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Well maybe that's because 'Sotherbys' .....

**Ananda:** What, get 'Sotherbys' to value the thangkas?

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes.

**S:** Vajrakumara will give you all the information that he has gathered, because he did all that.

**Aryamitra:** There's a little department there. I think a lot of trouble before was because we wouldn't spend a penny.

**Ananda:** Well we still don't have money to .....

**Sagaramati:** It's so.....

**S:** This is all a separate item. Anyway things should be valued.

Any other point with regard to archives and library?

**Nagabodhi:** At the last Convention we discussed the possibility of moving the library to 'Sukhavati'. It might be worth settling now whether or not we are going to do that. I have a very strong proposal to make. Padmaraja and I will be living at 'Aryatara', and Padmaraja particularly might like to refer to the library for 'Mitrata'. It seems, I hear, that plans for the library at 'Sukhavati' are for a more general or more specialized.....

**S:** Or rather a collection of books quite closely orientated to the needs of the residential community there, not just a miscellaneous collection of books on Buddhism.

**Nagabodhi:** In which case it seems best to keep the present library at 'Aryatara'.

**S:** This is my reasoning.

**Vajradaka:** Weren't there going to be two libraries at 'Sukhavati'?

(Unclear)

**Aryamitra:** You mean like two bathrooms?

**S:** There's going to be a reading room.

**Subhuti:** Two rooms.

\_\_\_\_\_: Two Rooms.

**Ratnapani:** So 'Sukhavati' will start from scratch will they? Building up the library?

**S:** Yes.

(Unclear) [Laughter]

**S:** .....Encyclopaedia Britannica, the standard works of reference, the Classics plus the most important Buddhist texts in translation. Very, very little actually on Buddhism.

**Lokamitra:** What about Buddhist periodicals? You have expressed a desire that we.....

**S:** Well, Buddhist periodicals are endless. They are coming in at 'Aryatara'; they are being boxed in and being filed and put away until such time as they may be needed. I think that's all we can do at the moment. When 'Sukhavati' is functioning we will probably consider even subscribing to select Buddhist periodicals. But we will consider that when the time comes for 'Sukhavati'.

\_\_\_\_\_: (Unclear)

**S:** Right.

**Subhuti:** Ananda raised a matter which then didn't get any discussion which was about the duplicate copies.

**Ananda:** Yes. Several people have mentioned that they have duplicate copies of books for their own use.

**S:** Well, the short answer is no. I mean I have those duplicate copies in mind for other plans.

**Mangala:** Some of them are in triplicate!

**S:** Yes, I've noticed that too. [Laughter] One also has to take into account the scarcity of the book and whether Centres could not buy it in any case. If there is a scarce book or it is out of print and very useful then there is a case for distributing an extra copy.

**Ananda:** Also, it's something I haven't mentioned and that is I feel that if we are intending to build up the library, and I take it that we are in the long term, it is very weak in certain aspects (unclear) Western literature and I feel that's an important and relevant part of classical literature. And maybe Order members would like to suggest what books they would like to see in the library, and I could scout around second hand shops for second hand copies of classical literature.

**Mangala:** Do you think, though, with classic works of literature being so readily available in public libraries and book shops, that it really is necessary to be spending the money on those sorts of things. Perhaps we would be more required to buy relatively rare books on Buddhism which aren't so widely available.

**Ananda:** Yes, well I'm sure that.....

**Mangala:** I mean everybody's got their shelves full of classical literature haven't they? [Laughter] At least they could have quite easily!

**Ananda:** I agree that we should concentrate on the more rare .....

**S:** Have we any idea as to the actual use of the library? To what extent it is used by Order members and others?

**Ananda:** It's used very little at the moment. It's mainly on retreats when people come down..



**S:** Perhaps more by you and Padmaraja than anybody else.

\_\_\_\_\_: *(Unclear)*

**Aryamitra:** In a way, it's just not used at all. When someone does a lecture who happens to be the community then it might be used but otherwise I mean I haven't read a book .....

**S:** In other words by putting it in a semi monastic Centre, nobody would really notice.

**Ratnapani:** No, it would only be noticed when we had nothing to browse through on retreats, to hide away from reality!

**Ananda:** I think that's a bit of an exaggeration.

\_\_\_\_\_: I don't think so.

**Aryamitra:** Maybe we should be *(unclear)*

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)*

**Aryamitra:** Just name one. That's what I said. Just one person who's doing the lectures who lives there in the community might use it, but otherwise it's not used by the Order.

**Marichi:** Is there anybody there who uses it?

**Vessantara:** I've used it.

**Nagabodhi:** I've certainly used it but.....

**Aryamitra:** When you say used it.....

**Nagabodhi:** I've read books from it but I haven't spent days studying. I'd like to but I don't really foresee being able to. I think in some ways a semi-monastic community would be the best place.

**S:** I thought, as I said, in terms of leaving it at 'Aryatara', but in view of what you say maybe that after some time maybe 'Sukhavati' may be .....

**Vimalamitra:** I'm a bit confused actually. Is 'Sukhavati' just going to be 'Sukhavati' library or is this the library that's being carted around from 'Aryatara' to the country retreat semi monastic place - is that the Order library or is it.....?

**S:** At 'Sukhavati' the idea is, we'll have 'Sukhavati' library which is intended to meet the needs of the resident members of the community.

**Vimalamitra:** It's not going to be an open - Its not going to be the FWBO. It's not going to be....

**S:** Well 'Sukhavati' will be part and parcel of the FWBO. It is in fact a Centre in its own right. But the intention is not that it should be of general access, but certainly geared to the needs of the people living and studying there and coming to stay there for different periods of weeks, mainly for the purposes of study or training and so on. It will be likely oriented to that purpose. And the collection which is at 'Aryatara', the nucleus of that consists of books which I brought with me from India, plus some books given by Mr.Nugent(?) plus books given by other Order members and Friends from time to time. That is the Order library and that is intended mainly for the use of Order members. Though often others also use it who are visiting 'Aryatara', or on retreats there, or living there.

**Nagabodhi:** I think we seem to have very few people who will have the time or the inclination to do a lot of study, serious study. Quite a few people who did while on retreats. It may be that in a few years there are people who are who actually want to get into study in a serious way. But at the moment, almost wherever it is, I feel it's going to be used as little or as much as it is now.

**Vessantara:** Well in a way it's a vicious circle isn't it? Because at the moment the library's falling further and further behind in terms of keeping up to date with new and important publications which makes it less and less useful as a tool for studying with.

**S:** Since giving all those books to the Order library, I've collected another small library of books on Buddhism which contain of course much newer publications and recent translations and so on.

**Ananda:** So in a sense we feel it's incumbent upon us to decide whether we're going to just let it continue as it is or try and build it up into a representative collection.

**S:** Well for various reasons, I don't think really we can take any steps about it at this moment - financial reasons. Books are a very, very expensive. I've been buying what I can but some books sometimes they're £13, £12, £17 for a small volume which had an important translation. This is the sort of price one pays for them.

**Vangisa:** The conditions at 'Aryatara' anyway are not all that conducive to real study, are they? If somebody did want to go into study in a very comprehensive way, I don't think 'Aryatara' would necessary be the ideal place to do it.

**Ananda:** There's absolutely no reason why they shouldn't.

*(Unclear)*

**Aryamitra:** The library's empty every single day except two nights and a week when there's a class there, a discussion rather. Otherwise it's completely empty.

**Vangisa:** What I mean is the atmosphere is not a studious one.

**Ananda:** When were you there last?

**Nagabodhi:** Because there's nobody studying! *[Laughter]*

**Vangisa:** *(unclear)* the ideal place for the Order Library would be in an Order House which was equipped in other ways for study as well and I don't really think 'Aryatara' is.

**Ananda:** The only feeling on that is that there aren't the people there who have the time for study at the moment. The conditions are perfect if there were the people.

**Marichi:** Anyone wanted to do any extended study would have to stay at 'Aryatara' presumably, or somewhere very close by.....

**Ananda:** It's ideal.

**Aryamitra:** If you're saying that you can't study unless you're got another five people around you who've got their heads into books then that's another matter altogether.

**Vangisa:** *(unclear)*

**Chintamani:** Sorry. If I want to study I like to study in my room. The little I've done I like to go into my room, close the door, sit down and do it. And in 'Aryatara' you can't take the books out of the library. So people might come through that room. It's not an end room and it takes quite a while to sink into your room and get into the right attitude for study. We can't do that.

**Nagabodhi:** Well we could decide here and now that people at 'Aryatara' could take the books out of their room or move the library into your room. *[Laughter]* That is a rule because you can't be sure of people bringing them back. I certainly don't think books should leave the house but perhaps the rule could be loosened.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes.

**Aryamitra:** It is in fact. If you are studying it's loosened. You just see the librarian. And he says OK.

**Ananda:** As long as you don't take it out the house.

**Uttara:** I think we're spending too much time and getting nowhere.

**Ananda:** I think once the Order evolves, if you like, in terms of a period, a phase in which people are really studying and got the time and facilities then wherever the library is it will be used. At the moment I think wherever it is it won't be used.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes.

**Ananda:** I imagine in two or three years' time people will be into a phase of more reflection and study.

**S:** Any other points in connection with archives or libraries. *[pause]*

All right let's move on then. There are only two more Order officers. The seminar recorder, that's Devamitra. Anything to report?

**Devamitra:** I don't have very much I want to say since the report that I put into 'Shabda' last November, except that since that time the 'Dhyana for Beginners' seminar has been completed and work is progressing on the Suzuki seminar and the 'Door of Liberation' Seminar. I personally started transcribing the 'Hui Neng' seminar some time ago and haven't been able to continue with that since the last Convention in fact, so there still remains three days on that. Apart from that there's last summer's 'Udana' seminar needs to be transcribed; the 'Ittivuttaka' needs a transcriber and the recent seminar you've given down in London on the 'Sutta Nipata'. So there is quite a volume of material still to be dealt with. I don't have time to get into it now. I don't have any more to say really.

**Nagabodhi:** Except that you are still the Co-ordinator of Seminars.

**Devamitra:** Yes.

**S:** Well there will be the appointment of (*unclear*) other officers later on. (*Unclear*)

**Manjuvajra:** What form will these come out in?

**S:** Well, let's give everybody - in case this is new to some people - let's give everybody a sort of picture of what happens. What happens is that first of all obviously we have a seminar. It may be a ten day seminar, it may be just for a few hours in the evening. That's tape recorded. The next stage is that it has to be transcribed. Transcription means that somebody listens to the tape and they make a completely faithful record, preferably typing it themselves. They don't do any editing at all at this stage. This is not required. What is required is a completely faithful and complete transcript. Even putting in indications of people laughing and so on so that we get a completely vivid picture and who asks what questions.

In this connection, by the way, let me make this point for future reference. Some transcribers have reported complete inaudibility on the part of some people participating in seminar discussion. So this is something that we must really attend to in the future when we have discussions in the course of seminars. People should really speak up. I won't mention any names but a few people are particular offenders. The

wretched transcriber can't hear what they have to say and has to put a line of dots which is a pity. And that bit is either left out or we have to sort of somehow edit it so that you don't notice the (*unclear!!*) So this is stage two, that is to say the making of a complete transcript.

The next stage is that somebody edits that transcript, in other words prepares it for publication. I'm now editing the 'Bodhicaryavatara' transcript. At present, I think only myself can do this sort of thing really, though some shorter items have been edited by Padmaraja and his assistants. I hope to do the 'Dhyana for Beginners' seminar too, to edit the transcript. I think after that, having provided two models, I'll have to leave it all to other people. These perhaps are the two most difficult anyway and certainly perhaps the most important. So after that, after I have edited, somebody types it into the final copy and then of course it goes to Nagabodhi who edits it for the press. It then goes to the printer, that is our printer, who puts it into our press and reproduces it as a publication, a book.

This is how we hope to process all these seminars, whether ten day seminars or even longer seminars, or whether it's just a discussion of a particular text lasting just two or three hours. This is the whole system as it were.

**[End of Tape Two    Tape Three]**

**S:** So obviously we need, in the first instance, people simply doing the transcribing. Almost anybody can transcribe - anyone who is mindful, and careful about detail. And preferably who can also type. Some people can type the transcript straight onto the typewriter. Others have to do it by longhand and then either type it up themselves or give it to somebody else to type.

But there's a lot of work of this sort in a transcript. And then I shall edit as much as I can and I hope others will be able to take up that work too. And in this way have a succession of publications coming from our own press based on this sort of material. The editing work that is required is quite demanding in a way. You have to be quite ruthless sometimes editing material. And I try in particular to keep the flavour of the spoken word. The spoken word has got quite a different sort of flavour, quite a different sort of feeling from the original - it's much more direct, it's much more immediate in impact. And also it has the advantage of being up to date relatively.

So if we can keep up the flow of such publications - they're of great importance for the Movement as a whole. Some may be full-size thick volumes; others may be just very short booklets or pamphlets - just reproducing a comparatively short discussion; either a particular point or a particular very short text, like the Suttas of the Sutta Nipata that we've been discussing just very recently. So this will be an extremely important part of our total activity in putting across the Dharma. Anybody want to ask anything about all this? Because it is very important and it is something in which quite a lot of people can participate; there's quite a lot of work to be done.

**Ashvajit:** - Will they come out with some sort of common format or general appearance?

**S:** I don't know whether this has yet been settled but that's Nagabodhi's department. It hasn't been settled?

**Nagabodhi:** I suspect not actually.

**Aryamitra:** I think they're going to sell very well - once they are - I think it is the sort of thing people will want to buy (*unclear*).

**Sagaramati:** Will the final the editions include the er... you said the '*Dhyana For Beginners*' - will it include the '*Dhyana For Beginners*' text?

**S:** Not the full text. What I have considered in the case of '*Dhyana For Beginners*' is to - I don't know whether it's still in copyright or not - I rather suspect it might have run out of copyright, or even if hasn't arrangements could be made - we could very well ourselves bring out our own edition of that, and I could quite easily edit it a little - it needs that, because some of their Sanskrit equivalents are incorrect - some of the wording isn't too good. We could certainly bring out our own slightly edited edition of that. It could be done quite cheaply - it's only a little volume, maybe thirty to forty pages, and it would be most useful. As a start someone could type me out that whole text with double spacing so that I could go through it and correct it. Then the next step would be Nagabodhi would find out about copyright and all that kind of thing. It could be very easily and very usefully done.

**Gotami:** - One of the things that I've been doing having got a certain way through one of these seminars, which is ten days, which is quite.....

**S:** Which seminar is that?

**Gotami:** Mahayana Buddhism.

**S:** Oh, yes, right.

**Gotami:** And um it's getting bigger and bigger and more and more pages so I thought well, if anybody wants to find anything in that, maybe they'd find it rather difficult, before it gets edited and gets printed and so on and so forth. Padmaraja wants (*unclear*) maybe something out of there and he remembers such and such a thing so I'm making a er ....

**S:** Synopsis

**Gotami:** No. An index.

**S:** Ah! Index.

**Gotami:** Just putting down a lot of words.

**S:** Yeh. Yeh.

**Gotami:** - and as I type each page.

**S:** Right.

**Gotami:** I make a note of them and if that was included

**S:** Right.

**Gotami:** And I wondered if other people transcribing things might do that.

**S:** Yeh. Yeh.

**Gotami:** It's quite easy to do while you're actually typing. (*Unclear*)

**Nagabodhi:** Fantastic.

**S:** That also reminds me of another point - that is the transcribing and editing of lectures. Tapes of lectures that is. Gotami has done the transcribing and is currently engaged in the editing of the lectures on The Eightfold Path. Other people might like to transcribe at least lectures, even if they can't edit them. And I've begun to feel that I won't be able to edit or rewrite all these lectures myself. And others may have to edit the transcripts and just let me give a final look through. There's quite a lot of work still to be done in this field and I expect quite a large amount of interest in the seminar extracts (*unclear*) in *Mitrata* sooner or later.

**Vessantara:** Am I right in thinking that Nagabodhi's responsible for this? Co-ordinating of the transcripts. (*Unclear*)

**Nagabodhi:** Transcripts of lectures, not of seminars. In fact that was announced in 'Shabda' and I haven't actually heard from anybody about work underway or work that they've done, and this is another area of 'Shabda' announcements. It is important that if you've ever transcribed anything, you tell me. And if you're planning to transcribe anything, you tell me.

**S:** Otherwise you get two people working in all sincerity maybe transcribing the same lecture, and the work is done twice, unnecessarily.

**Vangisa:** There's one small thing that might be useful in the case of some lectures and I think particularly in the case of The Noble Eightfold Path. A lot of them could be summarised quite well.

**S:** Gotami's doing that too. I know for instance that she sent me the first specimen lecture of the Eightfold Path series. It had been transcribed, also edited. And there was a neat little synopsis at the end.

**Vangisa:** (*unclear*) Perfect Effort. And it's got a beautiful structure and it's perfectly simple if somebody just wants to refresh his memory.

**S:** She's also by the way also included charts and diagrams and indications where additional such material is needed. So when it all goes off, when I've seen it, to Nagabodhi he will then also contact his designers and illustrators and so forth. So you see the way the whole machine, as it were, is functioning.

**Vangisa:** Yeh.

**Gotami:** I started doing these synopses when I was in Glasgow, and maybe it was quite a long lecture. And before I listened to the lecture and thought what points are in the lecture, and I would just pull out the stuff on one page, one A4 side. And this people have found very helpful because they can look back and just with a few words, a few sentences, they can remember what was said about it.

**Vangisa:** (*unclear*) ..especially if you wanted to have let's say The whole Noble Eightfold Path in two classes for instance, the synopsis....

**S:** Because it's not just a question, obviously, of providing reading material in the ordinary sense but tools for study and teaching.

**Vangisa:** Exactly. Yes. Some of them do reduce into something very natural, very easily.

**Gotami:** Bhante's structure is beautiful.

**Dharmapala:** Could they not be put out also with sales of our tapes - if you sent a tape to someone, you sent a brief synopsis in a box so people could look through these and see what's on that tape.

**Vangisa:** I think that should be used with caution. I think probably not at classes. One might encourage the idea among other people if they have the whole lot on there that's all they need to know.

**Gotami:** Certain diagrams that were sent out to Mitras might be quite good.

**S:** Because in some cases the diagrams are reproductions of charts which were actually exhibited and referred to in the course of the lecture - the original lecture. So really they're quite almost indispensable.

**Dharmapala:** What also came to my mind is that you once translated the *Dhammapada* in an early *Newsletter* and that (*unclear*).

**S:** This is already borne in mind by Nagabodhi.

**Gotami:** Did Peter (?) ever publish that?

**S:** I didn't, but people keep asking me about it and I will do so. That's another little publication. I've done about half of it. I think if I concentrated on that I could finish it in a month quite easily. The question is just at the moment I don't have a month.

**Gotami:** I think Jinamata was interested in editing.

**S:** Interested in?

**Gotami:** Editing, as well as transcribing.

**S:** Good. She probably could well do stuff like that.

**Nagabodhi:** She's been happy to do the series on Tantric Buddhism.

**S:** That's true.

**Nagabodhi:** ... several years. I don't know whether she's actually made a start. She's done some transcribing I think and typed some preliminary (*unclear*)

**S:** The whole series is transcribed, it's been transcribed for sometime.

**Ananda:** Bhante, are we going to discuss publications at all later on? There are a couple of things which occurred to me that I would like to suggest for possible future - probably other people have thought about them also. The first one in all this is an Order Puja book and I wondered if anyone um [*obscured by the chimes of an ice-cream van!*]

**S:** Yes. We do have this in mind. Devamitra and I are supposed to be working on that but we haven't got far with that yet apart from my compiling or composing this new Puja for the beginners which is supposed to be part of this. There also has to be a certain amount of thinking or rethinking about what ceremonies we need. For instance we had the discussion about the so-called Buddhist marriage ceremony. Gotami has transcribed all that too, some time ago. But before we can really compile a handbook of this sort for the use of Order Members we need to make up our minds more - or at least I need to make up my mind maybe - what sort of material we want. Two years

ago we might have included that particular marriage ceremony. Now I think probably we wouldn't.

**Lokamitra:** There was a suggestion last year of having loose leaf books so that even if now at the moment we don't include it, later on we can have other things for the Movement.

**S:** So what we do need and what I hope I can eventually get around to, if not compiling myself getting someone to do it under my direction, is a handbook of all ceremonies etc., for the use of Order Members which need not be in general circulation. [*pause*]

Anything further on recordings of seminars? There are quite a few transcripts of different things in circulation, aren't there? I think some people are making use of them in taking part in study groups and courses and so on. How many people are actually using these transcripts already? Hands up, let's have a look, or have done?

**Dharmapala:** If we should require one do we go to Devamitra for them?

**Devamitra:** Bhante some time ago wasn't very keen about having transcripts in circulation.

**S:** That is in unedited form. Some are quite a bit rough and need some editing.

**Devamitra:** But Lokamitra has copies down in Archway - some transcripts which have been at least given out to people in the Archway chapter.

**S:** Well, perhaps quite soon we could have another little note in '*Shabda*' - what is transcribed, what is being edited, what is still untranscribed and so on. Both with regard to maybe seminars and (*unclear*).

**Aryamitra:** How does one get hold of a copy of a transcript of a lecture if it's desired - is it allowed to be desired? [*Laughter*]

**Nagabodhi:** Well in time, I'm hoping in time you'll ask me because whoever transcribes a lecture will give me their top copy plus two or even three carbon copies and I'll.....

**Ratnapani:** So if printed these could perhaps be ...

**S:** I've been looking through recently two or three transcripts of lectures. I'm rather pleasantly surprised to find that they read reasonably well even without editing. Quite different from the seminar transcripts. So perhaps we could be a bit more liberal in distributing the unedited transcripts of lectures, particularly the later ones.

**Nagabodhi:** But don't ask me yet because I haven't got them. I've got one.

\_\_\_\_\_: O.K.

**Subhuti:** I'll just ask you this in passing. Sometimes in lectures, presumably it's a slip of the tongue or something like that - an error does creep in. And whether people if they notice these should make a note.

**S:** Right, yes, indeed.

**Subhuti:** Five instead of three or something.

\_\_\_\_\_: Not correct it?

**S:** Make a note in the margin.

**Gotami:** I think it may be better to do that because I've noticed that one particular piece I was editing something that had been transcribed by somebody else and obviously they'd done it quite carefully but a particular word hadn't been heard correctly and what they did put down didn't make sense. But if I looked at what had been written I'd have thought "Oh yes, that had been, that was what it must have meant..."

**S:** Yes.

**Gotami:** But in fact I just happened to have the lecture to listen to and it's quite different from what I would have done had I not had the tape to refer to. Do you see what I mean? It's awfully difficult.

**S:** I've noticed some people transcribing have misheard words and I know what I said, and then they've actually transcribed another word which sounded clearly to them on the tape, like some other word, not the word that I said.

**Gotami:** Yes, that's right. And if that had been printed, so that someone who's setting up the type might not remember that or might put in what they'd seen. So I think that if you do make a correction like that, you should definitely put an insert - that that is your correction - what you think was that word.

**S:** Yes.

**Gotami:** It's like the game where you whisper round the room.

\_\_\_\_\_: But presumably if we're transcribing a seminar they've got to transcribe the text as it's been written.

**S:** Not all of it. Only the portion which is actually commented on. And I noticed that as I'm editing the '*Bodhicaryavatara*' transcripts, more often than not I copy out a bit more than actually Devamitra has transcribed. This happens quite often. So the editor again would still have to check that. There may be room for (*unclear*). I err on the side of generosity in quoting from the original text. Some transcribers just indicate the passage, don't copy it out in full. It's helpful for the editor if the transcriber copies that passage out in full otherwise he will keep having to refer to the volume of the original text. *[pause]*

This brings me to another point which could well be brought up here, and that is to say there are all sorts of records and reports of discussions involving practical matters. Even sessions such as we've been having in the course of the conventions and Order Days and particularly say with regard to things like the Kalyana Mitra system. I think we ought to try to consolidate these. Otherwise we have to go searching through back issues of '*Shabda*' to find out what was said and what was decided. You see the sort of thing I have in mind?

So I think we also need someone to collate all that sort of material. First collect it and then collate it.

**Gotami:** You mean all the things that have come out of any *Newsletters* or transcript or anything on that subject should all be put together.

**S:** Yes. I'm thinking of discussions within the Order. Especially a case in point is the Kalyana Mitra system. This has gone through various stages of development. A new Order Member would hardly know where we are now with regard to it, perhaps. And what has to be done or what could be done and so on. Maybe wouldn't even know where to look. But if all that material was extracted and collated and maybe a few (*unclear*) made then that would be very useful.

**Vimalamitra:** Do you mean just keeping a set of taped discussions? You mean actually write them out?

**Nagabodhi:** A synopsis.

**S:** You see in '*Shabda*' we publish discussions - yes? and decisions. But in different issues of '*Shabda*'. So issues of '*Shabda*' are growing and you have to keep searching through, and a subsequent discussion has altered something or corrected something or amended something in an earlier discussion and you need to have the whole lot.

\_\_\_\_\_: Ah yes.

**S:** You see what I mean? You maybe get hold of one back issue and think "this is it!" but actually without your realising it that's all been amended say five or six issues later.

**Vimalamitra:** - So you need a kind of a -

**S:** A digest.

**Vimalamitra:** A report - an up to date report of each topic.

**S:** Yes. Well at present going on this particular one but there are individual points which are quite interesting and important which should not be lost sight of and simply buried in back issues of '*Shabda*'.

**Marichi:** - You could also produce an index.

**S:** Yes. I think a sort of digest would be probably more useful. There's not all that much material I think (*unclear*)

**Lokamitra:** Couldn't this be the function say, in the case of the Kalyana Mitra system, of the Mitra Convenor to, in his report at each Convention, to just go over everything, all the developments.

**S:** That would be quite a good idea. Another thing I was thinking maybe at the end of each year, each twelve issues of '*Shabda*', someone could go through it and collate all the important points raised and decided and they could be reproduced in a little booklet. The first issue would probably be not more than eight or ten pages, and then you've got it all there for ready reference. As regards the Kalyana Mitra system, maybe that would be a good idea. The Convenor of Mitras could present that by way of a report which of course would be printed.

**Lokamitra:** Maybe the editor of '*Shabda*' could do this before each Convention and just read it through very briefly at each Convention.

**S:** It could be done by the editor, depending on how much time he has had, or by some other person (*unclear*).

**Marichi:** This is why I suggested an index because I think that's the initial stage - I mean somebody could work with an index.

**S:** That could well be.

**Marichi:** The sort of index that Gotami had in mind?

**S:** Anyway, we make a note of these things now. When we come to (*unclear*) we have to find someone able to do things.

**Vessantara:** But there will come a point when we'll need some kind of handbook for new Order Members.

**S:** Yes.

**Vessantara:** With details of the Order Metta Bhavana, the Kalyana Mitra system.



**S:** We don't want to burden them with too much ancient history. Just what is the current situation. You might find yourself in some distant Centre and you've got a Mitra ceremony to perform. How do you do it? Or you've got a baby to name. How do you do it? One Order Member found herself in this sort of situation - you've got an after death ceremony to perform, or a putting into the coffin ceremony to perform. So you need - it'd be very useful to have a little handbook giving all the details and the texts - if there is a text for the occasion - to be chanted and so on.

All right. I think that's enough about seminar recorder. It looks as though we need a recorder of the tapes but that will come up in a few minutes.

Right. Yoga Convenor. *[pause]*

**Lokamitra:**

*Last October Order Day in Archway I think it was, we decided that a coordinator of yoga teachers and teaching would be a good idea. As yoga, or yoga teaching was something that couldn't come under the scope of a particular Centre or Branch - it was much more generally widespread and therefore should be more of the scope really of the Order - and I was appointed as that coordinator until this convention and the functions outlined were written in 'Shabda' as follows;*

*firstly, to see that new teachers of Hatha Yoga understand the implications of teaching Hatha Yoga within the Movement and that they're able to teach;*

*secondly to see that Hatha Yoga is being taught properly by those already teaching and to organise weekend retreats for those teaching or training to become teachers so that any difficulties related to teaching can be gone over; and*

*thirdly, to keep an eye on the place and function of Hatha Yoga in the Movement in general.*

*At present there are eight Order Members in the London area teaching yoga. They all happen to teach according to Iyengar's system. And that has happened by accident. It's not something we've planned and there are one or two Order members and a few Mitras training to teach at present.*

\_\_\_\_\_: Sorry, how many?

**Lokamitra:** - One or two Order members and a few Mitras training to teach.

\_\_\_\_\_: Outside, or still in London?

**Lokamitra:** Within London and Brighton.

**S:** This is not including Norfolk.

**Lokamitra:** Sorry, I should include Norfolk in this too. Norfolk, London and Brighton are the areas concerned. Let me just go through it and then you can raise any points.

*I just have several points really. One is that it can only be effectively done for a limited area, as I can only convene over a limited area. I can't travel to Auckland or I can't travel to Glasgow and see what they're doing. I can be in other contact and maybe occasionally I can visit other people and people from other places can visit. So effectively it's quite a limited responsibility.*

*Secondly it's important that all teachers and those preparing to teach have occasional, and preferably regular, contact with myself or Sona. I feel this is quite important still at the moment. We're the most experienced in teaching and also in our own practice and that sort of contact - either being taught by one of us or practising with one of us - is very important at the moment when we think in terms of teaching.*

*Another point is that no-one should teach a class within these areas - Norfolk, Brighton, London - without consulting one of us, without*

*having the approval of one of us. That is a class at a Centre or on a retreat or in any way under the auspices of the Movement.*

*And finally, I have for sometime been meaning to write something about the place of Hatha Yoga in the Movement, or the relevance, and I'm afraid it won't be for some time until I do that but it's very much on my mind.*

**Aryamitra:** I just want to know who the eight people are.

**Lokamitra:** Who the eight people are. They are Devamitra, Sona, myself, Dhammadinna, Kamalasila, Aryamitra, Mangala and Abhaya.

**S:** You mentioned that all these people are coincidentally following the Iyengar system. Have we in mind to modify or change that in any way in future?

**Lokamitra:** It's difficult to say until that situation arises I think, Bhante.

**S:** What I mean is, we haven't as it were, decided to adopt that system because it is the best and the most in harmony with our own overall objectives, so we must remain open to the possibility of possible failings. For instance. when I was in New Zealand, and I experienced it I think here also in England somewhere, I met people who were quite interested in Hatha Yoga as a practice according to other Hatha Yoga traditions and were not very happy about the Iyengar tradition and sometimes I'm asked what yoga tradition is taught under the auspices of the Friends and if I say it's Iyengar tradition sometimes the reaction has been quite unfavourable. So we have to bear this in mind. You don't need to go into the rights and wrongs of it all - or merits and demerits - but there's quite a bit of rivalry between the different schools. That doesn't concern us. I also got, I had the impression, especially in New Zealand that some of the yoga teachers, usually Swamis of various kinds, emanating from the 'Shivananda' group are quite good. They seem to teach well and have a good attitude towards it but are quite different method, I gather, from the Iyengar one.

**Uttara:** Has Iyengar recognised yoga within the Friends?

**Lokamitra:** How do you mean?

**Uttara:** Has he recognised you as a teacher.

**Lokamitra:** He has. And several others.

**Uttara:** But does he know it's going on within the Friends? *[pause]*

**Lokamitra:** I think that it is important at the moment to remember that it has happened accidentally as it were, that all teachers at present in this area are Iyengar teachers. It happened that those most committed to a practice and able to teach were all practising that system. We don't know what's going to happen in the future.

**S:** We might possibly for instance even develop our own eclectic yoga tradition, perhaps indebted to various Indian traditions, and more closely aligned with our own overall attitude and way of doing things. This is an open possibility.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yeh.

**S:** Any other points?

**Vangisa:** Is yoga practised to this extent by any other Buddhists?

**S:** Not that I know of. I've never heard that the Buddhist Society, for instance.

**Vangisa:** I don't mean here. Practising Hatha Yoga obviously isn't a Buddhist tradition in general but is it practised in any other part of the world? Is there any Buddhist movement or community that practices Hatha Yoga?

**S:** I think in organisations like the YMBA in Colombo, yes, they do have things like yoga, but it is relatively unusual, relatively unusual.

**Vangisa:** Yes.

**Aryamitra:** Can you give any reason for this?

**S:** I think there, very often - only too often - the religious life is associated with the sedentary life.

\_\_\_\_\_: Sitting down. *[Laughter]*

**Lokamitra:** It's very interesting; in Tibet, Japan and China when Buddhism has gone there, physical forms have developed yes? Karate, Tai Chi and so on.

**Ananda:** We have to be careful about Karate.

**Lokamitra:** So perhaps there is some need - there seems to have been this development in places where Buddhism has gone.

**S:** The fact mainly that many people in the West find yoga beneficial in itself and then again, for many, perhaps a relative minority, a quite simple and easy means of accessing other things; into meditation, vegetarianism, simple life and eventually Buddhism, Hinduism if they want.

**Dharmapala:** I've come across some thinking, particularly in your biography of Dharmapala where you mention practising 'Buddhist Yoga'.

**S:** That's yoga in the sense of meditation. He called it that by the way but it was meditation. He couldn't find a teacher in Ceylon. He only found one person who'd ever practised meditation and he went round the monasteries looking. That person had practised years and years ago in South Vietnam. That's the nearest he got - he had to go to Burma and find a Burmese teacher, for Buddhist yoga.

**Aryamitra:** It's extremely popular now - yoga - just about anybody in the street will know what yoga is to some degree. Whereas this is only recent; in the last few years.

**S:** Jack Hobster learnt meditation at the Centre.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yeh.

**S:** I found it very popular and widespread in New Zealand. Lots and lots of yoga centres and yoga teachers - mostly of the 'Shivananda' school.

**Ananda:** Do the yoga teachers in general find it does lead on to more involvement with the Friends?

**Lokamitra:** Annie Leigh has just become a Mitra and she really started through doing yoga.

**Ananda:** Is it a sporadic event or...

**Lokamitra:** (*unclear*) There's not that many that do. the amount of people that do get involved with yoga - there's not that many people who get into mediation. And the people that do are the sort of people that would anyway - if they had known there was meditation on a Wednesday night, they would have gone to that.

**S:** I think the point is not that they get in contact with yoga; the point is that they get in contact with you. That is the important thing - that they come along for yoga - which is good; they do the yoga, but you are teaching the yoga, they come in contact with you. And they have a certain feeling for you and they can share your interest and point of view to some extent and perhaps get interested in some of the things that you are interested in (*unclear*)

**Sona:** In Norfolk recently we had a festival where there was, I think, about forty people. Forty people who came along to it. I actually think of those at least thirty had been coming to the yoga class.

**S:** But the festival was a Buddhist festival.

**Sona:** The festival was a Buddhist festival, yes.

**Lokamitra:** maybe I'd just like to bring a point forward. If people do advertise yoga classes, it's quite important that unless that person teaching has had Iyengar's approval and instruction that they shouldn't say that they are an Iyengar teacher - they should just advertise Hatha Yoga classes.

**S:** Not even say Iyengar method?

**Lokamitra:** - Not even say that. Unless they've had his approval to teach.

**S:** Any other further point on yoga in the Movement?

\_\_\_\_\_: There is a school, Bhante, called the 'Yogachara' school of yoga.

**S:** That's a school of, as it were, philosophy. Here yoga has a different meaning. Yoga more in the sense of meditation.

Are there any Order officers that I've overlooked? I've got these seven. Any others?

**Sagaramati:** Treasurer. Does that come under....

**S:** Well it wasn't exactly an Order office was it?

\_\_\_\_\_: Not really. The treasurer of the FWBO was going to be responsible for the WBO account.

**S:** Well maybe it would be a good place to make a little report. *[pause]*

**Sagaramati:** For the benefit of those who haven't been on a Convention before this is a WBO account - it's an account that deals only with Order finances and has nothing to do with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order accounts. In the last year each Centre agreed to pay ten pounds for each Order Member connected with that Centre and those not connected with any Centre were asked to pay ten pounds (*unclear*). And this ten pounds covers the cost of 'Shabda', 'Mitrata', the Order register and the last published Convention report - insurance of the rupas and thangkas at 'Aryatara', and kesas. So the actual income from last year was 424 pounds and 51 pence. There are still 18 other Order Members I've received nothing from.

**S:** Eighteen.

**Sagaramati:** Eighteen.

**S:** Either from, or in respect of.

**Sagaramati:** Yes. So I reckon that most of them could afford to pay, if not the whole ten pounds at least something towards a contribution.

**Mangala:** This includes the people from New Zealand?

**Sagaramati:** No, all the New Zealand people have paid.

*[Transcriber's note: the following discussion about money is difficult to hear!]*

**Mangala:** But I mean this 424 pounds is including their money.

**Sagaramati:** Yeh. This is the whole lot.

**Manjuvajra:** That indicates that we've got 2.245 (*unclear*) a half per person. Too much.

**Sagaramati:** No, well New Zealand but I don't know. I got thirty six pounds and a penny from one lot. It doesn't work out like that.

**S:** Exchange rates and all that.

**Sagaramati:** Now our expenditure was two hundred and forty four pounds and twenty nine pence and the breakdown is; 'Shabda' £150.17; the last Convention report was £44.99; the insurance for the rupas etc., £30; 'Mitrata' £13.95 and Kesas £5.18. So we actually have in our account £180.22.

**Aryamitra:** How much was 'Mitrata' again?

**Sagaramati:** £13.95.

\_\_\_\_\_: That's amazing.

**Sagaramati:** Not everybody had paid their subscriptions to 'Mitrata'.

\_\_\_\_\_: Ah - yes.

**Sagaramati:** Mitrata is actually £13.95 short each year.

**S:** Maybe you could make it clear for the benefit of new Order Members where the money comes from.

**Sagaramati:** - From that.

**S:** No. Where the money comes from. This may not be completely clear.

**Subhuti:** From the Centres?

**S:** Yes. That it comes from the Centres and all that. It's not by way of donation or anything of that kind.

**Sagaramati:** Oh, well. As I said at the beginning, last year we agreed that each Centre pays ten pounds - that was for last year, for each Order member.

**S:** They pay that from their general fund or their general account.

**Sagaramati:** Ah. From their general account, Sorry. Yes.

**S:** So it makes it clear that the FWBO supports the Order.

**Sagaramati:** Yeh.

**S:** This is really the principle involved and this is one of the stated aims and objects of all FWBOs, to look after the Order inasmuch as it is the Order members who are propagating the Dharma and carrying on the FWBO activities. Or rather using the FWBO machinery to carry on their Dharma work.

**Manjuvajra:** This may be a principle but it's certainly not generally a fact. I mean I think.....

**S:** It is as fact to this extent.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yeh.

**S:** This is the principle on which this fact is based. This is an emphasis I want to make clear.

**Manjuvajra:** Should we work with that principle in mind, or should we work with the principle that seems to be happening and that is the Order members are there to support the Friends.

**S:** Spiritually, yes. Sure. Or even materially.

**Manjuvajra:** So it's sort of a two edged principle, really. A two sided principle.

**Nagabodhi:** The FWBO supports the Order and then asks the individual Order Member to support the FWBO by paying the £10 back.

**Sagaramati:** Well, that's up for discussion really.

**Nagabodhi:** But the principle is still there. That the FWBO supports the Order.

**Sagaramati:** Anyway the proposals for the coming year are that instead of the £10 fee we pay £5. So that each Centre, out of its general account, pays to the WBO account £5 for each Order member connected with that Centre.

**S:** What is the reason for the change?

**Sagaramati:** The reason for the change is that, well. I'll come to that in a minute. This £5 covers '*Shabda*', the Convention report, insurance, Kesas and any other financial responsibilities that the Order may incur. It does not include '*Mitrata*'. This is why the cost is less than last year.

\_\_\_\_\_: Did that include '*Mitrata*' last year?

**Sagaramati:** Yes.

**Nagabodhi:** But '*Mitrata*'s' only £3.

**Subhuti:** Thirteen pounds.

**Sagaramati:** Well, the thing was, the reason it's cheaper this year is because there was an overpayment last year. All Order Members paid their subscriptions to '*Mitrata*' plus the £10 they paid to me included '*Mitrata*' subscriptions, therefore there was two '*Mitrata*' subscriptions actually paid.

**Siddhiratna:** So there were two '*Mitratas*' that didn't come out?

\_\_\_\_\_: No.

**Vessantara:** People had paid twice for their 'Mitrata' subscriptions, once with this £10 and once separately.

\_\_\_\_\_: Oh yes, I see.

**S:** So what you're saying is that year by year the amount of money which will be payable by the Centre to which the Order Member is attached, or the individual Member, will be adjusted according to what seems to be the current formula.

**Sagaramati:** Yeh.

**S:** So in a way you're following the example of Mr Healey. *[Laughter]* So this coming year the need is for £5 per head per Order Member.

**Sagaramati:** Yeh.

**S:** So you're just asking Centres for that.

\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: Does this run from one Convention to the next Convention?

**Sagaramati:** Yes. This goes from one Convention to...

**S:** So say next year you may ask for £6 or for £10 or whatever seems to be necessary for that ensuing year.

**Lokamitra:** Our Order year is from the date that the foundation of the Order and Friends - that's the 6th and 7th of April - so that's when these payments are due. So this will be backdated to the beginning of April.

**Dhammadinna:** (*unclear*) only £10. Well there are about two.

**Lokamitra:** In fact at the last Convention - you remember - that we backdated those payments to the previous April. Some people have only just paid them and I hope they're not under the illusion they're going to last for another year from the date of payment.

**[End of Side One, Side Two]**

**Marichi:** - Do those figures go back to last April?

**Sagaramati:** What figures?

**Marichi:** The ones you've just given us - the previous...

**Sagaramati:** The figures I've given are how we stand now.

**Marichi:** - But you've given us the figures of what things have cost.

\_\_\_\_\_: Expenditure.

**S:** Is that during the last year. That is the year from the last 6th April?

**Sagaramati:** No. *[Laughter]*

**S:** In respect of what financial year are you giving your report? This is what I am asking?

**Sagaramati:** The thing is... the ten pounds covers is backdated to the April... the financial expenditure here dates back from April.

**Lokamitra:** The 'Shabda' .....

**S:** That should be made clear, in respect of what period you're giving your financial report.

**Sagaramati:** Considering what we've spent - consider it as that period.

**Marichi:** - So therefore you have taken it into account in reducing the current figure.

**Sagaramati:** Taken what into account?

**Marichi:** The fact that those figures have only covered half the year.

**Sagaramati:** I think in fact that these are the whole year. I've just said they covered the whole year.

**S:** There is a surplus so there's no need to ask for that same figure for the ensuing year.

**Sagaramati:** Right.

**S:** That is the year that began on the last 6th April.

**Sagaramati:** Yes.

**S:** And which will end on the next 5th April.

**Lokamitra:** Sorry. Do we have to pay any extra this year for 'Mitrata'?

**Sagaramati:** Yeh. I'm just coming to that point. 'Mitrata' is now public, or it's going public and the financial side of it is completely under the wing of FWBO Publications, Nagabodhi, yeh? So the Centres involved if they wish to pay for the 'Mitrata' subscription for the Order members connected with that Centre, they will do so. But the difference is they don't send the money to me, they send it to Nagabodhi.

**Nagabodhi:** In fact it has to be put a bit more strongly than that. Given the difficulty - I've been talking to Padmaraja about - given the difficulty he seems to have experienced in getting subscriptions specifically from Order Members, I would definitely like Centres to do this - to pay the three pounds on behalf of the Order Members attached to them, just as they're paying the five pounds to the account. If a particular individual Order member doesn't want to receive 'Mitrata', he can contract out. I propose that the Centres go ahead and give eight pounds either to Sagaramati through to me, or if it's really inconvenient giving it to Sagaramati you can then pass the rest on to me. But as a principle, that rather than me having to - just obviously I can imagine - send hundreds of letters right throughout the next year.

**Lokamitra:** I'm sorry but that's not really practical as far as Centres are concerned, especially if they have twelve to eighteen Order Members associated with them. Surely if it wasn't practical - I think Sagaramati's going to come to that in a minute -

if people don't pay their subscriptions from now on they don't get 'Mitrata'. Can it not be worked on that?

**Nagabodhi:** Oh it can, but..

**Lokamitra:** 'Shabda' is something different.

**Nagabodhi:** It can, but I think it's the old thing. I think there are people who probably want to receive 'Mitrata' but who simply don't send their money.

**Lokamitra:** Then they can write to you and say "look, over the next year I can get together three quid. I can get fifty pence every two months: and send it to you", yeh? It's not I think (*unclear*) ... unless they write to you well then they don't get it.

**Aryamitra:** Maybe it should be this way round. Maybe this thing about subscriptions, with 'Mitrata' anyway, why have subscriptions? Why not have the local Order Members have to buy it from the local shop?

**Nagabodhi:** I want to have as many subscribers as possible. It will really make everything easier to plan, to budget everything - to work with subscriptions.

\_\_\_\_\_: And a lot of people don't have (*unclear*)

**S:** If every Order member receives 'Shabda' that's 70 subscriptions which is £210 a year immediately.

**Subhuti:** I see no reason why it shouldn't be sent out only on receipt of subscription.

**Nagabodhi:** Well, yes. It's just that I fear that people will want it but...

**Subhuti:** Well, if they want it, then they have to...

**Nagabodhi:** Yeh. All I'm trying to account for is basic inertia, laziness and unmindfulness - nothing more serious than that.

**Vessantara:** Yeh but the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order should not carry on as long as we keep on accounting for it and allowing for it. We've heard that people

haven't paid for the Convention. We've heard that 18 people haven't paid their subscription to the Order last year. We hear that you don't think a lot of people will pay their subscriptions for '*Mitrata*'. We shouldn't let them get away with it. We should just stop letting them go to things and receive things until they do pay.

**Lokamitra:** If the principle of supporting the Order through the FWBO is to support cripples then we might as well forget about it now.

**Nagabodhi:** All I'm suggesting is that if the Centre has the responsibility for collecting the money like in Glasgow, whoever's the treasurer there is in a much better position to go around kicking people and saying "Give me your money", than I am, writing letters which also costs.

**Marichi:** Yeh, but it does seem simpler not to send it to people if they haven't paid a subscription. That is very simple. It's not like stopping somebody coming to...

**Nagabodhi:** It seems I have to accept that but I'd love to be able to start the year thinking that there are definitely seventy subscribers, although there might be thirty.

**Siddhiratna:** How will they know when their subscriptions are due?

**Nagabodhi:** It's due now. It'll be in '*Shabda*'. I'm telling you now.

**Siddhiratna:** It'll be in '*Shabda*'?

**Nagabodhi:** I'm telling you now, but for those who aren't present.

**Vimalamitra:** Do we all get our '*Mitrata*' - this publication which is out now?

**Nagabodhi:** Sorry?

**Vimalamitra:** Do we all get our '*Mitrata*' now?

**Nagabodhi:** If you've subscribed.

**Sagaramati:** (*unclear*) last year. Subscriptions which start from now will take into account '*Mitratas*' to come.

**Dhammadinna:** So are we agreed that .....

**Aryamitra:** Can I go back. I still feel that what Nagabodhi said right from the very beginning sounds... there's nothing wrong with that. It sounds very good. The fact that as the Centres themselves are going to have to pay the five pounds to the Order account, why not the Centres pay for the subscription?

**Sagaramati:** Because I don't want anything to do with it! [*Laughter*] What's this got to do with me? I just have to hand it to Nagabodhi. Surely cut that out and give it straight to Nagabodhi.

**Lokamitra:** Nagabodhi's justification was that most Order members are too inert to be able to send a subscription, to be able to take care of it themselves. Now if we have to support inert people, then we're doing something wrong.

**Nagabodhi:** I don't think we support them. I just want to be able to put the boot on the foot that's nearest to them, namely that of the treasurer of their Centre.

**Ashvajit:** I think the point has gone home really. We don't want every Order member to say yes to what you just said.

**Aryamitra:** (*unclear*) you want to sell '*Mitratas*' and

\_\_\_\_\_ : you want the money as well! [*Laughter*]

\_\_\_\_\_ : (*unclear*)

**Vessantara:** So putting the boot on the foot that's nearest doesn't work because there are still eighteen people who haven't paid their subscriptions for the last year. All that you'd be doing, it seems, would be sending out '*Mitratas*' and not getting anything for it.

**S:** It's a rather interesting, by the way, that all people in New Zealand have sent money, or someone has sent money or collected it from them.

**Vajradaka:** Are those eighteen people not associated with Centres?



**Sagaramati:** Yes. I mean some of them are in doubt, yeh. Um - some Centres - well say your case; well Atula said, "No". *[Laughter]* (unclear) connected with Glasgow.

**Dharmapala:** It's unclear what Centre you're from.

**Vajradaka:** - Yeh, well, I was a half a year in one and half a year in another.

**Lokamitra:** It was made very clear at the last Convention that it was backdated to April and to where Order Members were at that time.

**Vajradaka:** Right, well in that case, Glasgow Centre.

**Sagaramati:** Is there any other question about that?

**Dharmapala:** I think there is in terms of just simple co-operation and helpfulness, in that if the Order members can pay in to their local Centre and to the treasurer of their local Centre and then have it forwarded to Nagabodhi it saves everybody a lot of work and it can all be done on a definite day.

**Sagaramati:** It starts from now. I mean like Glasgow, I received their subscriptions in the last month of the year! I mean it should have been on the first month of the year not the last.

**Lokamitra:** If you've got another proposal to make I believe, Sagaramati. I think perhaps we should come back to that.

\_\_\_\_\_: *(Lots of unclear voices and laughter)*

\_\_\_\_\_: ..... that Centres no longer be responsible for this five pounds for the time being as it didn't seem to operate very effectively.

**S:** Well in some cases it did.

**Lokamitra:** In some cases it did. The most notable exceptions where it did. Not exceptions - the most notable cases were Archway and 'Sukhavati' and New Zealand...

**S:** Where it did work.

**Lokamitra:** Where it did work. What we were going to suggest was that individuals, individual Order Members, pay this five pounds to Sagaramati and that if a Centre felt that they would like to support a particular person, a particular Order Member in their area, or a number of individuals, then they would do so.

**Sagaramati:** I was going to leave that up to the individual Councils - yeh?

**Lokamitra:** If you do leave that up to them, you must make that clear now. You see. Because otherwise, as it stands now, every Centre pays, is responsible for, every Order Member in their area.

**S:** Connected with the Centre.

**Sagaramati:** Well, I would say that it's up to every Centre to make clear to the Order Members concerned which ones they're going to pay for and which ones will be responsible for themselves.

**Lokamitra:** As it stands at present every Centre automatically pays for every Order Member in their area, unless we change the situation and that goes.

**Aryamitra:** I think that that's the best possible way, that each Centre of the particular area pays and then they deal with, if you like, they try to get money from the people in that area. That's the only way it will work.

**Lokamitra:** I disagree entirely. I was treasurer for half a year and Sagaramati has been since then, and we've had quite a hard time with people, and although the principle, this principle, is something we want to aim at and I proposed it at the last Convention, thinking that it would work - it hasn't worked. So it's something we still want to aim at, but at the moment...

**S:** It hasn't worked in all cases.

**Lokamitra:** In all cases.

**S:** So, if one continues, presumably in those in whose cases it worked last time, it will work again. And perhaps we'll persuade a few more Centres and Order Members to make it work.

**Sagaramati:** There are only about two or three Order members who, as it were, were asked to pay themselves because they could afford to.

**Siddhiratna:** This seems to be thing doesn't it, that you said eighteen people but I've only just sussed it out that some of those people are being supported so it's not really eighteen.

**Sagaramati:** None of those are being supported.

**Siddhiratna:** Of the eighteen?

**Sagaramati:** None of them are being supported by a Centre.

**Siddhiratna:** Oh, sorry. I thought you said...

**Sagaramati:** They might be now, but at the beginning of the year they weren't.

**Lokamitra:** The eighteen is a bit of a red herring in a way because no money has been received on their behalf, but for the other fifty two or whatever it is, money has been paid. For example, as soon as we got back from the Convention, I wrote out a cheque - I transferred £180 from my general account in Archway to the WBO account. But how much of that has been paid by individuals has come in since then from individuals is a different matter. So those eighteen individuals have been accounted for, but a number of people who perhaps could afford it - I know damn well some of them could afford it - haven't contributed a bit.

**Aryamitra:** Well, I think the treasurer of that area should chase them.

**Lokamitra:** No, because...

**Sagaramati:** We didn't even have a treasurer to relate to at that time. People not connected with a Centre.

**Lokamitra:** We made the principle clear that Centres would pay so that there would be no chasing up, yeh? We didn't want this sort of thing. So....

**S:** No chasing up from the Centre.

**Lokamitra:** Yes. If we continue with this present system then it seems to me that Centres on the whole will have to fork out more than they can afford at present, yeh? If there are a number of Order Members who they feel they would like to support and they ought to support, then they can choose to do so voluntarily but at present they don't have that voluntary choice, they don't have that choice. At present they have to support every Order Member in their area.

**S:** In the sense of paying the five pounds

**Aryamitra:** This is what I'm saying all the time. They just do that - every Centre.

**Sagaramati:** That's not what Lokamitra's saying.

**Aryamitra:** I still don't understand it.

**S:** No. there are two alternatives. One which we have been following and one that it is proposed we should follow. Formerly every Centre paid automatically a subscription to the Order fund in respect of an Order Member, all Order members in its area. Maybe it got that from that individual Order member after or not, but that's another matter. The Centre was responsible for them, yeh? For all of them - good, bad, active, inactive - the whole lot. Now it is proposed that the Centre - the Council of the Centre - should have the discretion to pay only for those Order Members within that particular area that they wish to pay for. Still the initiative, or rather the responsibility still rests with the individual Centre.

**Dhammadinna:** Wasn't it done the first way partly so that things like 'Shabda' had money? If people, if a Council had to pay for so many Order Members and there are other Order members who don't pay, aren't things like 'Shabda' going to be out of pocket?

**Lokamitra:** So what we do, if we follow this through, what happens is that every individual Order Member is responsible for paying five pounds or whatever it is, yes, unless the Council which is responsible for administration in their area decides to pay that five pounds for them. Otherwise every individual would automatically send that five pounds off to Sagaramati.

**S:** I'm wondering whether it should be the other way round - that every Council pays the subscription in respect of Order Members within the area unless it decides not to do so.

**Sagaramati:** Yes - that's the way I'd do it. That sounds clearer.

**S:** Also it sounds more positive, I think. In other words if there is someone living near a Centre but doesn't go there, and the individual, the local Council would know that - is not in regular contact - well, they would just be under no obligation to pay the subscription.

**Manjuvajra:** Under what - what factors are you going to use in deciding whether to pay or not.

**S:** That would depend on that local Council but if that particular Order Member is only geographically in that area, but is not an effective Order member and has not been perhaps for some time.

\_\_\_\_\_: In terms of working for the Centre?

**Aryamitra:** Just in contact.

**S:** In contact, essentially.

**Sona:** When you use the word "Centre" does that cover Branches too or is it just Centres?

**Lokamitra:** I think we ought to use "Centre" and "Branches" every time we say something.

**Vajradaka:** Even in a sense the "Chapter" as well.

**S:** It would involve Chapter because if that particular Order Member was in regular contact with that Centre it would include attendance at the weekly Order meetings.

**Lokamitra:** I would disagree with you Bhante actually.

**S:** Well it should do.

**Lokamitra:** - No, I don't disagree there. I disagree somewhere else. *[Laughter]* It seems to me that it's a much easier situation for a Council to decide to support such and such, such and such, such and such, rather than say "right, we're not going to support you, you and you, because you're not - because we don't like you because" -

**S:** No, I don't suggest that. No. I think I've suggested that it gives more people the benefit of the doubt, huh? It means that if you're not going to support someone it means a very definite consideration of that particular person's case.

**Lokamitra:** But ....

**S:** In other words, you're taking it as the right of all Order Members to be supported, unless cause is shown to the contrary.

**Lokamitra:** But, but..

**S:** Rather than you decide whether they have the right to be supported.

**Mangala:** Does this also mean that 'Shabda' will have money to (*unclear*)

**S:** In other words I think it is erring on the side of generosity which I think we ought to do.

**Lokamitra:** This is certainly - the reason I proposed this was that at the moment I feel that the financial state of affairs isn't such as to be able to support all Order members in the way that ...

**S:** Well then, the individual Councils will determine that in light of the overall situation. They're paying the money. So if they feel very short of funds they'll look at the list of those that they're supporting rather more carefully. If they're very working class they'll say "well, never mind, we haven't seen him for the whole year but, never mind, we'll continue paying his subscription." That's up to them. But if they feel really short of money they'll prune the list that they're supporting.

**Sagaramati:** It depends on what Centre you're at really, At Archway there are a lot of people and it's quite different from, say, a Centre where there are say two or three people. But at Archway naturally I'll agree with Lokamitra's proposals but at the other Centres I don't think it's necessary.

**S:** But anyway, we have to, as it were, ledger one procedure for all and be careful not to assume that the Archway situation is general.

**Sagaramati:** Yes.

**S:** Or that it's representative.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: (unclear) [Laughter]

**S:** (unclear) It seems more reasonable. (Unclear)

\_\_\_\_\_: I'll second that!

**S:** Anything more about finance and this whole business? [pause]

**Sagaramati:** I'd just like to add that those eighteen Order members, I mean, they've still paid for the whole year.

\_\_\_\_\_: Are there any notable areas, exceptions?

**Sagaramati:** Well at the moment it would be Norfolk.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: I haven't received any 'Mitrata'.

**Sagaramati:** You'll have received your Convention report. It tells you in there clearly what to do.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: The Convention report?

**Nagabodhi:** Have you not received 'Mitrata'?

**Lokamitra:** Did you ask to receive it?

**Padmaraja:** It just goes to Order members on request.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: You said you'd send me it [Laughter] Oh well.

**Nagabodhi:** From now I'm assuming that all Order Members will want to receive 'Shabda' I mean am I right?

\_\_\_\_\_: 'Shabda' ?

**Nagabodhi:** Sorry 'Mitrata'. Am I right in thinking

**Sona:** I don't want it.

**Nagabodhi:** You don't.

**Sona:** Srimala gets it.

**Nagabodhi:** But I'm not going to send it. This issue here is already paid for, the issue that's just come out is part of last year's subscription but as from now, if by the week we go to press on the next 'Mitrata' I've only got ten subscriptions, we'll print ten issues, all right? [Laughter]

**Uttara:** Sorry. Are we to pay for 'Mitrata' now? Are we to pay for 'Mitrata'?

**Nagabodhi:** You always have! If you had it, it was part of your ten pounds.

**Uttara:** That's OK.

**Sagaramati:** This coming year you have to pay for 'Mitrata'. For this year you have to pay now.

**Vajradaka:** As an individual. [Laughter] (unclear) [Laughter]

**Nagabodhi:** You pay it to 'Publications'.

**S:** All right. Any further point in connection with this? If not we can move on to the next item.

**Dharmapala:** (*unclear*) from one person who paid their ten pounds and who didn't get 'Mitrata' but would like it from now - can you give me some idea of the....

**Sagaramati:** Sorry?

**S:** Well, can you sort it out afterwards? It's only just a thing between two of us.

**Aryamitra:** Sorry. Last thing. All this talk. Now I was under the impression from what you were saying that it's the Centre that pays - it is the Centre that pays, yeh? It is that?

**Lokamitra:** Unless it decides not to.

**Aryamitra:** - Yeh. So in fact Uttara doesn't pay.....

**Nagabodhi:** *Mitrata's* completely separate. I was hoping it wouldn't be but...

\_\_\_\_\_: You didn't push for..... That's right.

**S:** All right. We really now do have to get on to the appointment of office bearers for the ensuing year.

First of all, the Convenor of the Order, yeh? How does Khema feel about continuing, first of all?

**Khema:** I think somebody else might be able to put more time into it than I've been able to and I know that somebody else would like to do that.

**S:** Is there anybody who feels able to put more time into it?

**Sona:** Yes.

**S:** Oh fine. [*Laughter*]

**Nagabodhi:** Seconded.

**Aryamitra:** Yourself?

**S:** Well, I feel quite happy about that because Sona's up in Norfolk. I have felt that it would be quite convenient for me if the Convenor of the Order was a bit closer to me geographically. Maybe one or two other people, too. Seems to be that the general feeling of the Order is that Sona should be Convenor for the coming year. So that's arranged. Any objections?

**Uttara:** The only thing is that in relation to retreats and things maybe it would be quite awkward for Sona when he lives in Norfolk to organise a retreat say somewhere else.

**Khema:** I think if that happens he just won't be doing it.

**Subhuti:** Not if he's a good organiser.

**Nagabodhi:** Or get someone else to organise it.

**Aryamitra:** Can we just go over what the duties are?

**S:** First of all to organise the annual Convention. Ideally, although this has not yet been the case, to collaborate with me in organising and planning things like order study seminars. I'm very interested with Sona practically at my elbow in Norfolk, and if also the study seminars will be held in Norfolk which seems to be the case or will be the case - that will be very convenient. That's the main thing from my point, or the two main things. And there will be possibly Order retreats as such. I'm sure even if they are held outside Norfolk, Sona can quite easily co-opt help in the commissariat side of things.

**Aryamitra:** What about the other things you were saying, the other duties that you couldn't do..

**Khema:** They weren't duties but the Convenor could be somebody who keeps in touch with all the others who aren't associated with Centres and maybe (*unclear*)

**S:** I thinks that's more the Registrar's job, because he needs the address.

**Khema:** Well. I was proposing also that in a sense the Registrar's maybe the..... the Convenor's also maybe the Registrar as well.

**S:** Sona hasn't as yet offered to take on the Registrarship. That's entirely up to the Convenor.

**Vimalamitra:** Well would you like to be Registrar as well? *[Laughter]*

**Nagabodhi:** Does Suvratta not have to resign?

**S:** No. Everyone's sort of reappointed for the next year.

**Sona:** Can I hear what the duties of the Registrar are first of all before I have to make a decision?

**S:** To maintain the Order register, that is to say, a complete record of all Order Members together with their changes of address and so on, and to produce this in a booklet form periodically. And also, in between, to produce lists of changes of address and things of that sort. That is mainly the duty of the Registrar.

**Ashvajit:** It seems to me much more reasonable that that function, if it should be coupled with anything else, should be coupled with the editor of '*Shabda*' 'cause he needs to send it out every month.

**S:** Yes, right.

**Ananda:** There's also another job that the registrar's supposed to do and that is produce the what we called originally the parish registry type thing.

**S:** Yes.

\_\_\_\_\_: Has that been done?

\_\_\_\_\_: No.

**Khema:** It could be just a card index.

\_\_\_\_\_: No.

**Khema:** The book. The written book.

**S:** That is, as it were, a chronological record. Every time an Order member is ordained the next page is filled in.

**Dhammadinna:** The sooner someone starts on it the better, in that case!.

**Aryamitra:** I must say there's a sort of silence about it.

\_\_\_\_\_: About what?

**Aryamitra:** About Sona.

**Ananda:** It strikes me that we haven't really sorted out Suvratta's position.

**Aryamitra:** No, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about as Convenor.

**S:** Yes, we moved on to.....

\_\_\_\_\_: (unintelligible)

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*) agreed by silence.

**Nagabodhi:** Speechless with joy. *[Laughter]*

**S:** All right. Sona is appointed as Convenor of the Order for the ensuing year. What about Registrar, whether that's going to be Suvratta or some other person or someone who is editor of '*Shabda*' or Sona as Convenor - anyway what about the Registrar?

**Ananda:** Is there not word about Suvratta.

**S:** Well, he ought to be here.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yeh.

**S:** Or have sent someone in his place.

**Lokamitra:** He's clearly not able to continue.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: It's only an annual appointment isn't it? He's got no right to carry on this until...

**Ananda:** I know, but I mean, I don't think we'll be within our rights just to appoint someone else without him even knowing that he has not been reappointed.

\_\_\_\_\_: Of course not.

\_\_\_\_\_: It's a matter of survival!

**Lokamitra:** I'd like to propose Ashvajit as Registrar. What do you think?

\_\_\_\_\_: Is he also the editor of '*Shabda*' ?

**S:** No he isn't (*unclear*). He has been the editor of '*Shabda*' for the past couple of months.

\_\_\_\_\_: Isn't he Master of Ceremonies?

**S:** He is Master of Ceremonies, yes.

**Vangisa:** But the thing about the Registrar - presumably an increasing quantity of files and so on and I remember that one point that seemed relevant with regards to Suvratta and the job expressed to me was that he wasn't going to be moving.

**S:** Right. Yes.

**Vangisa:** So it does mean that these should have a home somewhere.

**S:** No. I think a suitcase is quite sufficient. [*Laughter*]

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*) Well it hasn't worked. [*Many speaking at once*]

**S:** He's been too stationary.

\_\_\_\_\_: He's going to be permanent.

**Vangisa:** What I'm thinking of is that if the files were housed in all one place like say '*Aryatara*' it shouldn't be too difficult to find somebody there from year to year to take on and act as Registrar.

**S:** I don't see any practical difficulty because Ashvajit has always kept in touch, we always know where he is. At least I do; he always lets me know.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: I think Ashvajit's point in particular that it be best combined with the editorship of '*Shabda*' is a good one and that's how it was supposed to be envisaged.

**S:** I quite agree about that actually.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: I'm aware you can't appoint Ashvajit as Registrar on that principle without appointing him as editor of '*Shabda*' and therefore the editor of '*Shabda*' should...

**S:** Well, I'm quite happy to think of...

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: '*Shabda*' - the appointment should be made first.

**S:** I don't mind how you get round to it [*Laughter*]. Is Ashvajit willing and able?

**Ashvajit:** Yes.

**S:** You would be? I personally would be quite happy with that arrangement.

**Lokamitra:** to edit '*Shabda*'?

**S:** To edit '*Shabda*' and to maintain the Register.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: And be Master of Ceremonies and (*unclear*)

**S:** Well, no. Master of Ceremonies will come up next. Don't think well, he is already Master of Ceremonies - he isn't. It's terminated today once he's given his report. So it comes up afresh. So the result of that is that Sona is Convenor and there seems to

be a general feeling that Ashvajit should be both Registrar and editor of 'Shabda', yeh?

\_\_\_\_\_: Yeh. yes. (chorus)

**S:** That's as far as we've got. Is everybody happy with that? has anybody got any doubts or reservations, or any alternative suggestions?

**Lokamitra:** Well, I did have before so I'll mention it.

**S:** Yes.

**Lokamitra:** That it would have been good if it could have been someone in very close geographical touch with yourself, but maybe it's not so necessary.

**S:** Maybe it's not so necessary at present.

**Lokamitra:** - Yeh

**S:** But let's see what happens in future.

\_\_\_\_\_: (unclear) duplicated his suitcase (*unclear*) .

**S:** All right. Next, the Master of Ceremonies, huh? Ashvajit was Master of Ceremonies but that's now open. It could be Ashvajit in addition to other duties or it could be somebody else.

**Mangala:** I propose Ashvajit [*Laughter*].

\_\_\_\_\_: Why not ask Chintamani?

**Chintamani:** I'd love to do it but I don't think I've got the time in the next few years.

\_\_\_\_\_: It's not a very big job.

**Padmaraja:** I think you should wait for Richard to get ordained. He'd probably be good.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: Give him a chance to get ordained first!

**Nagabodhi:** What are the duties?

**S:** To keep up a supply of kesas. What else have you done?

**Ashvajit:** Hardly got into the supply of kesas even because it was so competently done before. I was intending to take some material down with me to Brighton this coming Tuesday.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: You can still do that. So any Kesas from now on are simply sent to you?

**Subhuti:** Sent to the Master of Ceremonies.

**Aryamitra:** What are the responsibilities? A sort of overseer of all ceremonies.

**S:** We really had in mind that the Master of Ceremonies should be responsible, for instance on the occasion of Ordination for seeing that everything was in order, yeh? The shrine was properly set up, the kesas were there, the ritual vase was there - there were white flowers for the Upasaka/Upasika ordination; that the people to be ordained knew what they had to do - this was the sort of thing we had in mind.

**Chintamani:** I'd like to propose Alaya.

\_\_\_\_\_: Seconded.

**Aryamitra:** Who?

**Aryamitra:** Sorry, who? [*Laughter*]

\_\_\_\_\_: Alaya.

**S:** Is everybody happy with that?

**Lokamitra:** Is Alaya happy with that?



**S:** Ah yes. Also one thing I've forgotten - to ascertain and announce through 'Shabda' the dates of festivals. Would you feel happy with all that to cover?

**Alaya:** - Yes.

**S:** And would everyone feel happy with Alaya doing that?

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes.

**S:** Right.

All right, Archivist and librarian. Perhaps we should ask first if Ananda would be willing to continue because he is in the middle of the cataloguing it might not be very advisable to *[Laughter]*

\_\_\_\_\_: It would be disastrous!

**S:** You would be willing to continue with that - librarian and Archivist - yeh?

All right. Seminar Recorder. Does Devamitra wish or feel able to continue or would he like to hand it over now to somebody else?

**Devamitra:** I'd be willing but if somebody else would like to do it, then I'd be happy.

**Lokamitra:** Maybe Nagabodhi could take it on as he's doing tapes - they would go quite well together.

**S:** When you say "doing tapes" ...

**Lokamitra:** Sorry. Co-ordinating transcriptions of tapes.

**Nagabodhi:** Is that all you're doing effectively? You effectively just know who's doing what?

**Devamitra:** That, and I submit to 'Shabda' each month an excerpt from transcripts. I keep a file of all published transcripts.

**S:** You also select the extract in consultation with me. That's very close contact. That's easy isn't it?

**Devamitra:** Yeh.

**Padmaraja:** But you have a copy of all the finished transcripts?

**Devamitra:** Yes - well I still haven't got the top copy of 'Dhyana for Beginners' but the idea was that I should, I think have -

**S:** I have that with me.

**Devamitra:** Yes. Have a copy of all the finished transcripts.

**Padmaraja:** You did have access to that material Nagabodhi?

**Nagabodhi:** Sorry?

**Padmaraja:** You did have access to that material?

**Nagabodhi:** I think there's a difference. I don't mind sort of co-ordinating who's doing what but I don't really feel like taking on the extras like say the selection for 'Shabda', to be honest.

**Lokamitra:** I think Padmaraja could do that.

**Padmaraja:** I've got too much on.

**Mangala:** How about Manjuvajra?

**Aryamitra:** It's not even supposed to be done, is it?

**Subhuti:** It sounds like it should just be left to Devamitra as he's willing.....

**Devamitra:** I'm perfectly happy to remain doing it. It's just that somebody else might like to do it. I do have other things that I'd like to get into.

**Mangala:** I propose Manjuvajra.

\_\_\_\_\_: Why?

**Mangala:** Because he has said that he's quite interested (*unclear*) .

**S:** Well, are you quite interested?

**Manjuvajra:** I am quite interested, yes.

**S:** Do you think you've got the time?

**Manjuvajra:** Well, I will have the time very soon.

**S:** You will?

**Manjuvajra:** I think, yeh.

**Vessantara:** That doesn't sound very definite to me.

**Manjuvajra:** Well, it rests on a discussion I want to have a bit later.

\_\_\_\_\_: I don't really think you'd do it.

**Aryamitra:** Is it a matter of finding the typists and so forth as well Devamitra?

**Devamitra:** Well, trying to get people to do the transcripts, yeh.

**Aryamitra:** Yeh.

**Devamitra:** Preferably trying to find the typists.

**S:** I'd personally feel quite frankly happier if it was nearer me, yeh, because this is a particular pie I feel the need to keep my finger in quite firmly.

**Devamitra:** Yeh. OK, well.

**Aryamitra:** I think Devamitra should continue. He's just getting into that. *[Laughter]*

\_\_\_\_\_: It's not quite too late.

**Devamitra:** Well then I shall continue if everybody's happy.

**S:** All right. Yoga Convenor?

**Nagabodhi:** I'll do it! *[Very Loud Laughter]*

**Lokamitra:** Could you stop smoking?

**Nagabodhi:** I prefer the Mitra Convenor's job. Being an archivist I... *[Laughter]*

**S:** Is Lokamitra willing?

**Lokamitra:** I'm willing to continue, yes.

**S:** Everybody happy with that?

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes. *[Laughter]*

**S:** And of course the FWBO Treasurer doesn't have to be appointed for the moment. Any other, yes, Order Officer we ought to have? What about the recorder of taped lectures? *[Laughter]* You already are doing that aren't you?

\_\_\_\_\_: He is the seminar link-up.

**Nagabodhi:** Yeh. I'm already doing it actually.

**S:** I mean the person who's responsible for the transcription co-ordinating.

**Nagabodhi:** I don't really see that more as an Order function, really.

**S:** OK.

\_\_\_\_\_: What about Mitra Convenor?

**S:** Yes, The reports of the existing Mitra Convenor and acting Convenor of women Mitras will be given in another session - but no doubt we should actually appoint them presumably now.

**Subhuti:** Should we hear the reports first before we decide who's... [Laughter] -

**S:** All right. In that case I think probably we'd better leave the appointments (*unclear*)

\_\_\_\_\_: There was one other point you mentioned - someone to go through 'Shabda'.

**Aryamitra:** and to collect future events.

**S:** No, we leave the editor to organise that if he can't do it himself. But someone to collate and digest material.

**Lokamitra:** Would you be able to do it, Ashvajit?

**Ashvajit:** I don't know. I'll have to see how it goes. And if necessary I shall (*unclear*)

**Nagabodhi:** So you'll take responsibility?

**Ashvajit:** Yes.

**S:** Perhaps you could just co-opt somebody without our appointing someone.

**Ashvajit:** OK.

**S:** Perhaps that would be better.

\_\_\_\_\_: What is that function called again? [Laughter]

**S:** Someone who needs to... collate - a collator of things and information - a digest.

\_\_\_\_\_: A digester [Laughter]

**S:** Right. Any other Order business? That is, anything of a sort of, as it were, inverted commas, 'organisational' nature... There is one thing I can think of and that's we ought formally to recognise the list of Centres and everyone in that connection.

\_\_\_\_\_: And representatives.

**S:** Yes.

\_\_\_\_\_: And branches.

**S:** No. We don't recognise branches. That's the responsibility of the Centre, isn't it? We recognise the Centre with its branches. So which are the Centres - the autonomous Centres - that we could recognise as affiliated, as it were, to the Order? Maybe we ought to list them in order of their foundation yeh? First of all there is, of course, the FWBO, which I believe this has all been sorted out as far as I understand is now 'Sukhavati'.

\_\_\_\_\_: Not yet.

**Lokamitra:** Not until the end of the month.

**S:** Not 'til the end of the month.

\_\_\_\_\_: So it's still at Archway.

**S:** So it's still at 'Pundarika'. FWBO at 'Pundarika'. That's the first done. I think also I made the point at the last Convention - I think it was the last one - that when we do this - this is in a way one of the most important functions of the Order - at least of the Order as a whole - it's open to the Order, any individual Order Member, to make any comment that they wish about the function of a particular Centre vis a vis its relationship with the Order, with individual Order Members and the basic principles of the whole Movement. The Order as such, is, as it were, the guardian of the fidelity with which individual FWBO Centres implement the aims and objects of the whole Movement. So if one feels moved to make any comment, favourable or otherwise, on an individual Centre, or any suggestions, then feel free to do that as the name of the Centre comes up, in this way.

So first of all, the Archway Centre, which is the original FWBO. Before we actually recognise that, any comment that anyone wishes to make? Anything that anyone at any time visiting or connected with the Centre regularly hasn't been happy about or would like to draw to the attention of the Order Members there? Sometimes people coming from outside can see things that the regular resident people can't see, so don't be afraid to speak your mind. Has anything ever struck you which, you go there, you don't quite like, or you think isn't quite in accordance with our principles or you think maybe the Order Members who are functioning there just haven't noticed certain things or have forgotten certain things.

**Nagabodhi:** It's always freezing!

\_\_\_\_\_: It's not compared to (unintelligible).

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: Are you talking about everyone?

**S:** I got a bit of a chill there talking to someone.

**Mangala:** It always amazes me. I don't know how many years that place has been going and it still isn't - once they had a fire that works, you know.

**S:** That's a valid point, though actually what I have in mind is, you know, more basic and fundamental and, as it were, spiritual things.....

**[End of Tape Three Tape Four]**

**S:** .... albeit that is quite basic, but I'm thinking more in terms of very general principles.

**Subhuti:** I've got a positive comment to make. Very obviously since the last Convention the Archway Centre's really much brighter, physically much brighter, which I think represents something else. There also seems to be much more involvement by more Mitras and Friends.

**S:** Indeed. Well it has come very much more to life in the last two years. Well the last six months. *[pause]* All right, let's pass on to....

**Lokamitra:** If by recognising the FWBO you're recognising the Branches, it might be worth saying that Brighton, Truro, 'Sukhavati', Norfolk and Castle Acre are all Branches of the FWBO.

\_\_\_\_\_: And West London.

**Lokamitra:** West London.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*Unclear*)

**S:** I take it that everybody is happy with the Branches too. If you're not, if there's anything that you've noticed when visiting a Branch well speak up now and it is brought to the attention of the Centre responsible for that Branch, or the Order Members responsible for running that Branch.

**Manjuvajra:** I'd like to make some comments about Cornwall. I am not very satisfied with it. From two points. If we take the home point first. This is that in Cornwall generally there doesn't seem to be a very deep commitment. I mean a lot of people express an interest in Buddhism. They come along to meditation classes. If things are organised and run then they will partake in them. But it only seems superficial. The reason why I say this is, for example, when we ran a series of study groups, as soon as the study starts getting serious people started not coming because they felt that it was getting all a bit too serious. Also....

**Padmaraja:** What do you mean serious?

**Manjuvajra:** Well, they just felt that Buddhism was being taken a bit too seriously. I mean they wanted to joke and laugh around and have a bit of a gossip instead.

The other point is that two months after going back after Christmas - I went back after Christmas full of energy and put a lot into it - and within the first two months we had a couple of retreats, a talk, a jumble sale, as well as the regulars twice a week. By that time I was pretty exhausted because I am also working full-time (*unclear*) part-time; and so I sort of asked people if they would be prepared to do things and then I told them that they had to do things because I was fed-up and I wasn't going to do any more than just the basic organisation. And what happened was that most people found that they had other things that needed their time, so they couldn't even come to

classes. So one person said that they would have to think a bit more about Buddhism. Another person felt that their marriage was requiring more of their energies. And so when this happened I am afraid that my enthusiasm just completely fell away. Although people, they are interested, I don't think I can manage what's required down there. Now that's the sort of home view of it. Then there is the relationship with the Order generally, which is, I think, terrible.

**S:** Yours or theirs?

**Manjuvajra:** Theirs. I must admit that I do feel my own relationship, now that I am here, a little bit shaky, which I am a bit surprised at. I think that is partly because I feel a bit resentful about what I am now going to say. Two people down there have asked for ordination and, as I understand it, they have either been told, or expect to be told, that they will be expected to move themselves into a locality where they are in contact with a lot more Order Members.

**S:** To have more contact with Order Members.

**Manjuvajra:** To have more contact with Order Members?

**S:** Yes, well if they can manage it by frequent weekend trips, well fair enough.

**Manjuvajra:** Well I think that is really out of the question. For someone from Cornwall to come to London for the weekend costs them about twenty five pounds. (**S:** Yes, Yes.) which is not on for the people down there. So what it seems has been happening is that even if they do, at any stage, develop a certain feeling for wanting to commit themselves to the Order, they won't be able to do it without making a more drastic change in their lifestyle. I mean, moving yourself 250 miles from a primitive country setting to a city, or coming to Brighton, perhaps Norfolk, is a bit of a wrench to make, I feel, and so I really have to ...

**S:** What about coming on retreats?

**Manjuvajra:** Coming on retreats?

**S:** Mmm.

**Manjuvajra:** Well I think people do that as much as they are capable of doing from a financial point of view.

**S:** I mean coming on retreats, say, organised from London where there are quite a few Order Members with whom they could have contact.

**Manjuvajra:** Well I think people do this, as I say, as much as they are able to. Literally.

**Mangala:** Also, I think that what quite often happens is that in a way people often blame the situation. After all they are the people that have created that situation. And they have obviously done that because that is what they thought was most important to work for.

**Manjuvajra:** I can understand that absolutely. You know, I realise that if people were really interested in Buddhism they would travel to the other side of the world.

**Mangala:** Or else they would not get themselves into a situation where they were unable to attend retreats and unable to sort of have contact.

**Manjuvajra:** Yeah, but unfortunately, things don't normally work like that. People go on and on with their lives, they act out lots of karma and they build themselves up into a certain situation. Then they get into contact with Buddhism and they've got a lot of knots to untie. It's not a matter of starting off with a clean slate. Getting involved with Buddhism and keeping the slate clean.

**Padmaraja:** It's getting like that for more and more people at 'Pundarika'.

**Manjuvajra:** Well I think they are very fortunate. They have got something which is very valuable.

**S:** I think that quite a few people do tie quite a few knots even after establishing contact with Buddhism.

**Manjuvajra:** Well I have done that myself. I mean, I know how it works. I think if I had been told two years after my involvement with the Friends that I would have to go to the kind of lengths that you ask, you know, one is forced to ask other people to

go to, I probably wouldn't have done. Not out of not having any interest, but that by then my commitment hadn't developed that much. But I can understand both points of view, and it seems to me an impossible situation from both ends and I am therefore sort of questioning...

**S:** I think there is also the point that one of the two people who asked for ordination wasn't interested in becoming a Mitra first. They wanted to be ordained directly. He wasn't interested in becoming a Mitra first.

**Manjuvajra:** I didn't understand that, I didn't realise that. I mean, I must admit that in the two..... I only know of one definite decision, I don't know what has happened about the other person, and I would tend to agree with the decision that was made. But I think the principle still holds - that it's going to be very difficult, given the situation in Cornwall, for anyone down there to be able to commit themselves in a formal way. In other words, to become a member of the Western Buddhist Order. I don't see how it could happen.

**S:** I wonder if Anoma has anything to say about that. Didn't you come from Cornwall?

**Anoma:** I was going to comment on that. Um... *[pause]* I think I agree with you. I think it is impossible. I think people have certainly got to come on retreats and things. And if that isn't possible I don't really see how they can.

**Ananda:** It seems a very clear possibility out of that situation is to move a lot more energy down to that area and hold retreats down there.

**Manjuvajra:** I've been saying this for two years. But I even now question that. You have to ask yourself how much energy can you put into a certain area. I've never really seriously asked myself this question until Christmas, and then I asked myself the question, "well, what is the potential down there? How much, what efficiency can you work at in Cornwall?" and it seems to me that the efficiency is going to be very low. In other words it is going to take maybe five Order members to get five prospective Order members which is just not the efficiency I suppose you can work with.

**Lokamitra:** Something we could do is hold an open retreat down there, a bit like the Dutch retreat, and you would pay the expenses of two or three Order Members out of

the Mitra account to go down there and be on it. That is something certainly one could do.

**Uttara:** Could I say something? I don't think Manjuvajra wants to stay there.

**Manjuvajra:** Haven't I got to my conclusion. I think I did actually. The conclusion that I've come to is that I'm really questioning whether we should have a Cornwall branch of the FWBO.

**S:** Ah yes. I see you coming to that. I think what Uttara is saying is that aren't you feeling like that because you don't want to stay there?

**Manjuvajra:** What in Cornwall?

**S:** Yes.

**Manjuvajra:** Oh no, I like Cornwall!.

**S:** No I don't mean just as Cornwall, but as responsible for the Centre?

**Manjuvajra:** Right, yes. I would certainly like a break. Perhaps no more than that.

**S:** So these are really two separate issues. A fresh person, say a new Order Member with lots of energy say, going down there and being there might feel quite differently from what you feel about the potentialities of Cornwall.

**Manjuvajra:** I think they'd get a very good response there.

**Dhammadinna:** (*unclear*) Lokamitra! *[Laughter]*

**Lokamitra:** I've got a job to do!

**S:** Marichi. You've been down there once or twice, not too recently.

**Marichi:** Once, I'm going again next week.

**S:** Do you carry back any impressions from that previous visit which are of relevance?

**Marichi:** Well rather similar to Manjuvajra's. *(unclear)* I haven't attended a class there; I only attended a retreat, but the strain is all on one person who quite obviously finds it difficult to remain in contact with so many *(unclear)*.

**Ananda:** It seems to me to underline the great difficulty of a single Order Member going into a virgin country and opening up.... *(unclear)*

\_\_\_\_\_: Virgins! *[Laughter] [pause]*

**Marichi:** It's quite hard in Brighton with two Order Members and they're quite closely involved with a blossoming Centre.

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)* 'Pundarika'! *[Laughter]*

**S:** This is a rather general point. I'd just like to remind everybody that it was just like this in a way in London originally. It was endless work, and apparently very unrewarding for several years. You couldn't even get Order Members to do things, what to speak of non Order Members.

**Vangisa:** I think this is partly, to some extent, to be repeated in any new Centre or Branch. In other words, you have got to go back to the beginning and retrace the whole development of the Movement. *(Unclear)* I don't think this can be done with just one person. I mean Manjuvajra has been on his own for who knows how long. I just don't think it is possible from my own experience, in a similar situation for less time, and you can just go on for so long.

**Chintamani:** I don't think that is necessarily true what you are saying about starting from scratch. I think what we will probably be doing more in the future is starting new Centres with an organised team of people who really know what they are doing.

**Vangisa:** Oh yes.

**Chintamani:** Four or five would be more sensible than one person or even two.

**Vangisa:** Well the situation when one person starts something up like that is just not feasible any more, but it was two years ago. It was just the thing we were doing.

\_\_\_\_\_**(Woman)**\_\_\_\_: Well in some ways it is much harder for Manjuvajra who comes here and sees what is happening in other parts of the country.

**Anoma:** When you are in Cornwall, when I first went to Manjuvajra's class as far as I was concerned he was the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. I couldn't relate to any *(unclear)*. I was quite surprised when I came to London and saw all this, and although he told me you just don't know until you see it. I don't think I ever really.....

**S:** Well it is amazing what they did in New Zealand when for some time they had only Akshobya. Then Gotami went out there and Ashvajit, and then I went out. But for a long time it was just Akshobya who with great difficulty, though quite successfully, he did manage.

**Marichi:** Maybe with Cornwall then is *(unclear)* send people down to Cornwall.

**S:** I think the idea of organising a retreat there which they can get to, but which some people, some Order Members from up here, can go down to is a very good idea if that is practicable.

**Marichi:** Especially if it could be done in the summer months, when it is quite an attractive place to go to anyway.

**S:** Quite. but that would certainly give them some contact with Order Members other than Manjuvajra if they wish to have that contact. but it may be that the Cornwall situation just requires several more years of hard slog, whether it's by one person, or two or three. That may just be the situation. I think, though things are going really well at 'Sukhavati', at 'Pundarika', in Brighton or even in Norfolk to some extent; though things are going really well, in a sense for the last few years we have had it quite easy, this is what I feel. We have not had to face and overcome - most of us - real difficulties. Very few people have worked really hard, all out, for quite a long time. There aren't very many who have done this. Most have taken in pretty easy. So we shouldn't regard this as the norm. For instance we don't have any difficulties with our society; really no-one attacks us, no-one is actively hostile. No-one is trying to subvert

what we are doing or anything like that. We really do have it quite easy in many ways. In some ways we are quite soft. You see what I mean? If you think how people doing this sort of work might have to face difficulties in say Russia or some other such country. They wouldn't be having it as easy as we have it here. I think on the whole we are quite soft. I think we have to have a much more determined, much more vigorous approach. Very few people have been really out on a limb, and really had to push themselves, whether in their individual spiritual lives or in an organisational way. Very very few have done this even for a short time. *[pause]*

So we mustn't think that it's always going to be nice and easy. Change may take place. All these things that are a bit fashionable may become unfashionable. We may be going very much against the tide at some time in certain areas. This may all change. So we have to be prepared for that sort of thing, spiritually prepared. It may be that some Order Members, even if there are three or four of you somewhere, you may find very little in the way of results for several years. But you are having to keep on at it. So far we have chosen on the whole very nice, pleasant, easy areas. Even London is easy to get going something really in many ways. Norfolk is nice and easy and things are going well there. Brighton is quite easy. Truro is a bit more difficult.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Purley is impossible.

**S:** No! Purley's going much better now! A bit of energy has been put into the Centre as Centre. Before what energy was put in for several years? Practically none. Really. To 'Aryatara' as a Centre. *[pause]* Most people are, in a way, much much too easygoing.

**Lokamitra:** But it would seem that it is not only the situation that is difficult, but the fact that Manjuvajra's alone.

**S:** Yes

**Aryamitra:** Would you say this was a general policy with 'Mitrata' or not?

**S:** It's not policy; it's more like principle. I think we must recognise that on the whole we've had it quite easy. Things have gone pretty smoothly We have not had any real opposition, say, or real difficulties. The main difficulties are helping people get over

their various emotional problems and then the raising of money to finance our various positive projects. These have been the two great actual difficulties.

**Dharmapala:** We did talk quite a lot about it at the Christmas retreat.

**S:** About?

**Dharmapala:** About Cornwall. One of the points that Vajrabodhi made in particular was the sort of economics of manpower, of having Centres in places like Cornwall, where it was difficult getting (*unclear*) and perhaps Order Members in such situations could well be used to greater benefit elsewhere.

**S:** Yes, there is that to consider. But then Order Members must consider that before they go practically. And also you don't always know. Some particular place may look very unpromising; you may get quite a few Order Members. I would never have thought that we would have done so well in New Zealand. Just one Order Member going up there - that's all - and not an experienced Order Member, and a valiant Order Member; or at least he got valiant going out there, and with a full time job most of the time, and yet he started our Movement there and now there are ten Order Members, and there are only two Order Members who have been out there for a very long period, and I have been there for a very short period. That's all. Otherwise it all stemmed from Akshobya. *[pause]* So you can't always tell. For instance, the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara was set up in Hampstead because they thought that's the intellectual area and all those intellectuals would come flocking along to the Vihara. But did they? Of course they didn't. You don't always know. So wherever you happen to be or decide to be it seems you just have to go on plugging away, either on your own or in the company of your friends and fellow Order Members until success is achieved. What else can you do? No doubt you swop around sometimes, just to have a bit of a change. But I think once we have started something anywhere, I don't think we should lose that. Once something has been put into it already. Whether it is the same Order Member or whether it's other Order Members.

**Chintamani:** What has been your idea? To give up the Centre, and stay living in Cornwall?

**Manjuvajra:** Well, one of the things that is getting difficult in Cornwall was the fact that I committed myself to working for a period of time, rather (*unclear*) move up in



a few months time I would be handing in my notice for that particular job. So that act stirred me into thinking about what I would be doing next year. I just feel really that I want a break from the Centre there really.

\_\_\_\_\_: You have been there how long?

**Manjuvajra:** Two and a half years.

**Chintamani:** How do you feel about the lack of contact with your *(unclear)* [pause]

**Manjuvajra:** What, with the Centre you mean, or with me personally?

**Chintamani:** You personally.

**Manjuvajra:** Well, I didn't realise that there was that much. I mean I don't feel too much of a lack of contact.

**S:** You mean when you are here or when you are away?

**Manjuvajra:** Either here or there. I think I feel more contact when I am away. [pause]

\_\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: I don't understand that. How can you have more contact when you are not here?

**Manjuvajra:** Well, because it is a feeling of support.

**S:** I think that when I was in Cornwall, I spent all the time when I was down there very much in contact with the whole Order. And sometimes when I was just sitting in my chalet it was as though the whole Order was just sitting around. I felt it as tangibly as that, quite tangibly.

**Ananda:** I don't think that had much to do with physical location at all, purely a state of mind.

**Chintamani:** How do you feel now that you're here amongst everybody? [pause]

\_\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: Is it not more important to sort out Cornwall than how Manjuvajra feels about circumstances .....

**Chintamani:** Well it's emerged out of the conversation. That's all I'm asking.*(unclear)*

**S:** Well, can we sort out Cornwall then? It is basically to be sorted out between you and the Centre that you are part of. It is probably too specific to be discussed here generally. But have you, before this, communicated with other Order Members with a view perhaps to their going there and taking your place?

**Manjuvajra:** No. I have just mentioned it. I mean the idea.... these particular thoughts have only really crystalized in the past five or six days.

**S:** Well maybe you just have to get together with the Order Members from 'Pundarika' and talk it over with them and see what they have to say. My own feeling is that once having started up anything anywhere in the name of the Friends we ought not to close it down without very very good reason. Partly at least because it is letting down the people in that particular area connected with that particular Centre.

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)* [pause]

**S:** Well maybe in the course of these few days you could just get together *(unclear)* Order Members and of course if any Order Member does not want to be *(unclear)* but just feels interested and would like perhaps to consider going there to be with Manjuvajra for a longer or shorter period, well obviously they will need to approach him and say something.

All right, any other comment or point with regard to the other branches connected with 'Pundarika'?

**Lokamitra:** Brighton, West London, Norfolk, 'Sukhavati', Castle Acre? [pause]

**Vessantara:** Since I've been in Brighton I have really appreciated what Buddhadasa's done there and I am really sorry he is not here. I feel that *(unclear)*.

**S:** I think the sooner Brighton becomes an autonomous Centre the better.

**Vessantara:** I second that.

**S:** I have been thinking that for some time. As soon as it can be got together. The same with regards to Norfolk.

All right, other Centres. Let's try to have them in chronological order. Which was the one we started up after 'Pundarika'?

\_\_\_\_\_: Glasgow.

**S:** As a Centre.

\_\_\_\_\_: Glasgow.

**S:** Glasgow. Everybody happy with Glasgow? *[pause]* Anybody ever go to Glasgow? *[Laughter]*

**Aryamitra:** I have just come back.

**S:** When I went up there last I was very pleased with Glasgow. Now they are rather scattered, not to say dismembered. The minutes tell a very inspiring story indeed. I noticed when they lost their premises, both community house and also the Centre premises, the minutes seem to explode into life. It was quite amazing to get them. So even though they are not quite so well established as regards place as one would like, but I feel things, if anything, are better there than ever. I feel that....

**Uttara:** I would disagree.

**S:** You would disagree?

**Uttara:** Yeah, after my recent visit.

**S:** What would you say?

**Uttara:** I felt that maybe taking into consideration because they haven't really got a Centre or got things together, I didn't feel terribly happy with the place.

**S:** The place where they have been having some of their meetings you mean?

**Uttara:** Yes, there was all sorts of things I wasn't happy about. I just didn't feel... It was a bit shaky. Just what was going on. I think people were having certain conflicts between each other and I think maybe this was a reflection of just what was happening there. A certain uneasiness.

**S:** Did you talk about that to the people there?

**Uttara:** Yes. I talked to the people about it.

**S:** But then if you think that is at all serious or important, then take the opportunity of the Convention to get together with them and talk about it more fully. How recent was your visit?

**Uttara:** Just last week.

**S:** Ah. Well my minutes go down to about two weeks ago. *[Laughter]* There certainly did seem to be a lot of energy around in Glasgow, within the Order at least which just didn't seem to be there before. So I hope everything can be sorted out. Judging just by those minutes, I am not worried about the future of Glasgow, with or without premises. *[pause]*

After Glasgow, Surrey? *[pause]* I feel quite happy about Surrey too. They seem to have come to life in recent months. Has anyone else noticed this or not?

**Ashvajit:** I feel that there is a really good sense of working together in the Sangha down there and that there is an easy atmosphere between them. I wouldn't describe it as easy, it's more sort of electric at times! *(Unclear)*

**S:** I just get the impression sort of sitting more or less at the centre of things, even though out in Norfolk, that in recent months sort of almost a little wave of energy has moved around the whole Movement from Centre to Centre. I get this impression quite definitely; that it has sort of swept around, just like that. Maybe it hasn't reached Truro yet, but it will!

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)* *[Laughter]*

**S:** Anyone not happy about anything in connection with Surrey?

All right, which is next after Surrey? Helsinki?

**Vajradaka:** Things seem to be going very well in Helsinki. When I left I was very happy with the situation and since that time I have had a couple of letters from Buddhadasa which, based on what I already knew about the situation, shows that everything was growing very well.

**S:** Then of course, there is New Zealand. There is the Centre in Auckland, the Centre in Christchurch; these are both autonomous Centres. It all seems to be going well there, though they had a bit of a shake-up as regards premises in Auckland. It's not sorted out yet, but I'm not worried about it. *[pause]* I will probably be going out there before the next Convention. Is that all the Centres? Or have we forgotten any? *[pause]* All right. What about representatives, because we have got representatives too. Vajrayogini?

**Vajradaka:** Sulochana was first I think.

**S:** Was she?

**Vajradaka:** The first representative, and then after that there was Vajrayogini.

**Lokamitra:** It seems a bit irrelevant Sulochana being representative now that there is a FWBO branch, soon to be an FWBO Centre.

**S:** Well that is so, but we have left it until now because representatives appointed by the Order can't be not appointed as it were without the *(unclear)*. *[pause]* Vajrayogini?

\_\_\_**(Woman)**\_\_\_: *(unclear)*

**S:** Yes, because we now have an FWBO. A representative is only *(unclear)* until there is a Centre or Branch there.

**Vajradaka:** I feel personally that the post of representative in Holland is a sort of a flash in the pan and now there is just a pile of smoke. There is nothing very much happening as far as Vajrayogini is concerned with FWBO activities.

**S:** She's not even a postbox you feel.

**Vajradaka:** No not really.

**S:** Well Jarek is certainly trying to get the retreat together, to find a place for it.

**Vajradaka:** I feel that Jarek is doing much more than Vajrayogini. She feels, and she told me this, that she doesn't want to have anything to do with organisations; and it seems a bit irrelevant in a way her being FWBO representative with her present attitude. Not only that but I just feel that it isn't a good footing for us.

**S:** Right, yes.

**Sulochana:** I haven't *(unclear)* and I would like to be concerned about things in Norfolk. They can't be just rubbed out.

**S:** No. There is only a need for a representative if there is no FWBO activities in the area.

**Sulochana:** It would be nice to be included in some sort of activities *(unclear)* not have anything.

\_\_\_**(Woman)**\_\_\_: But you are part of the Norfolk Chapter. Isn't that right? You still are involved.

**S:** Well there have been Chapter meetings, haven't there, as far as I know.

\_\_\_**(Woman)**\_\_\_: Is that formal chapter or.....?

**S:** No, the Chapter meets once a week doesn't it?

**Vajradaka:** The Order meets once a week. There is a difference between the Order meeting, which is the Chapter meeting, the meeting of all the Order members in that area and the Council of FWBO in Norwich.

**Sulochana:** Yes well *(unclear)*

**Lokamitra:** Well maybe you should see the people on the Council there, and if there's something really (*unclear*) bring it up.

**Nagabodhi:** Maybe you could work on transcriptions.

**Sulochana:** I would be glad to do some.

**S:** Well then, you just get in contact with Devamitra or Nagabodhi.

**Sulochana:** Well I already asked him and he said something about let's see what you can do first. Well I offered, and I wouldn't have offered if I couldn't do it. I really wouldn't. I wouldn't do such a thing unless it was able to do it. I have done it before for other group meetings. (*Unclear*) before I went to Cambridge. I wouldn't offer my services if I couldn't do it. I think it would be good to just give me a try. You know not just to (*unclear*) me for work that it valuable. I would like to be able to do something that is for the Order.

**Nagabodhi:** Have you got a cassette recorder?

**Sulochana:** I have.

**Nagabodhi:** Could you do some transcribing with one?

**Sulochana:** Yes.

**S:** Ah, there you are. [*pause*] Can we come back to Vajrayogini.

**Vajradaka:** I don't know whether .... a question that has to come up is whether we feel that we would like to have a non Order Member or non Order Members as representatives, because there are a number of non Order Members, one in Holland and one in Sweden, who would like to do it. One actually having asked, that is Giordano in Sweden, who has definitely asked to be a representative, and on clarification this representative for him would be just in terms of being a letter box. He would have information about retreats and the FWBO, what we were doing and would give that information and literature to people.

**S:** By the way in his letter he says that he is coming on the European retreat and he hopes to visit '*Sukhavati*' too.

**Vajradaka:** He wants to work there.

**S:** Does he?

**Vajradaka:** Yes.

**S:** Good.

**Lokamitra:** Did this question of non Order Members wanting to be our representatives; this has come up with several cases in England too. It seems something which we do have to think a little bit about.

**Nagabodhi:** In particular because I understand Giordano teaches meditation.

**Vajradaka:** That latest letter mentions that he's taking four meditation classes, I think it is, teaching Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana. He started with a small group of people who were interested in Buddhism and meditation and it just started to grow and this is in a small town in South Sweden; and I can't remember if there is an exact number of people. He mentions the number of people in that letter. I think if I remember rightly it was about sixty people altogether a week. (*Whistle - Phew!*) [*Laughter*]

**S:** Anyway does..... Oh! Oh, sorry yes sixty, "*with together sixty persons*", yes, right.

**Vajradaka:** Which is quite amazing. We had a one day retreat there which was very positive and very good, and didn't have very much publicity, but twenty five people turned up immediately. So for him I think a representative would be most appropriate. As far as Jarek goes in Holland, I think that if he was asked he would like to do it. He would say yes. That was if people felt that it was appropriate that non Order Members were representatives; and that would mean that we would have to define, quite carefully, what the title 'representative' was.

**S:** Or even perhaps change the title. Has anybody got any ideas about this?

**Vangisa:** It seems to me that once we give anybody what you might call an official recognition of somebody not an Order Member, we're exposing ourselves. If he's not ready to become an Order Member is he ready to .... he's not ready for ordination is he ready for anything else? Ready, so to speak, to be sponsored by us in any capacity. We're responsible for him.

**Vajradaka:** Well it depends on the responsibility that we allow ourselves to give to them.

**Vangisa:** We can certainly give them a title of any kind. (*Unclear*)

**Lokamitra:** It could be done this way. (*Unclear*) the Order and affiliated to a particular Centre, so it would be affiliation. It would be....

**S:** Of the individual.

**Lokamitra:** It would be an alternative of the group. The individual or the group, so that he would just be a....

**Subhuti:** They wouldn't be strongly associated with us. They wouldn't be, as it were, members of the Order. They wouldn't have our total approval.

**Vajradaka:** You mean rather than saying when a branch is connected with a Centre.

**Lokamitra:** It's something quite different. It's only just come to my mind. I don't know the ins and outs of it but with affiliation you ask for affiliation. It's not something that comes from the parent body as it were. It doesn't have to be. So it would be a quite loose association but there would be some sort of relationship there.

**S:** There wouldn't be any real control.

**Lokamitra:** No. You would cease to recognise them as being affiliated to you.

[End of side one Side two]

It is very difficult. You can't do much in those situations.

\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: What about just having a person as the recognised contact point. So that they receive information of our activities, but if anyone else writes to us from that country they could either (*unclear*) but not having any responsibility for speaking even. (*Unclear*)

**S:** This is what Vajradaka made clear to Giordano. It may well be that Giordano is the proper person, Jarek too, but we would be deciding also to some extent in a general way. We might sometimes be misled by some people. People might want to be our representative or letter box to get recognition and they might say well I represent the FWBO and get all sorts of ideas of their own. We have to consider that possibility.

**Vangisa:** It seems to me if a person is leading meditation classes and using our meditation techniques, it makes it rather more important to have our kind of recognition. More than if he's not doing something.

**S:** Right. I met Giordano. He was on the last European retreat, and he does seem to be quite a solid and reliable sort of person. Quite determined. He's a man of about forty.

**Subhuti:** It seems to be something even if we limit it to simply being a contact, we should be fairly sparing.....

**S:** Right, indeed, yes.

**Subhuti:** We should really know the person.

**S:** Vajradaka, can you say that you know Jarek well enough to be able to, as it were, represent him?

**Vajradaka:** I don't think that he would knowingly or consciously do anything against our principles. When he organised and translated the weekend retreat, I was so happy about the way that he did it. I felt that he was really in the spirit of the Friends. Someone who is giving himself to growing in that way as well.

**S:** Do you feel the same way about Giordano?

**Vajradaka:** I think I trust Giordano very much too, yes. I think that Giordano has a few ideas which I don't agree with. Like, for example, in some of his meditation

groups he doesn't say, "*This is a Buddhist group*", he says, "*It's basically meditation and yoga*", and they also do some kind of very light Gestalt work; and he does seem to have an attitude that Buddhism is 'therapy' but using the word 'therapy' with a capital T, and in a very broad sense, which we did talk about with him. But I think, as far as the doctrine goes, Jarek is much more on the ball having actually taught Buddhism himself at Leiden University.

**S:** Another possibility that occurs to me is would it not perhaps be possible to appoint an Order Member, that is in England, with responsibility for a certain area in say Europe, and anyone wanting information.... Supposing say you were responsible for Holland, yeah.

**Vajradaka:** Let's say that! [*Laughter*]

**S:** I'm just using you as an example. You were responsible for Holland. Then it would be "Representative of Holland: Upasaka Vajradaka, care of Jarek so and so, some such address in Holland". Yeah. All the correspondence came to him, though it was addressed to you. He opened it and dealt with it on your behalf. What do you think of that sort of arrangement?

**Subhuti:** It strikes me in some ways as more dangerous because he's writing as....

**S:** No, when I say he'll deal with it, I mean he'll send information, send adequate information.

**Dhammadinna:** If it is an Order Member as a representative you could write all sorts of things (*unclear*)

**S:** Well those can be passed on.

**Dhammadinna:** You have to trust him with that discretion that (*unclear*) will not. It's not really in fact very much difference.

**Ashvajit:** The difficulty is that I think one does know what the line is or one doesn't. If one doesn't know about this you just make a mistake. That could very easily happen. We'd be let down through ignorance. It's a very delicate situation.

**Chintamani:** It's quite simple. The person acts as your secretary and sends basic information as in literature - you can send them a programme; and anything of a more personal nature then that should be forwarded to you and you answer it, send it back and they send it on.

\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Subhuti:** What's to be gained from this? That's one thing. Why does Giordano want to be a representative? What can.....?

**S:** Well he wants the Friends to be started up there. He wants Order Members to go there. He wants to be ordained, although that isn't possible at this stage. He is committed to the Friends and Jarek - I won't say he's committed but at least he's very dedicated.

**Subhuti:** Couldn't he just have stacks of these letters and so on without it ever being announced. If you knew someone was going to Sweden or whatever.....

**S:** If we want to include it in the '*Newsletter*', say, knowing that that circulates quite widely, the Friends say in Holland is represented by Upasika Vajrayogini, so anyone in Holland happening to see a '*Newsletter*' wanting to make contact can make it.

**Subhuti:** What can they do with the contact once they've made it? Do you know what I mean? All they're going to get is a '*Newsletter*'.

**S:** Well we hope there will be retreats in that particular country, and they can even book and keep in touch with London.

**Subhuti:** We can just as easily put in a part of the '*Newsletter*', "*there are frequent European retreats. Anyone interested can please contact.....*"

**Nagabodhi:** We have done that in fact with the coming European retreat.

**Subhuti:** (*unclear*) make a more general point at the end of that list of dates in the '*Newsletter*' that we are developing contacts throughout Europe.

**Marichi:** Does Vajrayogini actually get people writing to her or telephone calls very often?

**Vajradaka:** I don't know about very often.

**Marichi:** How many people do?

**Vajradaka:** When I was there a letter came, although admittedly it was someone whom I'd met on the train, asking about the European retreat. I'm not sure.

**S:** You had a very good retreat last year. A good number of people were there a you've had further shorter retreats.

**Marichi:** Were there people who contacted the Friends through Vajrayogini or were they people you contacted?

**Mangala:** If you're let's say based in Holland or somewhere we might sort of put an ad in some appropriate papers, say perhaps every month or something, and say that the FWBO exists and if you would like information write to him and he would send them one of our little pamphlets about who we are and retreats, you know.

**Sona:** But people when they ask that person may also go to that person or some person.....

**Mangala:** I think it should be made very clear to the person that all he does is send just information about the dates and times.

**Sona:** It's a bit difficult because sometimes you get people just knocking on your door and asking you about the Friends. It's difficult just to shove a pamphlet in their hands and say that's it, off you go.

**Dhammadinna:** Absolutely, I mean we work on personal contact, that's how we work so you've really got to have it in writing.

**Vajradaka:** If it hadn't been for the personal contact of a few people here quite a lot of us wouldn't be here already.

**Ananda:** But we didn't make it official.

**Vajradaka:** That's true, but you were kind of working for the Friends, doing things like jumble sales and things like that. And so I think it's the same with Jarek. He at the moment has, in a sense, got a position in the FWBO. He's FWBO European retreat organiser and he was prepared to take that responsibility upon himself. So to the extent that he has taken that position on to some extent he's got responsibility.

**Vangisa:** It seems that there are two separate issues, or two separate cases involved here. (*unclear*) In one of them you've got one person who's put in a lot of work organising and so on and we are thinking of appointing, or the suggestion has been made that he should be appointed our official representative instead of somebody else. But in Sweden you have got somebody who seems to be in a different situation. He is organising things on his own which includes making use of Buddhism and of our particular basic meditation techniques, and who has asked.....

**S:** Can we just check up the facts first. He is a Buddhist first of all. He definitely wants to be identified with the Friends.

**Vangisa:** Exactly.

**S:** He hasn't just acquired our methods, he was teaching and so on before he came into contact with the Friends.

**Vangisa:** What I meant by that was what Vajradaka had said about a bit of Gestalt therapy and so on. He seemed to be leading a combination. Of course I don't know the facts there. But whatever, for reasons of his own he has asked to be our representative. In other words, this is something that is important to him personally, so it isn't really.....

**S:** No it is also something he wants to do for us.

**Vangisa:** It's something he wants to do for us.

**S:** He wants to further the interests of the Friends in Sweden. He wants to plant the Friends in Sweden.

**Vangisa:** So this is something really that has be followed up with him. It isn't a question of general theory.

**Ashvajit:** It seems to me that what is really necessary is more personal contact, and that some Order Member who feels relatively free could go over there.

**S:** It seems much more like that, yes. I think it would be good if we could have an Order Member in Europe who moved about with caretaking (*unclear*) with these people. I think this is really what is wanted.

**Marichi:** I think Jinamata was going to be doing that to some extent in Holland.

**S:** Yes, but she of course will probably be going to Germany. *[pause]*

\_\_\_\_\_: How about (*unclear* - lots of clattering and banging on the bare floorboards!)

**Mangala:** I am not sure quite what you are proposing actually.

**S:** I haven't proposed anything. *[Laughter]* I suggested a few minutes ago that it might be a good idea for an Order Member to be, as it were, if you like, the Order's roving ambassador in Europe, keeping up contacts and having a caretaker's address in Holland, a caretaker's address in Sweden and so on, and spending time moving about and keeping up these contacts, paving the way for the establishment of FWBO Centres. Vajradaka's been doing something of that kind. Buddhadasa's been doing a bit too.

**Vajradaka:** Maybe I can say at this point that over the last three years I have been keeping up contact with Holland very regularly and I don't want to do it any more, and so, you know, I just tell you that because I think that there is already quite a few seeds planted in Holland and Sweden and a few even, but not such big ones, in Copenhagen actually. The main ones being in Holland, and it would be really a pity if they would just fade away. So I think that there are quite a number of possibilities of people going over to Holland for weekends and having their fares paid, because after all when I went to the last weekend retreat in Holland I got enough money from that retreat and there were only 12 of us, which would have paid for a ferry both ways. So it wouldn't

be very much financial skin upon others, and also a great deal to be gained in other ways.

**S:** I suppose the great question is whether we have the people who could spare the time and energy to go.

**Chintamani:** Why don't you want to continue contact with Holland?

**Vajradaka:** Because I fell that I want to withdraw completely from all kinds of situations where I have responsibility. *[Laughter] [pause]*

**S:** Unfortunately it doesn't seem as though very much can be done about Europe. It's unfortunate that if seeds have been planted that we can't do anything about cultivating them a little bit more.

**Vangisa:** It seems really appropriate as far as Holland is concerned, even if Vajradaka doesn't want to do it, it's obvious though we should make an effort to keep up the contact and do as much as possible. And as regards an official representative we have got one Order Member there, whether she is doing anything or not, in this particular matter we just decide whether to keep her on nominally as a person who goes on the back of the 'Newsletter', or to have nobody on it for the time being. (*Unclear*)

**S:** Do you think there is any point in having Vajrayogini as representative, even just nominally or do you think that's worse than useless as it were?

**Vajradaka:** I don't think it's worse than useless. I think nominally it's okay. I don't know whether it's much use for her. But from our point of view it is not worse than nothing.

**S:** At least people contacting her might get at least some information, a 'Newsletter' at least, or something like that.

**Vajradaka:** There is also a kind of , it's a bit roundabout, because eventually it's going to get to Jarek so if people send it to her, or ask requests for information from her, well she has a certain amount of 'Newsletters' and books which she can send off. But if they ask for information about retreats, well then she has to get in to then get in contact with Jarek.



**Nagabodhi:** Well I think as far as retreats are concerned I would put Jarek's name and address as retreat organiser without any hesitation in the 'Newsletter', but as far as the back page goes, representing the Movement, representing the Order it has to be Vajrayogini as far as I'm concerned, no matter how admirable the individual is, simply because of the way we function. It seems to be setting a wrong precedent to suggest ever that the FWBO is anything but the activity of the WBO.

**Ashvajit:** Yes, when this situation arose in Christchurch in New Zealand with (*unclear name*) as he was then, it went on for years.

**S:** He got quite anguished about it. He wrote me quite anguished letters; that he had no sort of recognition from the Friends, even though he was the Friends really for several years. But we didn't give him any recognition.

**Ashvajit:** But that seemed to help rather than hinder him, it made him even more enthusiastic.

**S:** (*unclear*) [*pause*] It seems rather to me that rather regretfully we just have to leave things pretty much as they are. It looks like that. It isn't very satisfactory, in fact not at all satisfactory, but I don't see what else we can do. Except that, as Nagabodhi suggests, include Jarek's name as prominently as we can as retreat organiser, inside with his address, but not on the back page.

**Vajradaka:** What about as far as Giordano in Sweden is concerned?

**S:** Well it would seem as though really we are not in a position to do anything there.

**Marichi:** He's mentioned in an article without his address, but it is possible for people in Sweden to get in touch with him.

**Nagabodhi:** They might get in touch with us to ask where he is.

**S:** I mean certainly the address can be given as an address of someone in contact with us but listing perhaps on the back page as representative, or even in any capacity is rather another matter. I just feel a bit regretful, quite regretful, that we can't take more advantage of a very positive and very dynamic situation.

**Marichi:** It seems no point in taking half measures, because we just can't meet what (*unclear*)

**Vajradaka:** I thought that your idea of the 'care of' system wasn't too objectionable.

**S:** That is true, it's not bad, but on the other hand, I think we do have to very careful.

**Uttara:** Could you not have it under the heading of 'Information Bureau' or something like that? 'Information Post' or something like that.

**S:** Information is not bad, but perhaps we should be still quite careful and not include it on the back page; having it somewhere inside: "*for information about the FWBO from such and such people at such and such address*". Something of that sort.

**Aryamitra:** Information (*unclear*) could be (*unclear*) retreat bookings.

**Nagabodhi:** I could put the article in question in part of Vajradaka's travels in Europe, rather than .....(*break or fault in original tape - small section missing*)

**Marichi:** .....that seems to be a very important point.

**S:** Well many people know English and are willing to write and get it in English, but some people just don't know English, and have to have the information in their own tongue. But I think that probably is the best we can do for the time being, that Nagabodhi in some suitable place inserts the names of these people with their addresses and makes it clear that information about the Friends, particularly information about retreats in Europe can be obtained from them. That doesn't commit us to recognising the representative or anything like that. At the same time, it does at least to some extent keep the channels of communication open. So perhaps Nagabodhi could even draw up something by the end of the Convention and just read it to us before the Convention closes so that we can finally approve that form of words. Because it's quite an important matter.

**Nagabodhi:** Actually I will propose what I could do straight away. Jarek is already mentioned in the article on the European retreats. Giordano is mentioned in my interview with Vajradaka, and also what he's doing, his kind of leaning. I could simply add, there in brackets, his address.

**Marichi:** Yes, it says here it's not really a Friends Centre but they are very close to the spirit of the Friends and very friendly towards us.

**S:** I think something more, "and wish to strengthen their contacts with us", something like that.

**Marichi:** It has got one more sentence "in a way they are poised for an Order Member to go over".

**S:** That's good yes. They are very much so. Maybe Order Members will bear it in mind, those who are in a position to go over at any time.

**Nagabodhi:** So I think that is what I propose to do.

**S:** We also hope that when 'Sukhavati' is functioning, some of the people in such countries will be then able to come over and spend a period - possibly even quite a lengthy period - at the end of which they receive ordination, and then go back, possibly with others, to continue these sort of activities, but that's of course still quite a long way ahead. Meanwhile if a few Order Members could get around Europe visiting these people and possibly taking weekend retreats, that would be very good.

**Vangisa:** Well the situation isn't all that different to what Glasgow was a few years ago.

**S:** That's true.

**Vangisa:** And look what's happened there.

**S:** Or Brighton.

**Vangisa:** Um..... No. *[Laughter]*

**S:** Anyway is there any other matter of general Order business? We've gone on quite late actually with this matter.

**Lokamitra:** Just the meeting on Sunday evening. If anyone's got anything for the agenda, any suggestions, could they let me have them as soon as possible. If possible sometime tomorrow.

**S:** Any other further Order business? Did we get through all the Centres? Let's make quite sure of that. Are there any Centres, any Branches? There is a Branch, isn't there, at - or a group, I'm not exactly sure of the status at Wellington connected with Christchurch. They call it a group, I'm not quite sure of the exact .....

**Ashvajit:** In the last letter that Achala wrote in 'Shabda' he said that he wasn't even sure about calling himself a representative as yet. He is playing a very low profile.

**S:** Well they have had meetings and classes. *[pause]*

**Dharmapala:** What about FWBO Castle Acre. That's going to shift, or is in the process of shifting.

**S:** No it won't shift, but if I shift then Castle Acre folds up and something else starts.

**Vessantara:** I don't think we should stop it and restart it. *[Laughter]*

**S:** There's no activities apart from *[drowned by loud and long laughter]* activities have all been carefully avoided!

**Aryamitra:** Is Castle Acre a Centre?

**S:** No.

\_\_\_\_\_ : A Branch?

**S:** It's a Branch. But a Branch without activities. It has the legal position of a Branch but it has no activities.

\_\_\_\_\_ : But it's active!

**Devamitra:** Are all the Order Members associated with that particular branch liable for their own fees for 'Shabda' and so on?

**S:** I think so. I think so. Just take it that they are! *[Laughter]*

**Dharmapala:** Is Nigel Goodman regarded as a representative in *(unclear)*

\_\_\_\_\_: Who?

**S:** Obviously not. Nigel Goodman. He certainly channels information and talks to people about the FWBO.

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)*

**S:** Yes, but to the best of my knowledge they are not FWBO classes, but obviously they'd like to be. He is one of those who has asked for ordination by the way, and the Glasgow chapter has considered that but recommends that he should have more contact with other Order Members, especially those in Scotland, before he is actively considered for ordination.

Perhaps this isn't a bad moment just to enquire of those from Glasgow, what connections now are being kept up with Dundee, Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

**Gotami:** *(unclear)* have some contact with Edinburgh but not an awful lot. Andrew *(unclear)* retreats and...

\_\_\_\_\_: Can you speak up!

**Gotami:** He comes over on some of the retreats but that's all.

**S:** From Edinburgh. He was on the retreat I was at, wasn't he.

**Gotami:** *(unclear)*

**S:** And Aberdeen?

**Gotami:** I haven't had any contact with Nigel since just before Christmas. *(Unclear)*

**S:** Oh. His father died. Dundee?

**Mangala:** I saw Nigel a week ago. He stayed in Brighton and he was *(unclear)*

**Gotami:** We have frequent letter contact. We frequently write letters backwards and forwards.

**S:** Yes. He writes to me quite a bit. *[pause]*

A sort of general point that occurs to me; that if we do establish contacts, especially regular contacts, I think we ought to be very careful about following them up. I just get the feeling - this sort of discussion over the past ten or fifteen minutes - that we have made quite a few contacts that in a way we are either not keeping up or not able to keep up. I feel this a bit about Scotland; I feel this a bit about Holland too. I think we ought perhaps to be very very careful to think, before we make contacts and sort of get things going a bit, whether we do intend to keep up those contacts or not; and not just, as it were, drop them. I think this is quite important.

**Gotami:** This is one of the reasons I haven't done anything with Dundee because I just think we need to start going up *(unclear)* I think we need all our energy in Glasgow at the moment *(unclear)*

**S:** Though Dundee people have been to Glasgow, haven't they?

**Gotami:** They came once *(unclear)*.

**Vajradaka:** They really took the initiative. They made the contact.

**Devamitra:** Did you have also those same doubts at the last Convention; that you thought that perhaps some of us could sort of wander around from place to place doing something, and not necessarily following-up? Give a talk here and.... I mean inevitably you'll make contacts that way, so I mean in a sense that's a bit contradictory.

**S:** No, I'm thinking more in terms of the Centres. The Centre establishes a sort of official contact with a group of people, then they should be prepared to keep that up. As the individual Order Member goes around of course he'll make contacts. You can't just sort of inhibit that. He can just put those people in contact with a Centre and then it's up to them to find out more about us. But we mustn't take on any sort of regular

responsibility with people, especially just a small group of people, unless we're prepared to follow it up. Not just leave them high and dry, so to speak. You're making contact every time you get a lift. You can't stop it! *[pause]*

I think once we've sort of established a regular contact and we're doing things with regular Friends or have made a promise to do anything we must keep to that.

Anyway I think maybe we should have tea now.

**Subhuti:** Can I just ask that you be careful if you go out of the door don't leave it open behind you. We've had a lot of trouble here with the local kids breaking in. As soon as they see a door open they'll be in.

\_\_\_\_\_: You mean the front door downstairs

**Subhuti:** The front door downstairs. And I think from that point of view it would be good if people could arrive between nine thirty and ten. The door will be open between those hours and at no other time.

**Lokamitra:** In London, the 'Pundarika' people I suggest we postpone our meditation by half an hour and start at half past six.

**[Tea Break/End of Session]**

**[Next Session]**

**S:** This morning we come to plenary session three; the theme of which is 'The Unity of the Order; Class and Nationality'. The Unity of the Order is obviously something that we are already concerned about. This is not just a question of, as it were, organisational or structural unity, but spiritual unity. The harmony between all the individuals who make up the Order. So inasmuch as we're very much concerned with the unity of the Order, we must be aware of any factor which might possibly disrupt, in any way, that perfect unity and harmony. So it occurred to me that we could well give some thought to the question, in the first place, of class. Class in the social sense. Class in the sense that we use the term when we speak, say, of middle class, working class, class conflict, etc., etc. I think we should consider this sort of thing all the more in such as very often we aren't aware of how it operates. And the certain thing I have

in mind is a situation in which we think we're being influenced by Buddhism or we think that we're, as it were, thinking and acting on our own initiative but really, subtly, we're being influenced by class attitudes. That is attitudes derived ultimately from our own individual class background. And it could happen that within the Order as a whole, certain kinds of class attitudes become prevalent or are taken for granted; and it might be that, inasmuch as the Order perhaps as a whole tends to have more of one sort of class attitude than another, we tend to discourage from coming in, people with possibly another sort of class background. This is the sort of thing I'm thinking of. I must say I don't have any very definite ideas or conclusions to impart. It's much more like a sort of thinking aloud on my part. I'd like to hear what other Order Members have to say. I rather suspect that something quite interesting might emerge.

And in the same way with this question of nationality, which is perhaps less subtle but perhaps even more potent. At present most of the Order Members do come, as regards national origin, from the UK. As I mentioned yesterday there are ten from New Zealand, although some of those are of UK origin actually, and three Finns, one American, one Dutch, one of German origin, one of semi-Hungarian origin and so on. *[Laughter]* So we have also to be very careful that we don't sort of regard certain prevalent national attitudes as somehow bound up with the Order or as part of the Order's attitudes. Sometimes we might tend to identify the two, and as the Order spreads and people of different national background come in, we must watch this all the more carefully. Especially, for instance, those who form the majority nationality shouldn't expect those of, as it were, the minority nationality within the Order to sort of accept their national attitudes in fact as part and parcel of the whole Buddhist 'deal' as it were. This is the sort of thing that I've been thinking of, which I think we ought to explore and give some thought to, so that we realise the situation and so that we can preserve our unity and our harmony as an Order, even though we have coming in people of different class origins and people of different national backgrounds. Within the Order these things just should not matter at all. And we ought to be clear, we want to see things clearly, just so that these things should not matter at all. Of course originally people will have, or will have had, different class and national backgrounds - you can't cancel out that; but within the Order it shouldn't matter, it shouldn't count in any real sense, within the Order of fully committed people (*unclear*) regardless of class and regardless of nationality.

One recalls the Buddha's words with regard to the Sangha. Speaking in the context of the Hindu caste system. In India in ancient days there was no class, there was no

nationality, but there was caste. Something even more pervasive perhaps, even more powerful; and the Buddha said that just as the great rivers, the Ganga and Sarasvati and so on, on reaching the mighty ocean all lose their separate identities and their separate names and are reckoned all as simply 'the mighty ocean'; in the same way, he said, Brahmas and Kshatriyas and Vaishyas and Shudras - people of all these different caste origins - come into the Order, come into the spiritual community, and there they lose their separate identities and their separate names as Kshatriya and Brahmana and Vaishya and Shudra, and they are reckoned, he said, only 'Sakyaputtas', sons of the Sakya, sons of the Buddha, daughters of the Buddha, or children of the Buddha if you like. There's no more speaking of Brahmin Buddhists and Kshatriya Buddhists and so on. They lose those nomenclatures. They're simply sons and daughters, simply followers, disciples, of the Buddha, *Sakyaputras*.

So it's much the same way with us. Once we come into the Order, we shouldn't think of ourselves within the Order as being English or New Zealander or American or whatever it may happen to be; or middle class or working class. So I think we should try to take note of any sort of influence of this sort which creeps in or perhaps has started to creep in, and we should also take note of so that that particular factor does not, either now or in the future - I'm possibly rather thinking more of the future than of the present in this context - affect the unity and harmony of the Order.

So the whole discussion, and I hope there will be discussion, falls into really two halves. First of all about class, and secondly about nationality. Now Khema drew my attention to the fact a few minutes ago that yesterday we did really go rather on and on - or rather I went on and on - without thinking of any tea break. She informs me that some Order Members with apparently less stamina than me were rather fatigued and request very humbly to have a tea break today. So all right we'll talk about class [*Laughter*] before the tea break, and having dealt with that and exorcised it from the Order and rid any trace of it there, we'll have a little tea break, and refresh ourselves. Then we'll return to the attack and then we shall banish nationality! [*Laughter*] And after that will probably be lunch for everybody and possibly the same sort of thing in the afternoon, because it's even more likely in the afternoon I think that we'll just go, or I go, on and on! So a little tea break in the afternoon too. Yes.

So, all right, this question of class. I haven't really much more to say than I've already said. I don't have any very definite ideas or conclusions. I merely feel that this is a topic, or these are two topics, which simply should be ventilated. It represents an area

within which we should be aware, within which we should exercise our awareness. So I'd really like just to hear what other people have to say. Whether they notice anything of this sort, and whether they feel that the Order has insensibly adopted any particular class attitude and so on. And perhaps others may comment on those comments or have original suggestions or observations of their own, and let's see where it leads and whether we do come to any conclusions. But at least we shall have ventilated the subject and maybe in future be somewhat more aware in that particular connection.

So who'd like to start off? Who has something to say?

**Devamitra:** Something I'd like to say is an attitude which I think has affected most of us is a sort of prejudice against the middle class. Because it's a popular attitude too; a sort of pseudo-liberal attitude against middle class values generally, and I think it's affected quite a number of us here. I did hear of a particular Order Member at a particular Centre who felt quite resentful that most of the people coming along to that Centre were from a middle class background.

**S:** I don't want to discuss the question myself. I want you to discuss it but I'll just make one point here. Sometimes you have to distinguish say between middle class values and middle class people, yes. And you might be quite right in not being very favourably disposed towards middle class values; but if middle class people come along, even if they have those values, they are people. So one just treats them as people and as individuals. You don't adopt a cold or a stand-offish attitude towards them just because you can see that they are very middle class. Even though you may not like those middle class values. So just that.

Just to paraphrase that, we must always remember that even middle class people are also human. [*Laughter*]

**Vajradaka:** Do you mean you think that the kind of the working-class hero syndrome has been taken up to some degree?

**Devamitra:** I think it has to some degree, yes.

\_\_\_\_\_: Can you explain that. [*Laughter*]

**Uttara:** I would disagree. I was going to say I thought the Order as such was middle class. The attitudes were middle class.

**S:** Yes, it is the middle class people who run down the middle classes.

**Ratnapani:** It's the middle classes who hero-worship the working class hero.

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)* [Laughter]

**S:** Can you all speak up! *(obscured by sounds of moving furniture!!)* So as everything gets clearly tape recorded. *(More noise!!)*.

**Chintamani:** I think there has to be some sort of clarification, because the terms 'middle class' and.....

[End of tape Four Tape Five]

..... 'working class' really change their meaning somewhat, especially within the Order. It seems to me that when we speak of working class, the frame of reference that pops up is, what Bhante coined as "healthy, happy and human", and middle class seems to have the connotation of neurotic, etc., etc. I think that what's happened is that people identify neurotic, infantile, immature people with the middle classes, and healthy, happy, human people with the working classes. *(Unclear)* that might be generally true. possibly.

\_\_\_\_\_: That's totally wrong! [Laughter]

\_\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: Yes, I think people tend to do that but I doubt that is true. It may apply to some extent. I think you have to look at that quite carefully. I think to see the working class people as happy healthy pagans is somewhat...

**Chintamani:** I wasn't suggesting that they were but I think that's possibly what is happening.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes I think so but.....

**S:** *(unclear)*

\_\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: ....I don't think it's applicable personally. I think working class people have their own neuroses, if one wants to use that word, and their own problems.

**Dhammadinna:** I don't think that's a genuine wrong view. I mean I don't *(unclear)* at all

\_\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: I think there is a tendency. I think there is and people make those associations, yes. It may not be, you know, right all the time, but I think it's a sort of tendency to make those associations.

**Dhammadinna:** I come from a neurotic working class background! [Laughter] *(unclear)*

**Chintamani:** It might be middle class distortions *(unclear)*

**Ratnapani:** I just hadn't been aware of people aligning these two things - the healthy and the working class, the neurotic and the middle class.

**Mangala:** There was a survey I saw which has been done in Bristol, and there's two areas of Bristol that were looked at. One was a very middle class area and the other was a working class area, and the report said it equally produced neurotics, but that the middle class area produced more schizophrenics [Laughter], whereas the working class area produced manic depressives. *(laughter)(unclear)*.

**Chintamani:** They're manic depressive because they're beginning to mingle with the middle classes! It is arguable that neurosis only seeps into the working classes when they begin to adopt middle class values.

\_\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: Why? They live under work alienation. There's plenty of opportunity for neurosis there, without middle class values.

**Vessantara:** I think partly to the extent that - I'm not totally sure that I agree that many Order Members do things, see things - the working class as happy healthy human, the middle class as more neurotic - I think partly to the extent that that's true, that view has been partly produced by the way in which we see people who come along to the Centre with their jobs. We tend to see middle class people who have very

good jobs being rather more entrenched, and having less possibility of breaking free and being able to commit themselves, than working class people who do have very alienated jobs, who probably have less to lose in a sense and therefore it's easier for them to make the step of committing themselves more and probably giving up that background (*unclear*) ...

**Uttara:** The thing about alienating jobs. I feel that we all have alienating jobs. It isn't a case of just the working class have alienating jobs, I'm sure middle class people have alienating jobs too.

**Nagabodhi:** In some ways actually, I think this is my experience too, that so-called working class people are more set in their ways than the middle classes. The middle classes at least usually have a notion of mobility - their conditioning is towards social mobility whereas the working class conditioning isn't. And consequently you do get a tendency among the middle classes to explore alternatives.

**Chintamani:** One of which is the working class!

**Nagabodhi:** One of which is the working class. Yes.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: I think rather than to stress this attitude of class, I think that the stratas of class, that is difference in classes, is a thing of monarchy, is a thing of governments, is a thing of the political system of the day. I think the Ideal should be to transcend classes on the individual level first, and then we should have as a basis ideal ways of life, certain ways of life, not class. Class as I see it, (*unclear*) are a thing of royalty, nobility, landed gentry - of which I come from on my mother's side - for services rendered to the monarchy of the day the classes were made, the barons were made, the landed gentry. But they lived, they conformed to a certain way of life which was based on a certain amount of luxury (*unclear*) and of course it was a case of principles. You've got the rich nobleman who could be a cruel man, who could be immoral. He could be all the things which he shouldn't be, and yet you could get a man of a lower class, so-called, who has a better morality and a better ideal way of living than this so-called 'upper class' gentleman. So I think we should transcend the whole idea of class, because Communism came into being through this struggle to transcend from one class to another or to remove one class which was the upper class, the nobility, the landed gentry. Tolstoy is a famous exponent of this removal - a Russian nobleman. He transcended the very idea of class and he was dealing with compassionate ideals such

as his love for the animals - he became vegetarian although he was one of the nobility. And yet he transcended his own class.

**Manjuvajra:** I think you can talk about transcending ideas as an ideal. Nonetheless I still think you've got the sort of relative truth of the existence of different classes and so you have to deal with those conditionings.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: I know what you mean. You've got the residue left of your conditioning as whatever class you happen to be born into. It would be very difficult to do away with certain ways of thinking and your ways of life. You could not accept the lower form of life. I would say if we could have a classless society, then at what level are we aiming at? Have we got to go lower than the class we were born into or higher or. Where's...

**S:** So far as the Order is concerned, one should forget about class. That's why we're talking about it, so that, as I said, we can exorcise it, so that within the Order, class factors don't operate. We might have brought in a residue with us, of one type or another, but we manage to get rid of them so that we relate to one another and carry on our spiritual work on an entirely class-free basis. Now while you were talking I was thinking of a sort of concrete example. Let's assume that a particular person is coming to the Movement, or even coming to the Order, and he's of a very strongly middle-class background. Let's assume that he comes from a quite well-to-do middle class family. Let's assume he's had a very good job, he's had quite a bit of money and is accustomed to exercising quite a bit of responsibility. Now when he comes into the Order he'll have all that sort of conditioning with him. He may find it very easy and natural on account of his class background, that he takes the lead. That he becomes, as it were, a leader within a particular group of Order Members, who, let's assume for the sake of argument, have got quite a different sort of class background. So they may think it quite natural that this particular Order Member, with his very strongly middle class background, should take the position of leadership. But it isn't for any really Buddhist reasons. It's on account of the operation of these unconscious class factors: they expect the middle class person to take the lead.

Now I'm not saying that this necessarily happens or it always happens or anything like that. I'm just giving it as an example of the sort of thing that could happen - the way in which the class factor can intervene and influence things.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: I would like to enquire to what extent is the Order or Buddhism in particular going to put into practice the social teachings of the Buddha, rather than, not actually exclusive to, but rather than ceremony and such things...

**S:** Well, this is what we're concerned with now. This is what we mentioned that the Buddha said within the context of Hinduism - no caste within the Order. What we're saying, within the context of our society is we don't want any class within the Order. Before we can get rid of it we must detect it, within ourselves, in our own conditioning. It's this that I want you to consider. We accept that, yes, it shouldn't be there, but we know in certain instances it must be there, we are conditioned, so let it not be there, so let's try to see it and expose it. So this is the area within which I want the discussion to be.

**Ashvajit:** I certainly found that this was the case in myself. Shortly after I came into contact with the Movement, and also for quite a while after my ordination - I was very strongly conditioned by certain modes of behaviour which I felt to be appropriate, which I felt were right and I never questioned them. It was only after a while that I began to....

**S:** Give some concrete examples. You don't slurp your tea! *[Laughter]*

**Siddhiratna:** I think the concrete examples come from one person experiencing a middle class person within the Order, and I certainly think I felt Ashvajit's middle class-ness come across. I can imagine very much a lot of Order Members as the class prefect. I think some evenings at the Centre it's more like a cocktail party than a spiritual gathering as it were.

**S:** Taking cocktail party to be a middle class term.

**Siddhiratna:** I think on the whole, at least in these past two years or so, I think any class distinction seems to have more or less disappeared. I think there's still evidence of it, but my own personal opinion is that there's very little class distinction, and I was thinking about it yesterday, if you look at the office bearers, I think they're all public school people as far as I can remember. Yesterday Sona got elected to an office bearer and I understand he is working class so I think you can see that that in fact is being broken down.

**Sagaramati:** The Treasurer is working class! *[Loud Laughter obscuring a few comments]*

**Dhammadinna:** The secretary and the Convenor of the Order didn't go to a public school.

**Siddhiratna:** Did you go to a grammar school?

**Dhammadinna:** No. *[Laughter] (unclear)*

**Sulochana:** A person can have attributed to them, values - but they may not actually adhere to them. *(Unclear)*

**S:** I know this has happened in your case because I've met people who've met you, and they've been most impressed by you, and they think you're a sort of Duchess-like figure *[Laughter]* but I told them that you're wildly revolutionary. *[Laughter] (unclear)*

**Siddhiratna:** I think Bhante that maybe there's a group sort of consciousness in operation in, that if you get certain people whom you've just said are conditioned by their middle-class and public school backgrounds to lead, then a group will automatically impose leadership on them whether they want it or not.

**Marichi:** Or the opposite. They might impose the opposite.

**Siddhiratna:** What, that they don't want them to lead?

**Marichi:** Yes.

**Siddhiratna:** Well in a sense that would be more good.

**Sulochana:** Why?

**Siddhiratna:** Because they'd be more aware of.....

**Sulochana:** But they may not actually have the values that are attributed to them.



**S:** This brings up what I said earlier on, about dealing with people as people.

**Ananda:** Can I just clarify Sulochana. I'm not quite sure what you're saying. That there are people who can lead, who are naturally able to lead because of their image, background...

**Sulochana:** No, I'm not saying that.

**S:** No Sulochana's saying something more complicated than that. She's saying that you might have a situation in which people think that a certain person is of a middle-class background therefore they've got a middle-class conditioning, so they might have a natural tendency to lead. So therefore that should be discouraged. But actually, though you are labelling them as of middle class origins, though they might be, their attitude in fact is not middle-class, and therefore there is no point in your trying to decondition them. They've already deconditioned themselves, but you're continuing to see them as they were, in terms of their class origins which is not fair, because they are no longer that. This is what I think Sulochana is saying.

**Sulochana:** Where they come from is not necessarily what values they hold, and they should be seen as people as they are now, not as where they came from or what they used to be or where they went to school.

**Ratnapani:** Something I've noticed in myself progress in this way, although I'm still aware outside the context of the Friends of the way people speak, I immediately will quite possibly virtually unconsciously, judge someone by the way they speak, but in the Order I'm not aware. I don't do that. And I think in Centres, just with newcomers it tends to be in some ways suspended, as if they're in an atmosphere that that is irrelevant. I quite often find that I'm not aware of what sort of accent an Order Member's got. It could be a Scots accent or an American accent or something, but no, I'm....

**S:** You are aware of the individual. If you're aware of the individual then you're not so conscious of those things. There was an interesting incident the other day at 'Sukhavati': I had a 'phone call from Terry Dukes, and Subhuti took the call and I spoke to Terry and Subhuti made the comment afterwards that there seemed something strange about the way that Terry spoke. So I said, "yes I noticed that too",

and then I thought a minute and I said "well he seems to have a stronger accent now than before". This seemed to really stand out.

**Siddhiratna:** What kind of accent?

**S:** Very very working class. More working class than ever, and Subhuti said, well yes, he felt also that that was it. So I just mention this to illustrate that one notices these things commonly, and especially with regard to people outside the Order, and one isn't so conscious of those things within the Order. Because one is much more conscious of Order Members as individuals presumably.

**Chintamani:** There's also something I've noticed, that when one group encounters somebody from another group they quite often make their accent heavier and thicker, to sort of emphasise their group-ness. You get this with black people. That when they encounter white people, although they can speak English they start speaking Creole, in the thickest possible..... and they sort of nudge each other and laugh when you can't understand. You get this in other social and ethnic groups.

**Marichi:** Well this is like schoolkids at school who have an accent for school and an accent for home. It happens whenever you go between two groups. (*Unclear*) degree of confidence and (*unclear*)

**Vajradaka:** It's not always true actually. (*Three people speaking at once*) .....

**Siddhiratna:** ..... they speak Jamaican, they speak Caribbean. They don't speak English.

**Chintamani:** But they can speak English.

**Ratnapani:** I don't think that's relevant in the Order.

**Siddhiratna:** (*unclear*) a Scotsman can't speak English English. (*Three people speaking at once - again - impossible to separate out!*).

**Chintamani:** I've actually encountered this situation myself.

**Siddhiratna:** You've encountered a minority. You haven't encountered (*unclear*) of Caribbean peoples or even African peoples or Asian peoples.

**Ratnapani:** Pardon me, but I don't think this has any relevance whatever to the Order. I mean I don't think this has.

**S:** In a sense it hasn't but it's interesting that so much energy goes into it nonetheless. [*Laughter*] It means the energy is there in these sort of matters, even though they're not very directly connected.

**Siddhiratna:** I think it's also interesting that in my time within the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order I've seen three coloured people. One at 'Sakura' and two at 'Pundarika', and they've been along about twice or three times and never been seen again, and I wondered why that is.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: That's not true. The coloured woman's coming regularly every week and she's the most generous woman you've ever.....

**Siddhiratna:** Yes, sorry there is a coloured woman, isn't there. She goes to yoga as well.

**S:** This does raise another question: the question of race. I didn't include that, in a way purposely because I thought we would deal with class and nationality this time; but there is this question of race. So far the Order is barely inter-racial in the sense that we've only I think, if I'm right, only one non-Caucasian. We've one Asian-Chinese member. But in connection with say coloured people in this country, I remember that at 'Sakura' we did have quite a few people coming along from Nigeria at one time. They didn't stay for very long. So this is - though this is not the main topic for discussion - this is perhaps something we should ask ourselves; whether in the Movement generally there is anything that might be a bit off-putting from the racial point of view. I'm sure no one does anything intentionally or deliberately but sometimes non-white people are quite sensitive and one has to be very aware.

**Siddhiratna:** One other thing is that I can remember in my own experience only two people who were very definitely working class and who turned up for about a month or two and then just disappeared again. And I think that the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order is basically a middle class organisation, and I think those of us that

come from working class backgrounds have in fact moved into the middle class, in terms of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, and I think for a totally working class person who's never had any contact with the intelligentsia, it's very difficult for them to feel at home or to relate to people.

**S:** Can you go into that in more detail?

**Siddhiratna:** I remember one... I can't say (*unclear*) I just remember one particular person who stuck in my mind and always has. It's that friend of Carl Taylor's, the young Scots boy, who came along to Quartermaine for a couple of retreats, and he seemed to want to get into things. He seemed very enthusiastic, very good natured, and I can remember him being at 'Pundarika' and he was usually by himself, because he had such a broad accent, very difficult to talk to, or even to understand in a sense, and very sort of working class. And no real kind of ideas; he just used to talk about very basic things, and he sort of got shunned as it were. At least I felt it looked like he got shunned. I had difficulty talking to him because I just didn't relate to him in any particular way, and I think this is in a sense where we can be sort of over critical of ourselves as middle class people, but I think a lot of it is up to the working class people to get out of that conditioning and I think, as I said before, that the working class do suffer, in a sense, more from social immobility than the middle classes do. And in a sense from the Nigerians you were talking about I should imagine the movement has got to come from them rather than we providing them with an opening; they've got to allow themselves to come in. I think this is probably the problem for the working class as it is for other nationalities.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: There is also another question, which is what working class people, or in this case also the Nigerians, may regard as more important for them. Is it what we call Buddhism and their development, or is it simply things that the middle classes already have like a better standard of living, better jobs, social mobility etc. They may simply think that those things are more important and it may be that for the reasons that the middle classes have got those things, they ought to have (*unclear*), I don't know, but I think this has to be considered. This may be a factor. I won't say that leads to different countries and nationalities. (*Unclear*)

**Devamitra:** Another factor that occurred to me out of something that happened. A gulf that developed between myself and my parents, if you like. My parents are both working class people and I'd become, if you like, middle class through my education

and what have you. And I felt that there developed a sort of cultural gulf between me and them; and I could relate to other people who had got that sort of cultural background or had achieved a certain standard of education - I can relate in a way that I can't with my parents. So someone, say, coming along from a working class background to our Centre where most of us had at least a half education, if not a complete education; but there's that sort of cultural barrier or educational barrier or whatever you like to call it. It's like there's no real medium of communication.

**Siddhiratna:** I agree with that entirely, yes.

**Aryamitra:** That's if you only relate through that, you know. I mean I don't think that necessarily has to be the case. Especially if you come from a working class background and you are now middle class; I feel that you should be able to, unless you have something personal about the fact that you can't relate through other things. You should be able to relate through other media.

\_\_\_\_\_: *(all speaking at once!)*

**Devamitra:** I don't think I fully expanded the point actually. Can I just go a bit further? It's like I think one of the aspects of *dana* is the giving of education, and I think in the 'Survey' that's almost a prerequisite before..... one needs to attain a certain degree of cultural.....

**S:** Refinement.

**Devamitra:** Yes.

**S:** In real terms, as I also think I said in the 'Survey', it's not a question of knowing the right fork or the right spoon, and that kind of thing.

**Lokamitra:** Devamitra, just one thing. By getting cultured you haven't become middle class. You've simply become cultured.

**S:** I think it's very useful in this connection to have some experience of Scotland, where you have highly educated people who, for want of a better term, remain quite definitely working class. I've been reading a little bit about this in a book that I reviewed for the 'Newsletter', called *'The British: their identity and their religion'*,

and this point was made very strongly, that in Scotland there is a strong tradition of higher education, very serious thought and study, but dissociated from the sort of middle class values that are usually connected with it down here in England.

\_\_\_\_\_**(Woman)**\_\_\_\_: I think the association of good middle class manners and education is particularly English anyway. I think that we've put the two together. Well why?

**Vangisa:** This is something I'm becoming very conscious of while this conversation has been going on. Though I have lived here for quite a long time, and I'm not of origin English, and I've heard in all these years about English being class conscious and so on and never really thought about it very much, consciously. But listening now to the conversation and discussion we've been having about this, it seems to me quite clear that most of the people here seem to take this as something more obvious. They know what they're talking about. They know what they mean by middle class and working class and so on. I'm wondering if this can be dissociated from nationality. Is this a purely English phenomenon? I would say that .....

**S:** That's a very important point. *(Unclear as people speak all at once)*

**Vangisa:** I would say in relation to this in fact that I probably grew up with - I mean it's changing a bit now - but I probably grew up in an environment in which there was no class, but there were possibly two castes and they were racial. If you were a member of the majority racial, 'caste', so to speak..... there was only one class. As regards people's attitudes to and relations to one another, somebody might be better off than somebody else or more educated than somebody else, but there wasn't a feeling like I am getting now from what has been said, of class difference.

**S:** It's very similar to caste difference in India, in the sense that - I think I've written somewhere - the caste Hindu seems to have a separate distinct organ by which he recognises the caste of other people and by living in India for twenty years I started developing this organ, and I could pick out people's caste. It's quite extraordinary in a way, so it's very likely there is something like this in English people. They pick up your class. They register, maybe unconsciously, all sorts of subtle things; like your bearing, your dress, your accent, and one or two little facts about yourself that you let fall, and most people let them fall, as it were, accidentally, just to give certain signals and indicators to other people regarding their class status. And maybe we should also bear in mind that this is a very English thing, and it may not be found in other

countries. I certainly found, for instance, in Finland that in the English sense there was no class there.

**Vajradaka:** I'd say that that was generally true, but the class is more a sort of financial sign.

**Aryamitra:** Like in the States.

**Jinamata:** I think in most other European countries the distinction of traditional working class and middle class has been transcended much more than here. That I think is certainly true. Whereas in England it lives in the sense that it lived maybe before 1900 and before the Second World War, in other European countries - of course in the Eastern European countries it has been transcended more or less completely - but I think we have to bear that in mind. For instance if one goes to Germany there is no question of detecting what may be a middle class person by accent. This just doesn't exist. There are regional accents but there are no class accents. Whereas here there is such a thing as a class accent, as you've mentioned before.

**S:** It's interesting for instance in India, just to cite an example from the caste system, the best Hindi for instance, in the sense of the most cultured Hindi, the most correct, is spoken by the lowest classes as we would call them. The barbers and sweepers speak the best, purest and most correct form of the language, which from an English point of view is rather unthinkable. It's rather like your dustman having an Oxford accent. *[Laughter]* That's the way dustmen speak, that's the standard. It may help to make you aware that our way of doing things isn't the only way. Just as in India all caste Hindus think everybody must have a caste. English people tend to think perhaps that everybody must have a class; but it isn't so in all other countries.

**Manjuvajra:** Could we look at some of the factors that are class conditioned that eat into our spiritual life in an important way?

**S:** One thing that occurred to me just as we were all talking; was I think one has to be quite - assuming for instance that many people within the Order are, as it were, middle class, for want of a better term - we have to be careful that middle class, as it were, ways of behaviour don't become generally accepted in such a way that if someone comes from outside, whether from some other class or even some another nationality,

it isn't sort of incumbent upon them more or less to conform to those particular class ways of behaviour of the majority within the Order.

**Khema:** There is also another point. I think there's not just middle class and working class. We have to be aware of not being a sort of sub-culture class too. I mean there are those classes too, like the hippie class, the underground class etc., etc., and I think - the dropout class - (*unclear*) .....

**S:** (*interrupting*) We're not a sub-culture. We're a super-culture! *[Laughter]*

**Nagabodhi:** This is much more relevant than any class consideration because to me for somebody to say "*in joining the Friends I've become middle class*", what on Earth do they mean? Have you got a better job? Do you live in a better house?! *[Laughter]* You're in a culture where they are quite happy to walk into a squat where nobody works, lives from jumble sales, um.....

**S:** It's subtler than that, it's subtler than all that.

**Nagabodhi:** Well yes!

**Ratnapani:** It's subtler than that surely because class and culture have become synonymous. As Chintamani mentioned. That in order to escape, as it were, the working classes, one has to adopt a complete disguise, a complete cultural disguise, that you can't have the culture and keep the class.

**Vessantara:** I haven't got any particular point to make about it but I'd be very interested if anybody has any thoughts about what's happened in '*Sukhavati*', because there there have been quite a number of middle class people who've gone into '*Sukhavati*' and turned themselves into workers on a building site, and adopted, or found within themselves a lot of much more working class external ways of doing things, much kind of more uncouth (*unclear*).

**S:** Uncouth? That's the last word I'd use about '*Sukhavati*'. *[Laughter]*

**Vessantara:** Maybe they were.....

**S:** One of the things that struck me when I have arrived fresh from Norfolk, the first impression was of the refinement of everybody there. That really struck me first of all. I knew that they were all doing.....

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: Was that while you were there? [*Laughs*]

**S:** ..... but this struck me. They couldn't have put it on for my benefit. No, I'm not so easily fooled! [*Laughter*] The atmosphere and the way that people were relating was very refined. This is the first thing that struck me. (*Lots of voices at once - unclear*) They were sensitive to one another.

**Sagaramati:** I think what Siddhiratna was saying about the cocktail party (*unclear*); I think the danger is that has been identified in the past as spirituality, yeah, and like the more so-called 'cruder' but as you say probably more refined because refined being a sensitive thing.....

**S:** I mean the tea mugs were all filthy and eating off bare boards no-one bothered to sweep the table, but the general atmosphere was one of genuine refinement. This is what I felt, yes.

**Chintamani:** It's like..... I think one of things about 'Sukhavati' is all the inessentials get stripped away. Um. .... Yes I think we're probably relating to each other from the basic essentials upwards, not on some sort of crust of etiquette that's sort of imposed on top of the essentials. Do you see what I mean?

**S:** What are you really asking (*unclear*) Vessantara. We have gone a bit off the track.

**Vessantara:** It would seem that there were a lot of people going into that situation who had more of a middle class conditioning, and in some senses were acting out or taking on a working class conditioning to see how it..... It was putting themselves in that role and rather enjoying it.

**Ratnapani:** (*unclear*) way one is oneself working, doing work. In order to do work which one normally associates with the working class one doesn't have to change - at all. You just.... one is oneself doing that work.

**S:** Yes, it's not a role. This is something I sometimes mention in connection with the sexes. When a woman has a baby she's not adopting a feminine role. She's just being a woman, she's having a baby. So in the same way, when you work and get your hands dirty, you're not adopting a working class role; you're just working.

**Vessantara:** There were certain elements that went along with it, which.....

**S:** Has anyone any feelings about that?

**Sagaramati:** I think the energy. The quality of the energy definitely changes. I think this is... I mean you could really feel it in London anyway, since 'Sukhavati' started up. There's been a quite positive (*unclear*) for example.

**Mangala:** Perhaps there's a certain association or connection there between let's say blocked or repressed energy and the kind of middle class way of life. Like I would say, like, my experience of the Friends... it's been diminishing over the years but it's always been one of people being a bit sort of blocked, a bit sort of restrained, a bit sort of held back. I think this is because we are sort of largely kind of middle class people whose energy isn't really moving, and maybe because we're all a bit work shy or have been, and [*Laughter*] if you get into a situation like 'Sukhavati' or something, a lot more energy tends to come out because..... I think because middle class people tend to live more in their heads perhaps than working class people, and .....

**Ratnapani:** (*unclear*) vitality though. What about the question of vitality? When I've worked on the same sort of work but with the people that one expected to be doing that job, the working class painters and decorators and builders, there has been no vitality. There hasn't been the vitality which there is at 'Sukhavati'. It has been a big..... it has been a draining experience, both from the physical work and from the atmosphere. It's been very draining. I've felt from my own quite limited experience no vitality from people who were having to use a lot of energy in their ordinary day to day work.

**Marichi:** It's the working class myth again. I've worked with both working class people and middle class people and neither are more vital than the other.

(*Unclear with many speaking at once!*)

**Mangala:** ..... making a case for working class people. I'm not sort of saying that. I mean really I'm just saying that I think probably most people here, most of the Friends, haven't got as much energy flowing as they could have, and I think probably perhaps some more sort of physical work would help in that respect.

**S:** This is another impression that I did get when I was in 'Sukhavati' after being in Norfolk for a few days, that the extremely positive value of work, but work within that very definite spiritual framework, not just any old physical work for any old reason. For that purpose, for that project with that ideal as it were, on that spiritual basis.

**Lokamitra:** You don't have time to dawdle up any pseudo-spiritual fun as it were. You are much more direct and that doesn't really say that you're any less sensitive.

**Chintamani:** It's not really very difficult to sort of get out of all this because in somewhere like 'Sukhavati' or in the Movement generally there are certain things needed. I would say the Dharma is energy, patience and all the rest of it. It's all there. You don't just attribute them to one class or to another class. There's work to be done at 'Sukhavati'; necessary objective work, so you do it in the most efficient manner. We're also living together so we have to be aware of each other. I think it's much easier to see it in those simple terms than to say, "ah yes well we're doing physical work. Yes, that's the working class bit" and so on and so on. It's ridiculous. And all I think we're talking about is the ethnic v. the universal. It's these remnants of ethnic groups that we've all come from. And one can say the same thing about nationality. Something I experienced a lot in my travels is that I was related to as an Englishman, full stop! And that was it. And no matter how much I de-anglicized myself, I was still and Englishman, and we fought you in the war, didn't we, and that was all the basis of it and.....

**S:** I had this experience in India once or twice, even though I was a monk. They said, "Why did you start the Suez War?", as though you'd done it personally! *[Laughter]* I hadn't even heard of the Suez War. *[Laughter]*

**Aryamitra:** I'd like to hear what Subhuti has to say on this.

**Subhuti:** I don't think I have anything really to add. Only at one point did class seem to rear its ugly head when one person in particular seemed to feel that there was a sort of officers and men situation, because it appeared that most of the Order Members

were middle class, and at least the majority of the others were not. But in fact it wasn't true. Hridaya's disguised working class! *[Laughter] (unclear)*.

**Dhammadinna:** I suppose the point is - on a more general level - whether through our Centres we give a particular impression which does make it difficult for any particular class or nationality to join us if they want to. This seems to be the area where we need to be aware, and we're not going to stand back and look at the situation if we can.

**Chintamani:** Yes, but it's unfortunate that things like brown rice are associated with middle class health faddists, and we have to eat brown rice for quite objective and sensible reasons, and you don't compromise the things that you do because..... I mean brown rice is a bad example but I mean it's arguable that Buddhism itself is a middle class preserve and you don't compromise the things you feel strongly about to fit in with an ethnic group's values.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: No, I do think one has to beware of these *(unclear)*

**Vessantara:** One thing which we are doing is things like playing taped lectures. A lot of your lectures require a fair degree of education and a pretty good vocabulary just to follow them. When you get working class people coming along, I've seen some of them just getting lost and.....

**S:** The middle class people are getting lost too!

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_\_\_: That's culture. That's not class.

*(Unclear - many speaking at once for a number of comments - this continues sporadically throughout this discussion. I have done what I can to decipher the comments but the participants were too excited at times to bear in mind that the proceedings were being tape-recorded. - Silabhadra (the transcriber)*

**Nagabodhi:** *(unclear)* middle class conditioning *(unclear)*

**Ashvajit:** *(unclear)* not even a question of money. I once worked on a building site and I worked with a bricklayer there and he was one of the most educated and cultured men I've ever met. *(Unclear - many speaking again)*

**S:** (*unclear*) intelligent working man couldn't understand my lectures.

**Chanda:** (*unclear*) reason why we get people with (*unclear*) people who haven't had the opportunity. You've got the opportunity. You're lucky. (*Unclear*) working class (*unclear*) jobs (*unclear*) conditioning. I think myself if we were class conscious of what patterns that people should be (*unclear*) but they're not. (*Unclear*) He can be a very educated man, though I think people form psychological patterns of a man's job, his calling. I think that's how they see the person, within that pattern.

**S:** Anyway, what I was going to say was when I was in India I used to hear from my Brahmin friends that these wretched illiterate Untouchables couldn't understand anything. They were very superstitious, very dull-witted, so if I did give them a lecture on Buddhism it should really be simple stuff. But my experience totally contradicted that, and I found that even completely illiterate people were quite able to understand whatever aspect of the Dharma I cared to put across to them; whether it was *Anatmavada*, *Shunyavada* or anything of this sort. If I was clear and put it across clearly, they could understand it. So I'm quite sure in this same way, that any intelligent working class person, however uneducated technically, could follow any of my lectures on tape. They may not follow all the literary allusions and things, if they weren't well read; but they wouldn't miss any of the sort of main thrust of the argument just by missing the odd Shakespearean quotation. That wouldn't really make any difference.

**Nagabodhi:** I was just thinking really the conditioning of sitting down for an hour and a half, sometimes, and listening to a lecture, no matter how difficult or easy; that is an advantage I have. That I have a background of listening to lectures at University. It's just that I can do it. But people whose main way of taking information is in very easy doses off television and always has been....

**S:** No, it hasn't always. It's just this last generation. This is what, more or less, the Brahmins told me in India about the ex-Untouchables. They'd been working in the mill all day, you know. They used to sit and listen for two hours to a lecture on Buddhist philosophy, and understand it. So I think one mustn't underestimate the basic intelligence of people. Even their capacity to pick up cultural allusions and so on.

**Chintamani:** There is this thing of if one (*unclear*) happened between two people, if you believe something about somebody for long enough, they'll start becoming that.

**[End of side One Side two]**

**Chintamani:** That is if one group of people set the pattern for another group of people and insist that's how those people are, quite often they start becoming like that, and they say, "OK, if that's how you see us, that's how we're going to be, and we'll also try and make a virtue out of being like that".

**S:** Well not just sitting down and listening to lectures, what about all these big Trade Union meetings. The leaders go on for hours and hours lecturing to them, and they sit for hours listening to it and taking it all in, following the argument.

**Lokamitra:** They sit hour after hour looking at TV as well.

**Vangisa:** (*unclear*) are entrenching to some extent these elements which, as I said earlier, to me seem English elements. For instance to suggest that a person who has had fewer advantages than Nagabodhi can't understand a tape is suggesting that Nagabodhi can! [*Loud Laughter*]

**Nagabodhi:** It's nothing to do with understanding. It's just being used to sitting on your backside for an hour and a half.

**Vangisa:** I think we're just making assumptions here. I think anybody if they really want to listen to a tape can acquire the facility or the ability to sit and listen to these tapes. Even to listen to them in such easy doses and (*unclear*)

**Nagabodhi:** We can acquire Enlightenment. That's why we're here. Why I'm kind of juggling around is because I'm trying to pin down what is the difference that is relevant, because one can sort of quote tomes and tomes of what class is, you know lifestyle or income or this or that, but obviously that doesn't apply here. OK, is it your conditioning in terms of what you're used to and what you've been led to expect? Obviously that doesn't go here. So what is it in fact that we're trying to pinpoint?

**Vangisa:** To me it's your English conditioning.

**Nagabodhi:** May be.

**Vimalamitra:** It's any form of prejudice isn't it really, whether it's national or class. That's really what it is. It's any kind of bias.

**S:** I think it's more than that. It seems to me that usually it's an attempt to maintain some sort of separateness and some sort of superiority using whatever means come handy; whether it's educational, cultural etc., etc.

**Chintamani:** If we're not careful in two hundred years you're going to get people from the Glasgow Centre coming down to the Centre in London, say, and saying "these Londoners, they just don't know how to do things. They're really sort of thick and slow. We do things much better in Glasgow" - that's the danger.

**Aryamitra:** We won't have to wait two hundred years. *[Laughter]*

**Dharmapala:** I feel it's possibly quite the reverse at the moment.

**Chintamani:** Oh no, no. This is purely hypothetical. I mean...

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: I think one has to practise flexibility. If people associate eating brown rice with the middle classes, well there's nothing written that Buddhists have to eat brown rice. Why eat brown rice? We don't have to eat brown rice!

**Chintamani:** I just chose that as an example.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: One can be very flexible and adapt one's circumstances to the means which are applicable. I don't see a great problem with that. If we don't eat brown rice we're not going to die or lose our Buddhism.

**Chintamani:** I only chose that as an example!

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: Yes. Or something else. Take brandy or something. It doesn't matter.

**Manjuvajra:** We've been talking so far about superficial mundane factors, but it seems to me that ... I mean Bhante mentioned earlier this idea of leadership and how much does that affect spiritual life. I think there's another factor as well that comes in, and that's the idea of doing social works. I've noticed this in myself particularly,

that I feel a real struggle to get away from the idea that I ought to be devoting myself to some sort of social work. Either as I am at the moment as a schoolteacher or else just give free soup out or something of that nature; and I see that at work in the Order generally and I think that's one factor (*unclear*).

**S:** Could you enlarge upon that? Because I think it links up with something that I was thinking about and was wondering whether to mention. Probably I shall now that we've started on that track. And then it will be tea-time! When I've had my say!

**Dhammadinna:** Do you mean the kind of attitude where one's not doing something that one wants to because you somehow feel you ought to do some... you have to pay your dues in some way or other. (*Unclear*)

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: Something to do with your education.

**S:** Could Manjuvajra enlarge upon that.

**Manjuvajra:** It's a deep sort of feeling that it's wrong for you to do anything for yourself. That you should really be devoting yourself somehow to other people. That it's a sort of feeling that even if you go and sit down and read for half an hour you're being selfish.

**S:** Self indulgent.

**Manjuvajra:** Self indulgent, yeah. And so that you should always be trying to involve yourself in things that are working for other people. Now obviously if you become a Buddhist you learn about the Dharma, then obviously the thing you've got to do for other people is spread it.

**S:** Right. Help them with their problems.

**Manjuvajra:** Yeah. *[Laughter]* (*unclear*)

**S:** You're getting very close to what I'm going to say! *[Laughter]*

**Manjuvajra:** But..... I've lost my line now.



**S:** That's all right. Let me carry on! *[Laughter]* What I wanted to raise was the bogey of professionalism. Do you see what I'm getting at? I think there is a danger for some Order Members, especially in the case of those with a middle class background and certain qualifications, and with this sort of feeling that you've described; of feeling obliged to go into sort of social work type activities and do lots of things for other people. Perhaps Buddhist things. Maybe help them with their problems; but they don't do anything for themselves. Yeah. They, in a sense, kid themselves that they are helping themselves by helping others etc., etc., But actually their as it were professional work - and this especially ties up with people in any form of psychotherapy; that is giving psychotherapy, taking psychotherapeutic (*unclear*) - the danger is that they just get out of touch with themselves, their own feelings, their own spiritual needs, their own development and that they're just sort of machines, taking classes and groups and courses etc., etc. Yeah? And I think this sort of professionalism is very very dangerous. And especially if many Order Members are taking classes regularly and all that kind of thing; they come, if they're not careful, perilously near this sort of professionalism. And certainly they're doing good; certainly it's very useful, but sometimes they are not looking at themselves and not working on themselves, and their activity is not coming out of their own inner abundance, but they're just driven by this sense of duty or whatever. Sometimes it's not as simple or as noble as that and.....

**Dhammadinna:** Are you saying that if one is taking classes for a long period of time, that you can get into this, even though you didn't start off like it?

**S:** Yes. I am saying that also, only incidentally though, but certainly that can happen, yes. For instance I'm thinking of a situation where one or two of our Friends, that is to say Order Members, are into this sort of situation. They're so busy sort of helping other people in various ways outside the Friends, they can't even come to an Order meeting. But they can justify and rationalise it perhaps.

**Lokamitra:** Is this connected with Christian conditioning do you think? Almost a martyr.

**S:** That's a whole big part of (*unclear*)

**Ratnapani:** I must confess that on a minor level that I have found within myself a sort of thinking of the Movement in quite business-like terms, which does have

application. (*Unclear*) and all the rest of it do apply, but thinking, as it were, this Branch is doing very well, that one seems a bit weak and could do with some more capital investment. This one's doing quite well and.....

**S:** Well that's all right on that level if one doesn't forget all the other levels.

**Ratnapani:** If you don't lose your vision, yes. But finding myself doing this I was imagining a situation combined with what you were describing probably.

**S:** This professionalism, especially in the field of say psychotherapy and even in the field of Buddhism, as far as certain techniques are concerned, but you can't go any further, is associated with this whole idea of you as the operator of the technique. Now I had a talk about things of this sort with Vajrayogini when I was in Holland, and she mentioned for instance - and this is what really started me thinking about this whole question - she mentioned that quite a few people were coming and taking courses with her to be group leaders. Now they were coming straight off the street, as it were, or straight out of University, to be a group leader and get the training to be a group leader, and one actually said they just wanted it as a professional qualification so that they could make money. They didn't think of it as a working on themselves, getting themselves all right, then perhaps helping other people - no. They didn't even think of working on themselves apparently except in a very perfunctory way. They wanted to become group leaders straight away, operate the old techniques that they'd learned, cure people, take in the fees and that's their living, Yeh.

So professionalism in this sort of way is a real danger, I feel, for people within that sort of psychotherapeutic field; and for us also to a slight extent, inasmuch as we overlap that field just a little bit.

**Dhammadinna:** The danger seems to be that you become dependant upon operating in that way and.....

**S:** Yes, and you're unable to stop.

**Dhammadinna:** ....when it's taken away from you, you collapse. Whereas if someone's taking classes at the Centre and then they go away and don't do that then they should be no difference to the way they feel. (**S:** Right.) It seems to be one of the dangers - that you rely on that (*unclear*)

**Ratnapani:** Yes, I think some people can get very busy and think, well I get to meditate in the classes occasionally and I can talk to other people so that keeps me open and all this work... some good will filter through and I'll be OK. Forgetting that the quality of one's class taking will deteriorate if there is just no time spent entirely dedicated to oneself. I think it's commendable up to a point and then you go over. This is obviously minor compared to your psychological technicalities but admirable to a point and then you go over and find that you've got a technician on your hands, who is very good at taking Pujas, very good at leading classes, sorts out psychological problems in a flash, but isn't getting anywhere.

**Lokamitra:** Another point connected with this, very much with the professionalism, is the power that one feels in that situation which is often what people sort of .... once they experience it they want to hang onto it.

**S:** Yes. This brings up something I'm going to talk about on the fourth day, that is authority. It is very much connected with that. I talked about it with someone who came along to see me the other day - not an Order Member, a sort of ex-Friend - and she had been experienced taking all sorts of groups and courses, and the point that emerged in the course of discussion was that if you are taking groups and courses and you are the leader, you are in a very invulnerable position. You don't have to be vulnerable, and that can be a great big cover up for all sorts of things.

**Chintamani:** Something that's been occurring to me recently in this context was I feel that it is really impossible psychologically to lead unless you have been led at some time in your life, and this was, in a traditional setup, this need was covered by the master-apprentice relationship. That before you did any work you served your apprenticeship, and this just doesn't happen any more.

**S:** This is what happened with these would-be group leaders. They didn't want to serve any apprenticeship. They just wanted to get a handful of techniques which would enable them to be masters straight away. They didn't have the sort of mentality of apprentices (*unclear*) as it were to that craft or that line of work.

**Chintamani:** I think if you haven't been led at some point and to some depth, and you put yourself in a leader position, you will inevitably have some sort of fear. Fear of being deposed, and this usually manifests itself in a sort of tyranny which you then

seek to impose on other people. You want to lead them so you put yourself in a position of leader.

**S:** And also there is a danger inasmuch as people with a sort of professional background, professionally (*unclear*), coming into the Movement will tend to pick up ways and means of doing things as sort of methods and techniques rather quickly because they're used to doing that sort of thing, and be able to operate them rather quickly and smoothly. They may not really be ready to do so however. So I think this is also something to be watched, though a bit incidental to what we are really discussing. Anyway I think we are very nearly at tea-time unless there's any other basic or important point anyone wants to make.

**Mangala:** Yes, I'd just like to make the point. I think often working class people are perhaps inhibited in say learning things which perhaps they're interested in because they associate, perhaps not really learning itself but perhaps a specific thing with being middle class. So they may not really have an interest in Buddhism but they may think. "Oh study, it's very middle class....."

**S:** (*unclear*) confidence in their own capacity to learn.

**Mangala:** But also they may feel that they're sort of stepping out of their sort of social area and they would be mixing with people that they have no right to be mixing with.

**Dhammadinna:** George Andrews used to feel that. He was very drawn to Buddhism (*unclear*) public school accents and things of that nature and people were quite open to him.....

**S:** Friendly towards him. Well disposed towards him.

**Dhammadinna:** Yes. But he seemed not to be able to get through that (*unclear*)

**S:** Yes. I talked with him quite a bit and he did seem to have almost a sort of inferiority complex.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Siddhiratna:** Can you speak up down that end.

**Vajradaka:** I think that the educational sausage machine that .... the Secondary Modern school and the Comprehensive school where a lot of middle class people or middle class children go to; they get half educated and in that half education there is a kind of lack of confidence and apathy as well.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: All people go through the same educational you know. It doesn't matter what class.

**Vajradaka:** But I think in the Comprehensive school some people do manage to sort of get into those more high powered fuller education levels, because the comprehensive system is tiered.

**Marichi:** Yeah, but so do some people with public school. Wherever you go you this is going to happen.

**Uttara:** I got a hitch from a guy when I was coming down from Scotland by a teacher and he preferred to teach in working class schools. He said he was teaching in a middle class school and he felt it was boring. He said he'd rather go back into a situation where there was more energy in there.

**Marichi:** There are just different sorts of energy.

**Chintamani:** I must say one of the things I've noticed about - last year I spent quite a bit of time in Camberwell in the Summer, and then there was the house to house collection in the pre-(unclear) days as it were. I did my house to house collection in Hampstead, and the difference between Camberwell and Hampstead. Camberwell was dirty, untidy, noisy, full and really alive. Hampstead was neat, tidy, aesthetic, beautiful and really dead, and people were far more unfriendly. I mean people, young people in Camberwell were much more... they'd even threaten to beat you up and they were also much friendlier! I'm not glorifying the working classes. This was just my experience; and in Hampstead it was hell. (Unclear) But it looked nice! [pause]

**Vangisa:** I always feel really fascinated just (unclear).

[Tea Break]

**S:** All right we're still dealing with the question of the Unity of the Order and we're going to consider that in relation to nationality. Let me just very briefly indicate first of all the sort of thing I had in mind. Afterwards people can make their own comments or their own conclusions. As I mentioned earlier on, the majority of people in the Order at present are from the United Kingdom, which means presumably they've got a sort of collective attitude, even unconsciously. But the Order is growing, the Order is spreading. It's spreading into other countries. Already as I mentioned there are Order Members in New Zealand, Finland. There's one in Denmark (unclear) one American Order Member though he isn't actually resident in America. So I think one of the things that we have to quite careful about is that as we spread into other countries amongst people of other nationalities, we don't want to, as it were, take along typically English attitudes as part of Buddhism, as it were. And we must learn to distinguish these things. When we're really being Buddhists and members of the Order, representing the Dharma, and when we're merely being English. We have to drop the being merely English whenever that is necessary, in that you are influenced by those conditions. This is the sort of thing I've been thinking about. Of course other people might have thought about it and maybe others have something to say on it, as well as various other aspects of this whole question.

Maybe those who aren't of UK origin would have something useful to say on this sort of topic. [pause]

**Vimalamitra:** It's quite difficult to really see the difference between the nationalities, or the fact that there isn't any real difference, unless you have done a bit of travelling and so on. Really in a way travel can help this a lot.

**S:** I certainly noticed it in my own case, say, when I came back from the States in 1970. I only spent three months over there, but when I came back to London, I really noticed certain things about people in London which I hadn't really noticed as much before. My overwhelming impression was 'how lifeless'. This is people mainly around the Friends as well as others outside. I was mainly concerned with people within the Friends. How lifeless in comparison with the Americans; how little energy, how flabby, how floppy, how dull! This was my predominant impression. I really started shaking things up a bit after that. That was my predominant impression. It's certainly not my predominant impression now I must say.

**Ratnapani:** I remember when Vajrayogini and some of the other Dutch people came over. I met them in Archway, and I felt quite crushed and quite ashamed. There was this... I mean Vajrayogini is lovely and powerful and could have possibly come from almost any country, but the sheer energy; not of just her but the other people with her. The enthusiasm, the outgoingness, the warm bone-crushing handshake. *[Laughter]* I just felt *[drowned out by Laughter]*. I felt quite ashamed almost. We almost seemed pale (**S:** Anaemic) Yeah, anaemic in comparison with these bright, fantastically lively people.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Vajradaka:** When I first went to Holland I'd only had experience on Friends' retreats in England at that time and it was the first retreat that I led, and I was really shocked, not to say surprised, by the fact that people actually asked questions. Because it didn't seem to happen in Britain. People were saying, "what does this mean?" in the *Ti Ratana Vandana* and "what does this mean?" and "why do you do this?" but I was completely unprepared for that because they were clearly (*unclear*)

**S:** I must say that one thing I noticed when I went - to change the geography a bit - to Paris; I only gave a few lectures there, but the type of response was completely different. I certainly used to get a lot of questions in England in London - I won't say there were no questions - but the questions I got in Paris were so different. They were much more penetrating and much more demanding and many of them obviously asked from a sort of intellectual Marxist background; which is the sort of thing we just never encounter over here - I mean within the Friends. We don't have to deal with people coming from that sort of background. We do have it, in many ways, rather sort of quiet and cosy here.

**Ratnapani:** I think the typically English attitude that I've certainly picked up from quite a few people in other countries in Europe has been that the English are very quiet, reserved, not to say reticent, and endlessly polite; and I think this would tie up with Vajradaka's experience and your experience. They weren't merely being polite. If they wanted to know they demand to know.

**S:** So therefore when English Order Members go out here and there, what they mustn't do is to give the impression that when you become a Buddhist you become endlessly

polite. That's nothing to do with Buddhism. That's just our little English characteristic.

**Jinamata?:** I think we will find that we will be questioned in a very penetrating way when do go to other countries, particularly from those people with a Marxist background, because that is..... for people who want to change themselves and society, in all Western European countries, they're Marxist, and they will question us and it will be very good for us, I think.

**S:** I must say also I didn't feel the questioning to be in the least bit hostile. It was quite sympathetic but at the same time quite demanding.

**Jinamata?:** I think this would be very good for us when that happens. (*Unclear*) to distinguish what is Buddhist and what is English and this will happen when we meet these people as well.

**Aryamitra:** Can I suggest that I mean there are people in England like this but maybe it's that we attract a certain type, more hippie like rather than a person who will be much more demanding in their questions. I don't think we can generalise too much and say that well because it's England they're not like that.

**S:** I meant in the context of the Friends. The people we get along never are experienced in taking classes, giving lectures.

**Jinamata?:** So the situation you meet in most other Western European countries is the people who want to change themselves, who want to evolve, who want to change society and who ask themselves about the meaning of life if you like- they will tend to be Marxist, not in a narrow doctrinal manner, but have read Marx or Mao (*unclear*) a lot and they will have thought about and they will want to change society in a more human way; and they are the people who will come to us because they'll be interested in evolving. But they will come from a very strong kind of background of what they've read and what they've understood and what they've thought about themselves; and they will ask us, for instance, well if you want to make the world better and if you want to change yourself and life, you must do it for everybody in society. Not just for a few people, and what are we going to say? I'm not saying we can't but I'm going to say these are going to be the kind of questions, and they're going to be well.... serious questions, not games.

**Aryamitra:** Why is it we don't have those.....

**Jinamata?:** I don't know but.....

**Aryamitra:** I mean we have the same books here. Why.....

**Vajradaka:** I think that just people on the continent are much more politically sophisticated than the.....

**Jinamata?:** Well they're politically and socially conscious much more than people here, and they want to change their society.

**Padmaraja:** Can I say something. I don't think we should put ourselves down that much, because (*unclear*) much more conscious in Europe of wanting to change society. I think in this country we're much more open to the possibility of changing ourselves. They seem to be very much.....

**Jinamata?:** Well the two are identical. You can change society or.....

**Padmaraja:** No!

\_\_\_\_\_: They're not.

**Padmaraja:** Not at all. I think the Europeans, especially the French; the Germans too, are very much bound up with their own culture and sense of culture and tradition, but I don't think that's quite so bad in this country. It seems to be much more..... This is happening in England, yeah, this Movement. It's not happening in France, it's not happening in Germany.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: I don't think we're concerned about putting down. But it's not such a threat in England as it would be in France (*unclear*) are capable of absorbing a great deal of things. It absorbed Lenin and all the other people who come here and they go away again and their impact is relatively small. European countries I suspect (*unclear*)

**S:** One thing I did notice in France - I suspect it pertains elsewhere in Europe - I did notice a very great dichotomy, intellectually, between the Marxists on the one hand -

I'm using this term very roughly and loosely; it doesn't necessarily include card-holding Communist Party members, but people whose range of reference is, as it were Marxist intellectual - and on the other, orthodox Catholic. The intellectual scene, in France at least, is really split down the middle. You're either politically, intellectually, and everything else, Marxist, or politically, intellectually, religiously Catholic. (*Unclear*) sophisticated abroad or unsophisticated abroad. We don't have that sort of split. There I got the impression you had either to come down on this side or that side. You were almost forced into that situation, but not here.

**Marichi:** Because they're forcing one (*unclear*)

**Vajradaka:** The two main situations that I found myself in Germany. One was a situation with about thirty young people who were meeting every week to meditate and to learn about Buddhism, and quite a lot of them were Marxist based primarily, and sort of coming into Buddhism from that angle; and the other group of people who I met and talked with were quite well read from a theoretical point of view. I wouldn't say Catholic but certainly kind of.....

**Nagabodhi:** Which country was this?

**Vajradaka:** Germany.... sort of very vigorous theological rationale, and that also I think is something that we will have to be able to hold our own with.

**S:** Yes, we never meet or encounter really well informed and committed Christians. We just don't come across them. I'm not saying in this country but in the course of our work with and for the Friends.

**Vangisa:** The thing is that well informed and committed Christians aren't necessary the same person or the same people.

**S:** Well I'm just imagining the particularly formidable combination of both. The committed that is also very well informed and able to argue with you.

**Vangisa:** I'm sure they're in a very small minority. The reason you haven't come across them is because there aren't very many of them around.

**S:** I must say that I met a few, and heard a few in Scotland some years ago when I went up and spoke on Buddhism and there were people from other religions, and I certainly found people giving a very well argued account of their position as Christians, which I haven't heard in England anywhere.

**Jinamata:** I've thought about this quite a lot recently and I think we will find it very difficult to kind of be religious and not political and not social if we are there. I personally don't think that there are any contradictions but I think they would ask us how can we change society or can we change people unless you take political action of some kind, and these are just questions I think we are going to meet right from the beginning. Because those people who want to change, they think in those terms, and if you say something about religion in those words there will be a much stronger anti reaction to that than I've ever met here in the Friends, because they just don't want to know. Because of these major prejudices and anti reactions I'm not sort of saying anything, but they may well be. It's their experience of religion, but they will be much more violent in their rejection of that. Far more than here.

**Nagabodhi:** In their rejection of what?

**Jinamata:** In their rejection of what they think is religious. I'm not saying we are religious in the standard sense and that religion is contradictory to social and political change, but that's the way they see it and that's what they are used to.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: I would think the Germans being fifty percent largely Catholic based would have a different perspective. People who want to change the system, they're radicals. I'm a radical myself. I don't think it's possible to change any system by adopting a religious philosophy. It's been tried all through history and it hasn't worked. This is why the so-called anarchists have gone to the other extreme, taking on violent themes because they realise that you just can't change men who are in Government by some form of ethnic Christianity. They've tried it for centuries. You can't convert people by quoting these soft philosophers, as it were. People have realised that. The French and the Germans in particular.

**Uttara:** Ashoka did it.

**Jinamata:** We're not trying to do that anyway.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: I myself, as I say, I am quite radically minded myself, because I see that to change a system on any large scale the majority and wealth of the people you've got to change not just all the individuals in the street, whether they come from this class or middle class or that class, you've got to change the actual government, the law makers, policy makers, and I don't see any big change in any of the Western countries. And only in the Eastern based countries, (*unclear*) in the Eastern bloc countries, the Communist so-called countries, has this change taken place, but it had to come about not by religion.

**Vangisa:** But surely the present day is a unique situation. It's comparatively recent. They seem to be obsessed or some people, a lot of people seem to be obsessed by political change. Political change involves some basic drastic radical change of the mind. In fact any change that has evolved out of the past centuries by political means seem to have left the basic problems of humanity untouched. If there has been change it has been incidental and not as a result of....

**Jinamata:** But I think this sort of argument will go on. They will ask you, they will argue that maybe political change is the primary thing and they will see religion as something different that has nothing to do with it, and this could go on, and they will say well (*unclear*) if we take the People's Republic of China as a country where people, from what we can see in films, look happy in their faces, and this is supposed to be the case. They will say well look at that, they are not religious, not in the way we understand it, but they seem to be happy people. We've maybe been there and seen it or we have seen films and it doesn't look as if they are forcing them to change; and these will be the kind of things they will bring up, and much better than I'm doing it now. And I think this is what we need quite a lot. I'm just sort of trying to.... I've met this with myself and .....

**S:** I think we shouldn't sort of try to have the argument that we might have when we go to Europe, but listening just to what you were saying reminded me of something mentioned in that book I referred to earlier which I was reviewing for Nagabodhi; "*The British: their identity and their religion*". The author makes the point that it's one of the English characteristics to sort of compromise things. To try to keep opposing forces and influences in balance, as it were, all the time. I think on the continent one does not find this. There it's much more a question of a clean cut choice. Either they support either Marxist or Catholic communities, and I think therefore if English Order Members go to the continent, they will be challenged much more in

those sort of terms: "Do you accept this or that?" whereas the natural English tendency is to say. "well, you know, we don't really agree probably (*unclear*) a bit of this and a bit of that." This is our natural tendency. We do it almost instinctively. We call it our 'British gift for compromise'. We are prepared to compromise God and the Devil, you see. Patch up things between them. [*Laughter*] But I think on the continent you will be less allowed to do that and must therefore be prepared to be asked which side of the fence you are on.

**Aryamitra:** You're not saying it's necessarily a bad quality of the English?

**S:** I'm not saying it's good, I'm not saying it's bad, I'm not saying [*Laughter*] This is what English Order Members going to Europe must be prepared for. They must not expect everybody to fall in with this sort of compromise and making everybody happy all round sort of attitude, no. I think that would go down much less well on the continent.

**Vangisa:** But Bhante, you have also said that the Buddhist attitude, as opposed to the English attitude, is rather one of both and rather instead of either or.

**S:** But you see where the caste system was concerned the Buddha said no. He didn't try to compromise that. He didn't say a middle way between caste and no caste - he said , no, definitely no caste. So Buddhism can, as Buddhism, come down very definitely on one side of the fence or the other in certain cases.

**Siddhiratna:** On the last Convention you said that changing society must happen so that the individual can develop more easily, and I think the impression .....

**S:** Yes, that is our criterion in a way.

**Siddhiratna:** Yes, and I get the impression that the question Jinamata is saying that on the continent they would ask what are these (*unclear*)

**Jinamata:** (*unclear*) the only system that they know of where the individual seems happier, which is after all quite a big thing, is a socialist system that seems to be working well. So this is what they will tell you, because that is what they know. They know that they live in a system where they work in an alienated situation. Profits are made. They don't like it, they don't agree, and the other systems they know of are

socialist systems. Not all of them. Some. Very few maybe, but this is what they will tell you and they're quite well informed about that, very well informed, because they've seen a lot of films about them on the television, and they've seen it and this is what they will say, because they've seen a system which to them looks like people are happier there. So they.....

**S:** (*unclear*) about the Friends.

**Jinamata:** Yes. They say if we see happy faces they may think well right maybe they're happy too.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: What is it that's made them happy, in Western Germany?

**Jinamata:** Made them happy?

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: Yes, or Eastern Germany.

**Jinamata:** Oh, then Eastern Germany won't come into the category of a country where people look particularly happy, no.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: I don't know (*unclear*) Germany during the war - of course that isn't now - great change (*unclear*) separation of East and West, but which in your view is the happiest - Western or Eastern?

**Jinamata:** I don't think I'll answer! (*Jinamata laughs*)

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: I think I can say and I haven't been there. From what I've read of people who have been there. Who's got the more justice, the East or the West. This is another controversial.....

**S:** I think we're getting a bit off the track. Yeah.

**Jinamata:** You know but I think one will have a very kind of direct debate and confrontation.

**S:** I think what I am basically trying to say in this sort of context is the average English Order Member going to the continent must be prepared for a much rougher time intellectually than he or she gets here. Yes.

**Siddhiratna:** Do we have any idea about what our stance is as Buddhists on specific political issues, as it were, like distribution of wealth?

**S:** I have ideas of my own but I've not yet dealt with them systematically. I've talked just a little bit about them from time to time but not really much in any lecture apart from 'One World or No World', I think was the title of that.

**Siddhiratna:** About worms. *[Laughter]* Worms undermining the foundations of society! *[Laughter]*

**S:** That's right.

**Siddhiratna:** It could be Wesleyan! *[Laughter]*

**S:** I think we've been promoted to small dragons now! *[Laughter]* But perhaps I should have to give more sort of systematic attention to these sort of things.

**Jinamata:** I've found it quite difficult when people have asked me this; particularly if they quote.... if one sees films on China or something like that and I found these questions quite difficult.

**Chintamani:** I've answered somebody like that by saying OK let them carry on until their happiness runs out. *[Laughter]*

**Jinamata:** Well I don't think it's as easy as that.

**Chintamani:** Well I mean if somebody's happy you can't say well actually you are basically unhappy but you don't.... you've got to experience that actually.

**Aryamitra:** The way you can approach that is like how can you tell people are happy. You can go into that one.

**S:** Yes there's eight hundred million people.

**Aryamitra:** Yeah, I mean you see a film. A few people working in the fields, you can see that anywhere, in England.

**Jinamata:** Yes that's true but I still think.....

**Nagabodhi:** It's still good enough for those people.

**Ratnapani:** But why doubt it. I mean OK things go on in the world which are good. Not everything that happens is bad.

**S:** If that is used as a basis for an argument and you're not even clear whether that basis is what is purports to be, then you can't be sure about the argument. If the argument is everybody in China is superlatively happy and no one in history has every been as happy as that, therefore Communism is the solution.

**Jinamata:** No, no the argument would just be something like how is it that if one just photographs people who are not there, who maybe don't even know they're being filmed, but they do show happier faces than..... To make a film somewhere in London, in the West End, of people going to work, I think you'd see a lot of miserable faces.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Show a photograph of a retreat!

**Jinamata:** And then the argument would be but you must create a society where everybody can enjoy their situation. What do you do about that? These are the type of things.

**S:** For instance I remember when I lived in Kalimpong, everybody in the area looked happy. No trace of Communism and lots of poverty. You see, so this is the sort of line of argument I'd begin by taking with that sort of question, but anyway, as I said, we can't reproduce any possible argument you might have. It might be totally unexpected. The sort of approach you get when you go there, and that might be (*unclear*)

**Vangisa:** One might say the Chinese haven't yet quite got over the after effects of their Buddhist heritage! *[Laughter]*

**Jinamata:** I thought about that too!



**Lokamitra:** When we do deal with this sort of thing I think we should bear in mind the four things which Bhante has said we have to offer. And the fourth which ..... those of us in London these we can feel coming into existence very much, is a blueprint for a whole new society, civilisation and culture. I hope Bhante sometime will enlarge on this a bit.

**S:** He probably will.

**Siddhiratna:** Sorry, is that that you want one or there is one?

**S:** That we want one.

**Dharmapala:** I think you must be very careful in making statements like that unless you've got something that you can point at and say, "there it is. It's definitely working".

**S:** Remember we said "blueprint", a "blueprint", so just a corner of the blueprint is beginning to be put into action.

**Dharmapala:** That's what you've got to have to show, I think, before you make a big thing about a blueprint.

**Lokamitra:** Also there's Schumacher's "Buddhist Economics", which is well worth reading for anyone who is involved in discussions.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)*

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)* it's a book *(unclear)*

**Lokamitra:** It's certainly worth reading for our own information.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_\_\_: Schumacher's not a philosopher, he's more of a economist and political expert.

**Jinamata:** Well these questions will be asked. I mean that is a very good book.

**S:** I think again we're getting a bit away from the main topic. This is all illustrative material; what we've been saying, so I think that point can be fairly taken; that those of us who are of UK origin have a certain type of English conditioning or British conditioning, and we must watch that, especially when we go to other countries and are in contact with people there who are interested in Buddhism. We may get totally different kinds of questions and experience totally different attitudes from what we're accustomed to here. And if we do we mustn't think that we've been unfairly treated or people are asking the wrong questions, or anything of that sort.

**Jinamata:** We mustn't think it's a question of putting people here down. It's not a question of that. It's just different.....

**S:** So anyway, having sort of taken that point, is there any other aspect of this whole topic of nationality?

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes.

**[End of Tape Five Tape Six]**

*[Transcriber's Note: Please note that the recording quality for much of tape six was very poor so it has been very difficult to hear - and transcribe - clearly]*

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)*

**S:** No, let's get back to this point.

**Chintamani:** I answered a point that Vajrabodhi brought up when he was staying at 'Sukhavati' a few weeks ago, talking about the differences between the Finns and the English and how *(unclear)* were completely different, and I pointed out, not very coherently at the time but I clarified my thoughts afterwards, that in fact there is basically just one predicament and different degrees and permutations of that predicament, and I think it's worthwhile to see different cultures, classes and nationalities in terms of that rather than in terms of irreconcilable differences. If you look at it really blackly you could say there was just one neurosis and there were degrees and different stages of development of that neurosis, and you've got to spot the different kinds *(unclear)*.

**S:** There is also the positive side, that each, as it were, nationality in terms of culture especially, has got a positive contribution to make. One need not necessarily see it entirely in terms of neurosis.

**Jinamata:** I found it very enriching just to be in a different country again, and it's made me look at myself and it's altogether an enriching experience. I think you must have found that too.

**S:** I agree with you wholeheartedly. But perhaps we might even go so far as to say that just as every Order member ought to have a solitary retreat, every Order member ought to spend some time out of England doing things for the Dharma, or at least contacting people in other countries.

**Aryamitra:** On expenses!

**Jinamata:** No I think working in another country - not as a tourist - really being part of those people there, because otherwise you're going to stay a tourist and that's nothing.

**Vangisa:** I found that. Last year I spent the total of one week or so in Ireland and, strange as it may seem, it was the first time I've ever been there as a Buddhist. In other words I hadn't been there for rather a long time! And it definitely..... or rather nothing particular happened - I didn't do anything - I found it gave me a much clearer awareness of myself in relation to the world. Just to move into a different environment which I was familiar with but had not experienced while I was a Buddhist. It gave a completely different angle on oneself and other people.

**Jinamata:** There is another question also that I'd like to mention. I think it's a question of lifestyle. Here it is relatively easy to find part-time work or even to exist without working. This will not be possible in other European countries. It just is not on. They have to work and they have to..... they don't regard it as a... sort of something one doesn't like doing. Although they have alienation as well but there are also people who work happily, and it simply won't be possible for them to find part-time work that easily or not to work at all. That just isn't on. And I think that's quite an important point too, from just a practical point of view of how we conduct our everyday life.

**Vangisa:** That's not necessarily true, because this way we can now live in this country is comparatively new. It's come into existence because people are demanding (*unclear*). When there are people who require... a sufficient number of people who require part-time work (*unclear due to moving of chairs*) will come into existence. But if you (*unclear*) say in England ten or twenty years ago there was none of this available at all.

**Vimalamitra:** (*unclear*) really want to be part-time, perhaps I thought in a way that we are going to expand anyway, we are going to be full-time, or quite a large time doing farming or lecturing or whatever....

**Nagabodhi:** Printing.

**Ratnapani:** Full-time Dharma workers.

**Nagabodhi:** It seems to link up a bit with the last issue we were discussing, and maybe in some European countries there's a need for Friends to get together on business projects, so that they can work and live together. One can push that and that might go towards answering their other questions.

**Aryamitra:** It certainly seems like one forgets, well I forget, not being out of the country for about five years, that there are other countries. At least in some sort of vague sense.

**S:** Any Order members who've never been out of the UK, those who are born in the UK? Anyone at all?

**Chanda:** Ever or never?

**S:** Never been out of the UK.

**Ananda:** Come on. Own up!

**S:** (*unclear*)

**Dharmapala:** I think it's quite valuable to travel up to the North of England and to Scotland where it is different.

**S:** Norfolk's different! *[Laughter]*

**Jinamata:** One needs to be out working in another country. Not just as a tourist.

**S:** That's very good, actually. Working, yes.

**Chintamani:** Something that I noticed, being away, especially recently, is that a large part of me - in fact most of me - was only English to the extent that I remained in England. Really most of that sort of Englishness, English behaviour, and almost English reserved-ness, which I don't think can be (*unclear*) that all seemed to drop away. There's a lot that's really rather superficial in all cultures, in that respect, and there seems to be a sort of like cloud of mode of behaviour which if you're in it for long enough it starts working through you. It's not really very (*unclear*).

**Vajradaka:** I think that when you stay abroad for a very long time then you come to another kind of level. I think that generally that's true when you first go away. The kind of superficial English conditioning kind of drops away and you get involved being with the natives, eating with them, you know, being like them a bit *[Laughter]* but....

**S:** Well people certainly do that when they go to India.

**Vajradaka:** ..... and I think then there comes a point where the Indian or the foreign conditioning sort of just rubs up against a very deep English conditioning and then all of a sudden the English conditioning comes right to the surface and you feel very English. I think that that does happen. It certainly happened to me, and then you come face to face with these sort of much deeper conditionings, and then that's where you see what is very relative.

**Mangala:** What are they?

**Vangisa:** Oh I could name quite a few (*unclear*)

**Nagabodhi:** It's a whole world view.

**Chanda:** (*unclear*) working with other people (*unclear*) you come to know them and (*unclear*)

**Vajradaka:** I think that that's what eventually happens

**Chanda:** It really does happen if you travel and (*unclear*)

**Aryamitra:** I can imagine this whole (*unclear*) a bit like one say psychological type meeting another psychological type. First of all they can sort of sort of drop in a little bit of superficial stuff and feel like they're getting on all right together, but when they live together for a while, then I should think each of them really begins to see what deeper motives and so forth up against this thing they can't understand, because it seems so alien, like another type if you like. Do you see what I mean? So you really come down to roots of what makes you tick from a psychological point of view. And that same things can happen with, you know, national conditionings. You can't put it into words what they are but you're up against facing something that you can't completely (*unclear*)

**Chintamani:** You have to go away for enough of a period of time to discover that. I can't understand how.....

**Aryamitra:** Well just live with other Order members. (*Unclear*)

**Uttara:** It's a shield. It's your protection and if you (*unclear*) come up against it then you have to drop that protection.

**Vangisa:** A kind of national front *[Laughter]*

**Dharmapala:** (*unclear*) and really can stay with that, continue living with them, then what happens, it seems to me, is that any sort of security you have in your being the right way, as it were, is really shook, and continues to be shook. You have to let go (*unclear*).

**S:** You may of course decide in the end, after having been shaken that actually that particular way was right. Yes, but now you take it as right objectively, not because you've taken it as part of your equipment as an English person. You don't necessarily reject everything in the end. Or you may just keep certain things as quite useful working techniques but you quite recognise their limitations, whereas before you'd taken them as right and necessary ways of doing things.

Another very important aspect of all this that occurs to me is the question of language. Language, as it were, filters things. For all of us practically, except to the extent that we've had some experience apart from words, all our experience of Buddhism has been filtered through the English language. This is another kind of national conditioning that we have to be aware of. You may find that some very fine point of understanding that you've achieved in this country - you try to put it across in some other country and they don't have a word for that. It's as though there's a complete void. Or they've got a fine point of understanding of Buddhism, the possibility of which doesn't exist so far as the English language is concerned.

**Jinamata:** This is a very good way of broadening one's understanding. To use different words for, let's say, one's read and talked about Buddhism in English and then does it in a different language. It's really very good. Preferably in about five languages.

**S:** Can you say anything in greater detail?

**Jinamata:** Well I've found that as a personal experience of it happening to me. I started reading about Buddhism in German and then I tried to put what we talk about into German and it's really..... well again I found that enriching my way of thinking and being involved me and making me understand things from a different angle again. Maybe their word is slightly different and that again opens a new area of feeling and thought and this all broadens everything out. I think there was a tendency in the way one talks to get kind of into clichés before one has noticed it has happened and then if you use another language, well then you shake up these clichés and you come out with a broader understanding. I think that's very useful.

**Dharmapala:** I think that can happen even in Britain. There is a tendency to sort of develop jargon.

**Jinamata:** Yes, yes.

**Dharmapala:** And this goes back to that thing we were talking about earlier - class and (*unclear*). If you develop jargon you find it very difficult to relate to that, but if you're quite open to what they had to say. If you could speak to him on terms that he uses.

**Jinamata:** In my case I also experience that some words have been used in English and I saw the German word, I suddenly understood it better. Maybe because German is my mother tongue, I don't know, but that sort of thing happened, and just a general re-evaluation of one's terms and questioning them. So I think one could do that in one language as well, as you said, a jargon tends to develop. We use words in a clichéd form. We talk about positive and negative. Do we really know what we mean? Is it emotions, is it thoughts, what is it? And we go on and we hardly ever question these terms. And if you use another language you are forced to question them. You can of course do it in one language too, but it sort of forces you if it's a different vocabulary. I think that's just a very good thing to do.

**S:** Well there is a saying that when you learn another language you acquire another soul. [*pause*] Any other further points on nationality. We're getting very close to lunch time actually. Perhaps it ought to be put on or heated.

**Manjuvajra:** Nationality. That would also include, presumably, like the hereditary factor. One's parents etc., and where they came from.

**S:** Well there are all sorts of aspects. There is the family, the class, the economic group, the religious group, the linguistic group. All these. They are all acceptable.

**Padmapani:** Because it's possible that quite a few people of a national character might actually have quite an affinity with the Germanic race for instance, through... I don't know... If you take it on an international level over a period of time then there's been a sort of a stock, you know what they call a (*unclear*) moving up through Germanic up through Norway and Sweden, and maybe that affects us in conditioning in a very subtle sense. We have a sort of affinity with those people. (*Unclear*)

**S:** Maybe. I remember reading somewhere that at the time of the last war the ordinary British Tommy was very insular and anti other countries. So he went to Europe to fight and he came back with a strong dislike for all Europeans except the Germans. [*Laughter*] It may be because of this sort of racial connection. I don't know.

**Sagaramati:** How about as regards teaching the Dharma? Obviously what is going to be right for one country might not be very helpful for another.

**S:** Do you mean the Dharma itself or certain aspects of the Dharma or the way of teaching the Dharma?

**Sagaramati:** More the way of teaching the Dharma.

**S:** Yes.

**Sagaramati:** I mean obviously if you're all in the one country we have a certain way of doing it.

**S:** Well one instance I give from that connection sometimes is from India - where one has to explain what stand Buddhism took with regard to the caste system. This was an absolute must, just owing to the general nature of the situation there. You could well take your point of departure from the caste system and then gradually get into all the different aspects of Buddhism. That would be quite meaningless here, because you don't have a caste system.

**Sagaramati:** I was thinking more in perhaps deep psychological terms. Like thinking of the Tibetans they were of an, as it were, psyche, very very different from the Indians or the Chinese. Do you feel that these aspects are prominent in Europe? Is the English psyche very different from the Norwegian?

**S:** Well I can only speak about Finland from some experience. I didn't feel that the Finns were basically different at all. I felt very much at home with the Finns. I found it quite easy to get on with, despite all Vajrabodhi's warnings, not to say threatenings! *[Laughter]* I just found the Finns very easy to get on with and their psychic structures or whatever seemed exactly the same as those of the people I'd left behind in England. The social situation and their culture is somewhat different, their political setup, but no, I had a series of long sessions with Vajrabodhi and I quickly informed myself about all of them, those sort of things. And he was careful to warn me of all the possible corns I might tread on, so I carefully avoided them, but eventually I came to feel I could trust my own feeling and even if I did happen to tread on a corn it would give no offence, and I apparently didn't tread on any corns and everything seemed to go all right in that sort of way, as far as I know.

**Jinamata:** I don't think these things are essential, not essential differences but I think it's good to be aware of the differences because it helps, especially at the beginning.

**S:** For instance, one of the things that Vajrabodhi told me, which was useful to know, was that despite everything, in Finland the Lutheran Church is still the Church established by law, and a certain percentage of your income is deducted automatically by the government for Church purposes, yes. You can become excused from this if you go through some quite complicated business and usually people don't. So a lot of people have got a somewhat resentful feeling that they have to support the church or religion, even though they don't want to do so. And this may affect their attitude, say, in supporting the Buddhist group or the Buddhist movement. If you know these things you can understand why some of them may be, or seem to be, rather unwilling to give.

**Vajradaka:** Just before I left we took a very strong position on that. We gathered most of the more regular Friends and said to them leave the church and give the money that was being taken by the church to us, and quite a lot of them went along with that and thought it was a very good idea.

\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_: I'd like to dispute the remark you just made which was the famous no caste system in that I think there's middle class and working class and there's also male and female and I've been noticing it increasingly and I'd like everybody else to notice it and to take note of that, and (*unclear*) disregard it and.....

**S:** When I say caste, I'm using the word caste in a quite technical sense.

\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_: Well I'm using it in a technical sense. It's quite a class. It feels like a caste.

**Chintamani:** What's quite simple is that as regards class there are no objective differences whereas between the sexes there are.

\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_: On some levels there are and on other levels there aren't

**Chintamani:** Well on the levels that there aren't any differences there are no longer any sexes.

\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_: I'd appreciate it if everybody kept (*unclear*) as much awareness of that as possible, not treat women as types but as individuals as far as you possibly can, and the same, women try to do the same for men. I think.....

**Sagaramati:** It's up to the women to be individuals in that sense as well I think.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes, obviously.

**Sagaramati:** It's very hard to treat a woman as an individual if she isn't.

\_(*Woman*)\_: Yes, but I think, you know, keep trying.

**Dhammadinna:** It does raise the question of the unity of the Order which we were talking about in terms of sexism in the Order. We talked about class, nationality, race. I think sex does come into it. I've always understood that any Order member is welcome at any Order meeting whether they're male or female, but I get the impression this is not so, and that the women Order members are not welcome, say, at '*Sukhavati*', to the Order gatherings in the evenings during the Convention. And I'm not against segregation in retreats and all sorts of situations, but I think within the Order itself and large Order gatherings the segregation does not apply. That seems to be viewed as an option by other people. It seems not to have been aired. It seems to have just assumed, so I think it's very important then that (*unclear*)

**Abhaya:** I must say I was very surprised for the evening meditation that all Order members weren't there. [**Voices speaking at once:** (*unclear*)] Really very surprised. I think it a great mistake. Every Order member should get together and do the puja together in the evening.

**Vessantara:** Was there some policy laid down on this?

**Abhaya:** I don't know. It was just noticeable that there were no women there although there were quite a few women Order members around.

\_\_\_\_\_(*Woman*)\_\_\_\_: I discovered this.....

**S:** I don't think there was any discussion of any policy that there should not be any people other than the residents of '*Sukhavati*' in the evening meditation. I don't think this was discussed at all.

**Khema:** It was discussed. Only not directly in that way. When yourself and Subhuti and I met to discuss the arrangements for the Convention, and I said I felt it would be really good if the women who were staying here were able to eat and meditate in.....

**S:** No, you didn't say anything about meditation.

**Khema:** Yes I did! But we agreed that there would be an evening meal and meditation and puja where.....

**S:** Well I didn't discuss that. No I didn't discuss anything about meditation.

**Khema:** Well I know I mentioned it because I was quite sort of concerned about it. I mean I know I did, and this wasn't agreed.

**Ananda:** Well is there anyone here who feels that there should be segregation in the meditation?

**S:** I think just to speak about this generally, what I felt was this - that during the day we are all together, yes, and that during the evening time people can either be free to do exactly what they wish to individually, or get together in smaller groups.

**Abhaya:** Yes, but what I (*unclear*) would be the purpose of the puja.

**S:** Well I'm quite happy about everybody getting together for puja.

**Abhaya:** I just wondered whether there was any policy behind it.

**S:** So far as I'm concerned I would avoid any policy about that.

**Subhuti:** It's totally impractical. You know the size of the shrine room in '*Sukhavati*' is pretty crowded now.

**Ratnapani:** It's knee to kneecap anyway.

**Ananda:** Is in fact that the only criterion or is there a certain amount of sexual.....

**Siddhiratna:** Discrimination.

**S:** Well can we get everybody in there? I think actually we can't.

**Ananda:** Well if we can't then what is the basis of the exclusion?

**Siddhiratna:** Should it be done as it is with meditation being led, that the person who's been ordained longest attends that particular meditation.

**S:** Sorry I don't get the point.

**Siddhiratna:** If when we take meditations if the Order member that's been ordained the longest leads the meditations, so picking up on Ananda's point should the people who are going to be in 'Sukhavati' which seems to be the focal point of the Convention be those Order members who have been ordained longest?

**S:** No 'Sukhavati' is not the focal point of the Convention. This is the focal point of the Convention. This is where we're having the Convention.

**Siddhiratna:** We're back to what's the policy over (*unclear*)

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: What was the criterion of (*unclear*)

**S:** Well this hasn't been discussed as far as I know.

Well what is the policy? Yeah. What is the policy, that there's no distinction as regards men and women, as regards attendance at any puja or meditation that we have in connection with the Convention. It is simply more convenient that those who are there attend the meditation and puja there if there is only room for them in the shrine. If everybody gathers..... if there is a big enough place for everybody who is on the Convention all to be gathered together, all have the puja and meditation together, that's fine, but we don't have a big enough place apart from this place. I think if I remember rightly we did, at an earlier stage, think about using this place for a puja or a meditation but it was felt it wasn't a suitable venue - we'd have to put up a shrine and so on - therefore we thought let everybody do everything where they happen to be, in larger or smaller units. But we did think of having a joint puja and meditation possibly here but the place itself was not felt to be suitable, and that was a much earlier stage before I spoke with Khema.

**Khema:** It certainly is true that this place isn't very conducive to meditation.

**S:** This place?

**Khema:** I was definitely given the impression that it was not acceptable to have a puja (*unclear*)

\_\_\_\_\_: Can you speak up please, we can't hear you!

**Khema:** I was just saying that it's certainly true that this place isn't a very good place for meditation but I was certainly given to understand that it would not be acceptable to go and join in with other Order members in the other place.

**Ananda:** Could you say how you came to understand that. If nobody explicitly feels that how did you get that impression?

**Khema:** There are two issues. One is (*unclear*). It isn't actually a very nice place to be and doubtless 'Sukhavati' is a very nice place to be (*unclear*)

**S:** You mean this was a nice place to be....

**Khema:** It wasn't a nice place to be (*unclear*) .

**S:** For puja and meditation.

**Khema:** Well even to be here. It's not very conducive. There's a man living in the flat, it's rather cold and it's a bit like being in a prison. There's one key between five people. It just doesn't feel very pleasant.

\_\_\_\_\_: There's one key to the front door.

**Khema:** It feels rather cut off and there was a suggestion that we either be invited to 'Sukhavati' (*unclear*) meditation and puja, and that didn't seem to be very welcome.

**S:** Well the question did not come to me.

**Subhuti:** Well it came to me and I said what has just been said now, which is that there isn't room at '*Sukhavati*'. I think that's fairly obvious.

**Khema:** The feeling was also that we ought to be together and (*unclear*) because we didn't want to be together. It was rather.....

**Subhuti:** Well I must say it did seem to me that it was a good opportunity of which something could be made.

**S:** When I came to see this particular place I also inspected those other quarters and I thought well these are very nice quarters and people would be comfortable here. It's nice and quiet and decent and so on. Actually better than '*Sukhavati*'. This is what I felt when I looked.

**Khema:** Yes I don't want to stay at '*Sukhavati*'!

**S:** No I say this to make the point clear that this was attended to, and that I came and looked for myself and I looked in every room. I looked in the kitchen just to see what their quarters would be like.

\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_: The experience is not (*unclear*) an already existing shrine room has an atmosphere and I don't find that (*unclear*).

**S:** (*unclear*) just to settle this question of principle we did have a Convention six months ago. What happened in the evening there as regards puja and meditation?

\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_: We all joined together.

**S:** Exactly, so that should have made it clear that that is the principle.

**Khema:** Well principles can change.

**Manjuvajra:** I've come in from the outside. To me it seems very clear that there is segregation though not within the Order.

**S:** What do you mean by 'segregation' because this is a very emotive word nowadays.

**Manjuvajra:** Maybe I should use 'separation'.

**S:** Yes.

**Manjuvajra:** There's a definite separation between the men and the women, and I think for people to sort of try and cover that up is wrong.

**S:** Yes. Well separation in the sense there are separate retreats, separate study courses and so on.

**Khema:** Not within the Order as yet though, not separate retreats within the Order.

**S:** Oh no, not within the Order, no, but in the Movement.

**Khema:** We're talking about within the Order.

**Lokamitra:** But even so, there could be separated retreats within the Order.

**S:** If we decided that that was desirable, but we haven't yet decided.

**Lokamitra:** Men in the Order choose to live together. Certain women do, and for us there may well be separate retreats and so on.

**S:** Let's go back a little bit because this is quite an important point so let's go right back to the beginning and what we thought about at the time when the Order was started. This is where it should go back to. I must admit that here, when the Order was started, I made certain assumptions, yeah. Assumptions which people may agree with or not agree with now. The assumption which I made was that the Order would be a mixed Order. This is the assumption which I made right at the beginning. I also further assumed that all the activities of the Friends would be mixed, whether it was meditation classes, retreats etc. It never occurred to me that it might be otherwise. The reason was I thought well this is the West, this is how people do things in the West, so no doubt it is the natural thing that we should want to do things in that way in the West. This is not India, this is England. So therefore everything was started off in this sort of way. But as the result of experience, and in some cases I must say, quite painful and unpleasant experience, we discovered that that did not work at all levels. That it was all right for beginners, it was all right for people just beginning to come in. It was



all right in the case of mature Order members, but it was not all right for everybody on all occasions. Therefore we found that the best thing to do is to have, first of all , retreats for men, retreats for women, as well as mixed retreats. Then communities for men, communities for women, as well as mixed communities. And this has been the pattern so far. And we therefore find that the more this sort of separation takes place, the more positive seems to be the feeling and atmosphere of the whole movement. And it's not unconnected with this particular factor, though there are many others. This is what we found in our own experience. But this we can't deny. But we did not start, or certainly I did not start up with any assumptions of that kind. I started out with contrary assumptions and contrary expectations.

So the Order remains a united Order. It's an order of Upasakas and Upasikas, but increasingly more and more of our activities, though not as yet activities for the Order, are for either men or women separately as well as for both together, and this is what seems to be working, and it seems to be a positive factor in a way which is rediscovering the Eastern tradition which I thought myself frankly was irrelevant to this country, but it seems it isn't so irrelevant as I thought.

**Khema:** Well I've certainly found it extremely uncondusive because of those states of mind to be in a small group of women in this place with all the rest of the Order members elsewhere.

**S:** Mmm, yes.

**Khema:** (*unclear*) in fact it is not conducive to feeling happy or feeling positive or anything else.

**S:** And you didn't feel positive and happy with those few other Order members?

**Khema:** I'd say on the whole I think all the Order members should work together (*unclear*) is extremely negative.

**S:** Why do you think that was?

**Khema:** Because there was a feeling that it's the only time that the Order all gets together and yet it's not, or it did not appear to be at all possible for us to join with the other Order members unless they happened to be here, in any other way.

**S:** Well you see again this raises the question simply of sheer size. That we're lucky to be able to have this place, this hall, which is big enough to meet and hold the Convention.

**Khema:** Well all right in that case why wasn't it organised say that half a dozen of the fellas stay here by themselves and the other people stayed in some other place. Why was it (*unclear*)

**S:** I don't know whether this was seriously considered as a possibility but it was felt, as far as I recollect, that that is simply because already 'Sukhavati' is a men's community and most of those who will be coming on the Convention are already in fact living there. In fact a good number of them and .....

**Khema:** But.....(*unclear*) not the same!

**S:** Just a minute! And we had seven or eight places here for us to use and a self-contained flat. There seemed to be about that number of women Order members coming, and frankly I felt they'd be very happy here. This was my feeling.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*) that nobody's telling you. I mean I didn't know until last night that we weren't going to do meditation and puja together. [ **S:** Ah] We didn't know we weren't going to eat together, and the fact that it was (*unclear*) that nobody told me until the time of (*unclear*)

**S:** Well this partly due simply to the way in which the whole Convention is arranged. We don't have a sort of general meeting about it or about the programme or anything of that sort. I in the past have been the head of planning of the discussions and most of the other things have just been looked after by two or three people who were here in London.

**Khema:** I think it's very obvious that if you want something you arrange it that way. Well it just seems very simple then, that the Order.....

**S:** Well as far as I can see the way in which it can be done, and the only way, is that in future, if we are going to continue to have this sort of Convention, which seems to be the case at least for a few years, with everybody on it and everybody participating, and if we want to have our puja and meditation together, well we shall just have to hire

a place which is big enough for us to be able to do that, and set up our shrine and have it all together. And this is possible if you really want to.

**Lokamitra:** Khema did really look into this I think. Khema did really look into it and I think this was the last resort. We were quite desperate. I think that should be *(unclear)*

**Khema:** Well I mean I did try for a long time trying to find somewhere else and I wasn't happy at all about it and I came around it with Subhuti and I was very very hesitant, but it did seem that it's going to be very difficult to find anywhere else. All along there's been this niggle at the back of my mind that I wasn't happy about the arrangements being made for the women who were staying here, and with the meeting with Subhuti about it I did express this but I didn't feel that there was an equal understanding the other way that in fact the six women staying here wouldn't be.....

**S:** Well I would say quite frankly I did feel that they'd be quite happy to stay there.

**Khema:** Well I didn't feel they would be. I just couldn't see any other solution other than if in the evening they all meditated at 'Sukhavati'. For other reasons this is impractical.

**Aryamitra:** Can I just say I think the feeling I get is not so much of discrimination but I think I pick up the feeling that the women feel they've been dumped here. I don't think there's been good communication. They come on retreat and are told 'you're there' *(unclear due to a number of voices all speaking at once)*

**S:** ..... people coming down and told that they're to stay at 'Sukhavati'. *(More voices all at once!)*

**Siddhiratna:** That's a point. It's an attitude isn't it. I mean Aryamitra's saying he was asked and the women are being told. I think that the women should stay here. I think that for the people at 'Sukhavati' it's good and I think for the females here it's good but it's the attitude on the part of some Order members that you just toss the women off to the side. *(Unclear due to even more voices speaking at once)*

**S:** *(unclear)* I quite understand the feeling and I am familiar with the feeling but I think really that we made a mistake, and I say this quite frankly. I think very often women not only in general in society but even within the Order sometimes feel that if they are not where the men are they're sometimes missing something.

**Khema:** No, I don't think I.....

**S:** Yes. Well this is the impression I get.

\_\_\_\_ **(Woman)** \_\_\_\_: It's like a different attitude towards women. That's what I think.

**Chintamani:** Well they're different!

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear due to voices shouting/speaking at once)*

**S:** For instance I can give you an example. Supposing I turned up in London and Khema had said to me, 'you and so and so and so are going to stay there', I would not feel relegated to a corner or put aside or anything like that.

**Khema:** Well I understood for instance in the evening there was going to be time to talk to other people. Now if for instance I want to go and see Manjuvajra he's locked away in 'Sukhavati'.....

**Siddhiratna:** He's not locked away! *(Unclear - as before!)* You can go and visit anybody.

**Khema:** *(shouting)* Well I never get that feeling!

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear - as before)*

**S:** You see me there! I get more women visitors than men! *[Laughter]*

**Vangisa:** One thing is whether or not the women downstairs are not happy with that flat, that's point number one. Point number two is they feel discriminated against as women which happens to be a thing which is very much in the air at the moment. Women seem to feel this very easily, but I think the two things should be dissociated.

I accept they're not happy in the flat down there (*unclear*) they're pushed in there because of sexual discrimination. (*Unclear*)

**S:** This is what I basically feel.

**Khema:** Would it be possible - going back to the meditations and puja - if there isn't a big enough room which seems to be the case, would it be possible to alternate. Those people who meditate there anyway, maybe they could make room for those who don't normally meditate and it could alternate. That is possible.

(*Unclear* - voices shouting at once)

**Chintamani:** Why?! Why?!

**Khema:** (*unclear*) with a large number of Order members. I hardly ever meditate with a large number of Order members. This is a very good experience to meditate with a large number of Order members so I can understand that people feel that they would like to do this, very much so.

**S:** For instance on this topic of all together, this is one of the reasons, by the way, I suggested this Thursday evening get together at Archway. This is my own personal suggestion, so that there would be a social and just a get together not only of all Order members, both men and women, but all Mitras in the area, both men and women also, and that we had the puja all together afterwards. This was also one of my own personal ideas. So it is not as though this question of us all sitting together and all meditating together was ever completely overlooked. We had this in mind, but we don't have a place where we can do it every day. Not here in the same place as the Convention.

**Khema:** Well is this degree of flexibility not possible? To change for the people who go there. Why.....

**S:** I'd be very happy if we had a place where we could have pujas.

**Khema:** One can make room for one's guests and..... is it so difficult that maybe different people go there every evening for the puja and meditation. Is that not possible?

**Sagaramati:** Why don't you come up to 'Pundarika'. There's plenty of room there.

**Vangisa:** We've got some room in West London if anybody wants to come!  
[Laughter]

**Ratnapani:** I don't see why things have suddenly changed. On retreats in the past we say 'you, you and you in there, you, you and you in there', and so on and so forth and you've (*unclear*) get on with it. Why.... I mean OK, so perhaps this isn't a completely groovy place but why don't (*unclear*)

**Jinamata:** There seem to be the separate issues of the accommodation and the place to meditate and do puja together. I think.....

**S:** Well certainly let's keep them separate. First of all I not only accept but I, if you like, insist that the more Order members there are sitting and meditating, doing the puja together, the better, and if we could all do it together in that way every day, so much the better. But we don't have that facility unless we actually use this place itself. If we want to we can do that. We can set up a shrine here. There's nothing to prevent us doing that. We considered it and rejected that possibility. All right, maybe we made a mistake but that can be done. There's no problem setting up a shrine here and everybody meditating and doing puja here in the evening. The whole Order (*unclear*) everybody whatever. It will only take us an hour to set up a shrine.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*) meditate at 'Sukhavati'.

**S:** Well this is a possibility.

**Jinamata:** Couldn't everybody go to 'Pundarika'? Just everybody.

**Sagaramati:** Why all this thing of wanting to keep everybody together. I mean it's convenient to split in two.

**Ananda:** Well the people want to meditate together.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Jinamata:** (*unclear*) we are talking about unity of the Order and quite a number of Order members meditating together which we all agree is a very very useful experience.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_: Yes but the unity of the Order doesn't consist necessary of everybody is coming together all at once. At sometime or other in the not so distant future it just won't be physically possible. The unity of the Order depends on something else.

**Vangisa:** Personally I excluded myself from 'Sukhavati' last night. I went round there afterwards. I had a cup of tea but I subsequently left because I could see that it was going to be pretty crowded anyway. I would have liked to have stayed on and done a meditation and puja but I felt I was inviting myself in and that it was more appropriate to depart. So I excluded myself.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_: I'd like to say that I felt excluded from 'Sukhavati' too. I was told that I couldn't go and stay there for the Convention. I had to stay at Archway, and I wanted to go to 'Sukhavati'.

**Chanda:** I don't see why (*unclear*)

**S:** Let me exert my British compromise and try to (*unclear*). Maybe I do always try to please everybody. Sometimes I succeed and at other times I just don't. All right, but if people feel strongly and very likely quite rightly on this topic of all meditating together - we can be together in spirit, we know that, but sometimes it's good to be together in the flesh too - all right could we not have a puja at 'Pundarika' to conclude with just as we opened with one?

\_\_\_\_\_: You mean on Monday?

**S:** The last night. That would at least satisfy some people to some extent.

**Ananda:** Would that really resolve the issue that I feel is.....

**S:** No I'm not going to ever please everybody, but this is a particular point that Jinamata has raised and I see that that is a very valid point. When we did consider - certainly I did think about all having our pujas and meditations here but we just

thought this room wasn't very suitable, but big enough. But we could certainly travel, all of us, to 'Pundarika', or those who wish to come up.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_: On Monday evening.

**S:** On Monday Evening. What is today?

\_\_\_\_\_: Saturday.

**S:** Well so far as I'm concerned we can go up every evening. I don't mind in the least personally.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_: We have a class on Sunday. We can't go up then.

**S:** Ah. All right then.

**Aryamitra:** Just to finish I don't think we should go up every evening. It's too much travelling distance.

**S:** We finish on Monday, and Monday is our last day, so we can all go out there. I mean it's quite easy to organise the transport. We'll all go up there, we'll fix the time, and (*unclear*)

**Aryamitra:** Will we have the Mitras?

**S:** Just the Order because we had Mitras on the first weekend so just for the Order. Does that at least please some people at least a little bit more? What about the women, what about the Upasikas. Are you happy with that? I said happier.

**[End of Side One Side Two]**

I know you're not going to be completely happy, but happier?

**Dhammadinna:** We may even be completely happy! (*Unclear*) [*Laughter*]

**S:** But I think, just to go back to the slightly more touchy issue which I think shouldn't be shirked, I think the women are going to feel that they're being put to one side for

some time. They are going to feel this. But I frankly think it's good for them! *[Laughter]* I frankly think. I really do believe that women can get it together in the same way that men can, but I think they can only do it if they're on their own together sometimes, yes. And not feel that if they're not with the men they're not where it's really at.

**Dhammadinna:** It's not so much that. Can I make a point about that because I feel that - let me try and get it straight - to a certain extent I agree that women can depend on men as men, and I think most women Order members are aware of that and try to do something about it. But there is the feeling of other Order members as Order members. That's very important.

**S:** Yes, I think this is very important.

**Dhammadinna:** I just want to go on. If you're restricted to a very small group, you maybe don't get on with everybody in that group(*unclear*). Sometimes you need, you know, the experience of Order members as Order members.....

**S:** Indeed.

**Dhammadinna:** .....and I don't feel that women can't get it on. I feel they can and the women do spend quite a lot of time together anyway, quite happily, and I don't feel that in our retreats and our communities and so on there is this feeling that we're missing something because there isn't a man there. I don't feel that at all. I think that's a past situation.

**S:** I'm really glad to hear that.

**Uttara:** You don't think so Dhammadinna but I think there's a couple.....

\_\_\_\_(*Woman*)\_\_\_\_: I (*unclear due to voices speaking at once*) do object to being pushed around.

**Uttara:** (*unclear*) some form of dissatisfaction. You must be unhappy about it.

\_\_\_\_(*Woman*)\_\_\_\_: I'm pushed around because I'm a woman not because I'm a.....

**S:** Can you be more specific. I mean do you really feel you're being pushed around.

\_\_\_\_(*Woman*)\_\_\_\_: Frequently, yes.

**S:** Because I don't think I push you around. (*unclear due to voices speaking at once*)

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Jinamata:** I'm a woman but I don't feel I'm being pushed around! *[Laughter obscuring rest of contribution]* You were talking about there would be a sort of separation for some time. Do you envisage that being in the Order, like two separate Orders. That's something else I'd like to ask.

**S:** I've haven't actually thought about that. In a sense there can't be two separate Orders because there's one unified Movement.

**Jinamata:** Well that's why I'm asking.

**S:** So as far as I see things at present there can only be one Order, but it may well be that Upasakas and Upasikas have some of their own activities, as it were, as well as activities in common.

**Jinamata:** Because I have heard that this has been talked about. I wasn't there at the time.

**S:** This would be rather difficult in practice anyway.

\_\_\_\_\_: I think sometimes one does feel pushed. Maybe it's to do with majority/minority situations. What did Chintamani say about the majority (*unclear*) which I thought could apply.....

(*unclear due to many voices speaking at once*)

**Dhammadinna:** .....maybe we have to push back because sometimes - if you're a woman in the Order - sometimes you lean over backwards so as to not appear a reactive histrionic hysterical woman. Maybe we have to appear like that sometimes. Like take the risk of being seen as being reactive if something upsets you.

**S:** Right yes. Well at least it gets cleared more quickly.

**Dhammadinna:** But that's a tendency. One doesn't want to be talked about (*unclear*) speak out.

**S:** I think just to go perhaps a bit back to sort of matters of principle, if we have say one Order and it's a unified Order, and it's men and woman, Upasakas and Upasikas - it means everybody is in that as an individual. Therefore the more people experience one another as individuals the better. But you can't have that sort of Order unless people really are treating one another as individuals. That means there's no room and no place for little sexual games, and both men and women must be really very aware and conscious of that. Otherwise if too much of that goes on, well there just has to be more and more separation until people get over it, whether they're men or whether they're women. That is actually the situation and I must say I've been in the past, even on retreats, so disgusted by what I've seen I can't say. Very disgusted. But it's certainly been got over now. Certainly the situation is much better now and certainly there's a much healthier atmosphere, and our having these separate activities has really helped in this respect. So they're not an end in themselves, they're a means to an end. In New Zealand, for instance, they weren't considered necessary. We didn't bother having separate retreats or separate anything for men or for women because the society there is so much more healthy. But that is the situation. It may well be that some women unfortunately do feel a bit, say, left aside but that's certainly not the intention.

**Gotami:** Bhante, When I'm up in Scotland (*unclear*) I came down here quite normally. (*Unclear*) tension between the men and the women, and it was here and I did not like it.

**S:** I must say I don't feel tension between men and women. If anything less than ever there has been, but because there's been separation.

**Gotami:** Well what I saw yesterday was that the women were separated and all the women were really unhappy about it.

**S:** What were they unhappy about? At least three different points have been made. One, that there was no united puja and meditation for everybody together. It's not so much even a question of men and women but of all Order members wanting to

meditate and have the puja together - fair enough. All right we'll have that on Monday. The other, the question of the women staying together away from 'Sukhavati', well that is simply as a matter of practical convenience, nothing more than that.

**Gotami:** Quite honestly I don't think it matters (*unclear*) I was very happy to come down here (*unclear*) but I don't want the chairperson (*unclear*) feel rejected from the Order.

**Dhammadinna:** Actually I don't think we were that unhappy! [*Laughter*] We expressed out dissatisfaction quite violently in the way that we tend to do that when we get together, (*unclear*) [*Laughter*] get it out in the open really amongst ourselves and (*unclear*) to bring it up here. I don't feel I was unhappy. Dissatisfied maybe and maybe irrationally on some counts.

\_\_\_\_(*Woman*)\_\_: All the women here yesterday were really angry and really.....

**Dhammadinna:** Well you know we can be!

**S:** I don't really know who these women are. Who the angry women are. [*Laughter and loud voices*]

**Khema:** I am angry. I left last night because I was so angry.

**S:** Who else?

\_*(Woman)*\_\_: I was angry too but I mean the thing is that when you're angry you let it out so it doesn't fester and it doesn't sort of come out a few weeks later sort of still being angry, so you can leave it, you can drop it. You don't carry it with you.

**S:** Let's try and eliminate the point. This question of non-access to a large Order puja and meditation. This is cleared up I hope. What was the other difficulty?

\_\_\_\_\_: Accommodation.

**S:** Accommodation. Well we did our best or whoever was responsible [*Laughter*]. I took sufficient interest to go and look myself and I thought it looked very good and I thought how nice it was frankly, so I couldn't personally do more than that.

**Khema:** Well I feel I've been pushed aside. There's been no choice there. We've been sort of pushed there.

**S:** Well isn't this a usual thing, that as I think Aryamitra said that on retreat you're assigned your.....

\_\_\_\_\_: Where you're concerned that's not true because I said if you want to go there you can, there's room. If you don't you don't have to.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Chintamani:** Nobody pushes me around if they try! [*Laughter and jeering!*]

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Chintamani:** Well they do actually but..... [*Laughter*]

**S:** Well personally I can't help feeling that probably as someone said owing to the sort of general social climate and the fact that these things are widely discussed, I can't help feeling that women are a bit sensitive, if not oversensitive, to what they feel is being pushed to one side. No one's pushing women to one side. Even that sort of way of putting it is as though the central thing is even there to push to one side.

**Khema:** Yes we had a choice but I misunderstood that choice. I thought it meant in fact coming down, taking part in the all the pujas and meditations and everything in the evening, and eating together, and I felt that that was.....

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Khema:** It seems to me that the most important thing is for us to organise that we can meditate and have puja together in large numbers, men and women. (**S:** Right, yes.) That seems to be the most important. That's what I came for and the accommodation seems just something.....

**S:** Well, as I think Subhuti mentioned, I was aware of the search that was going on for a place, and I was aware that Khema was looking. Ideally of course it should be a place big enough to accommodate all these things, because the next Convention there may be a hundred of us, yes. So maybe while we are on the subject is it people's feeling that say on the next Convention, because we're not going to be able to discuss it again, that arrangements should be made so that all Order members can have the puja and meditation together?

\_\_\_\_\_: And maybe to eat together because coming on a Convention there's that social aspect that's very important, and what's happening at the moment here is at five thirty or whatever time it's over a van goes to 'Pundarika', everyone goes to 'Sukhavati' and there this great split, and the social movement is not happening which I think is very important.

**S:** Well this is partly I suggested the get together on Thursday evening.

\_\_\_\_\_: I don't think that's enough.

**S:** Well fair enough. If we don't feel that it's enough let's take note of that, but it means that for the next Convention we must make those arrangements so that we have a hall or whatever where we can not only have the actual Convention and the discussion but where we can have the puja and where we can all eat together.

\_\_\_\_\_: Can we not eat here in the evening? I mean we can have lunch here, why can't we eat here?

**Dhammadinna:** I don't think it's a very nice place to eat actually!

**S:** We may very well have to cook supper well in advance. We may also have to spend quite a bit of money but all right if it is necessary then no doubt that can be done.

**Subhuti:** I must say I have rather valued the relative informality of this Convention.

**S:** Ah. Well this is again another thing we did have in mind. I personally felt that people might like to just be freer in the evenings and either be with the people where they are staying. In other words if you stay at 'Sukhavati' you eat at 'Sukhavati', you stay here you eat here, stay at 'Pundarika' you eat there, that splits you up into a

smaller number of bits. Or you just get together with two or three friends and go out. The point was made to me that people would want time for individual get togethers and not be all the time in session as it were.

**Khema:** I think the people who are in larger.... either at 'Pundarika' or 'Sukhavati', that's fine, but somehow there's the six who at five thirty the place is suddenly deserted, there are not women planted everywhere.

**S:** How many of them?

**Khema:** Well there were six.

**Dhammadinna:** No, there were four of us then.

**Khema:** It's a very small number. If they haven't been invited somewhere else they can't really invite themselves to that place, not so easily. That's where the difficulty is.

**S:** But did you really feel lonely here, something like that?

\_\_\_\_\_: It felt a bit prison like because there's only one door key between five or us and we couldn't come or go very easily.

**S:** Well I must admit this is something that didn't occur to me - the number or door keys, or that maybe I should have thought of it.

**Ratnapani:** I can well imagine the atmosphere from experience at the Archway Centre when everybody goes home.

**S:** Ah.

**Ratnapani:** The Archway Centre was sometimes terrible, just because of the contrast, although I was all right, within myself before everybody went home. Suddenly thirty people disappeared and you wonder what's happened. It is a very lonely feeling. But I also personally find the idea of eighty people all eating and meditating and being together for four days frightening, if not to say horrific! I wouldn't want to do it.

**S:** Well there do seem to be different opinions then. Perhaps we just have to compromise.

**Ratnapani:** Four twenties or something like that.

**S:** We will have the collective puja and meditation at 'Pundarika', and no doubt we can arrange to eat there on Monday evening too altogether. I must say that personally I don't (*unclear*) lot of people eating together very much at all, to be quite frank. In fact on Thursday I took the precaution of eating before I came along. Otherwise I'm trying it eat and everyone wants to talk to me which I find terrible.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Vajradaka:** Something that you mentioned last night when I was talking to some of the women - one of the bones of contention was that everyone else had had their food cooked for them but the women had to cook their own.

**S:** Let it all hang out here! [*Laughter*] I sympathise, but maybe we should have thought about that. We had so many Mitras at 'Sukhavati' to think about, or do that for us, and well maybe we ought to have had a couple of female Mitras come here and (*unclear*).

**Jinamata:** I think that is very unhospitable or whatever.

**S:** But who is hospitable to whom?

**Lokamitra:** It could have been arranged. It could have been arranged by the Order members. We've got Mitras preparing food at Archway, we've got Mitras preparing food at 'Sukhavati'; some arrangement could have been done.

**Marichi:** But why wasn't it done?

**Khema:** It didn't even occur to me somehow.

**S:** Well you're so capable yourself Khema you just.....



**Khema:** No, it's not that at all. It's just simply that the whole situation about the flat didn't occur to us until it actually was lived in.

**S:** Ah.

**Khema:** As you said you thought it would be perfectly adequate. I had a niggle at the back of my mind but I just.....

**S:** I thought it would be very comfortable, not just adequate.

**Khema:** I mean the only reason we decided to have a Mitra cook at Archway was because there were so many of us and it would take a long time to prepare the meal, not because we wouldn't be there.

**S:** But you did genuinely feel that you were a bit resentful that there wasn't someone preparing for you?

**Chintamani:** I sometimes feel resentful that they did prepare the meal!

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*) people screaming outside and it was rather.....

**Dhammadinna:** I think the whole situation as we've seen is a very mixed one in a lot of (*unclear*) quite right (*unclear*)

**S:** When I came in it was all very quiet. That might have been just exceptional. We looked at the (*unclear*) the flat and it seemed very nice and peaceful here.

\_\_\_\_\_: There is a man living in it which isn't that.....

**S:** In it? We weren't told anything about that. It might part of the perks of [*Laughter*] (*unclear*) As far as I understood (*unclear*)

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*) an avoidable situation. We didn't know about it until the night before last when we actually.

**S:** Well we should have checked of course.

**Chintamani:** I'd like to make a general point and that is I don't think the level of individuality is such, even in the Order, and that's on both sides, men and women, where we can actually socialise effectively, and even eat together. I really feel it's that serious, and I think it's going to be so for another year, possibly two, and maybe more.

\_\_\_\_\_: I just think (*unclear*) it would be a lot better if it was expressed to the women, not just expressed or thought but not brought up. This was one of the things that the women were saying last night. It was that they felt a certain atmosphere but nobody had actually said anything.

**S:** Well what was the atmosphere that they felt?

\_\_\_\_\_: Well (*unclear*) response coming out is it's going to be (*unclear*) to cook for them (*unclear*)

(*Unclear due to many shouting/speaking at once!*)

**Subhuti(?):** (*unclear*) everything that has been said. If Khema brought it up. I know when Khema brought it up with Lokamitra in London and we said more or less everything that's come out now. It's been quite open.

**Khema:** Well it feels like you made up this package and put the women together and said "it would be good for those women to be on their own", but nobody actually.....

\_\_\_\_\_: That's not true!

**Lokamitra:** Who is the retreat organiser here?

**Khema:** It's me.

**Lokamitra:** Yeah, it's Khema.

**S:** Khema did bring it up, this point, that the women may not be very happy there etc., but I must say quite honestly that I did think that they would and I told her that.

\_\_\_\_\_: When Khema....

**S:** But I must say I thought in terms of a nice comfortable flat etc. I looked at it mainly from that point of view.

**Gotami:** Well I didn't have any violent objections when I was first there and Khema asked me how it was and I realised (*unclear*) that I wasn't happy there. I didn't like it, and so the next thing we knew we were talking to Lokamitra and Subhuti and I think Khema put forward the suggestion that maybe we could be invited back to 'Pundarika' one night and 'Sukhavati' the next and was met with blank, you know, stares. It was fairly evident that they didn't want us at either place.

**S:** Not even at 'Pundarika'?

**Gotami:** No. Nobody said anything but you know [*Laughter*] (*unclear*) don't like it here. I feel they were reasonably sympathetic but they didn't really want us there at the same time.

**Sagaramati:** It's wrong to say that they didn't want you. The thing is that the whole thing brings in something else and you just don't want to change. You don't want to be bothered! It just seems so petty!

\_\_\_\_\_: If we weren't happy there then I think that that deserves consideration.

**Lokamitra:** I was certainly open to you coming to 'Pundarika' but asked Subhuti and we both said this to you, we were just quite amazed that you just didn't want to take this opportunity to get together, and that one or two of you had expressed before that you don't get the opportunity to feel Sangha so much within the Order such as men do, yeah. I was just amazed that there were more Upasikas together than ever before. They're exploring things with women, they're exploring the situation, yeah, but it just wasn't taken advantage of and made tremendous use of.

**Jinamata:** But as I see it, not living in a community, it seems to me that the women have plenty of opportunity to have some (*unclear*) with women anyway. That doesn't seem to have been in any way new so I don't see how it applies to the size.

**Khema:** I think it applies to the situation Lokamitra. Like on a women's retreat, if they had a retreat, women Order members, it would be completely different, but trying

to combine that with the Convention when you may want to see other Order members and socialise quite a bit more it just doesn't work.

**Lokamitra:** I do agree and I think the whole situation has been unfortunate. It's not your fault, I think you've done everything you can as Order Convenor, but we have tried other places, we tried to get Winscomb Hall where everyone would have been round Archway. We could have meditated together at 'Pundarika'. We were almost going to use (*unclear name*) but it wasn't felt convenient - I can't remember the reasons, so altogether I think it's been an unfortunate situation and I think we really have to remember that.

\_\_\_\_\_: It seems to me the assumption is (*unclear*)

**S:** I think also there is the point that inasmuch as the Order doesn't meet as an Order beforehand and there's no machinery other than the Convenor and a few *ad hoc* people, that the arrangements for the Convention, the practical arrangements, have to be made just by those few people.

**Ananda:** I don't agree, Bhante [*Laughter*] Why not use 'Shabda' for that. It's an excellent medium.

\_\_\_\_\_: It was.

(*Unclear due to many talking/shouting*)

**Khema:** I asked again and again for assistance to help find a place!

**Ananda:** I don't mean that. I don't mean that. I mean people communicating what's being communicated this morning, just feelings about these sort of things.

**S:** No, just a minute. We're talking about something quite different here. We can arrange the practical day to day arrangements for holding the Convention, the Commissariat, in fact.

**Ananda:** Yes but the feeling I'm getting from that is that they don't have any say in that.....

**Vangisa:** But this just isn't true. We've spent three quarters of an hour discussing the accommodation of five or six Order members.

**S:** I think we will have to stop for lunch, but what points are we left with which should be borne in mind with regard to the next Convention? This is really what we want to know.

**Aryamitra:** First one, more clarity with accommodation, explaining where accommodation is, why and who.

**Ananda:** Communication.

**Aryamitra:** Communication, yeah. I mean I just felt from the women that, male or female, they just felt they were dumped there. Even if it was just a bunch of men here, I think they would have felt they were dumped here because of the lack of communication somehow. I think that's the first thing really.

**S:** What are you suggesting in practical terms the Convenor should do? Well here's the convenor for next year. What is Suvratta to..

**Aryamitra:** The Convenor should approach everybody and tell them where they're going to be or.....

**S:** This is a practical point.

**Jinamata:** Somehow try and find a space big enough where we can all meditate and have puja together, the whole Order. This seems to me to be very important. Then also, maybe that as many Order members as possible can be there, and there are Order members here that I've seen for the first time. Well for other reasons I haven't got much time to stay over, but that's different, but I mean to create, find an environment where this can happen. It's good to meet those Order members that one hasn't met. *(Unclear)*

**S:** This is partly why we left the evenings free so that those of you who could get together with who you wanted.

**Jinamata:** There seem to be difficulties because of space though on this level. So we could make that experience now, we draw our conclusions for next time, and say that we'll try and find a place where this will be made more easy than here where some people are at 'Pundarika', others are at 'Sukhavati', others in the flat, and it seems difficult to move.

\_\_\_\_\_: I'd like to suggest that the Convention is always held out of a city. I don't think it's been a very good place to have it.

**S:** It seems to me that I think the only possibility will be - and even this is only until such time as we are more than say 150 Order members at the most, we just have to hire a conference centre.

**Ashvajit:** Hire a tent.

**S:** No. The only thing is to hire a conference centre, which means of course conference centre rates.

**Lokamitra:** Four pounds a day each.

**S:** Well that's the only way we can really do what has been suggested.

**Jinamata:** *(unclear)* four pounds a day each. *(Unclear)* [Laughter] Well you go out for a week and get a job you could earn the four pounds a day each. I don't think that should be....

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)*

**S:** *(unclear)* we can get Manchester *(unclear)* Oxford. It's already been offered to us. *(Unclear)*

\_\_\_\_\_: Would that be very expensive?

**S:** You have to bear in mind all these things. People say they want such a facility. Well you are going to have to pay for them.

**Jinamata:** You can't have those facilities if you can't pay for them so we have to make our choice. What line are we going to take and if we want those facilities well then we're going to make it possible for us to get them.

**S:** For instance the first convention we held at 'Aryatara'. Do you remember? The first Convention we held at 'Aryatara'. There were twenty seven Order members present. So we stayed there, we had the Convention there, we had our meditation and we had our puja there. We had our meals there and I think everybody stayed there in some form or other. So this is how we started. The fact that we're doing things differently is due simply or mainly to the fact that we've expanded. So if we want to continue doing this in the way that we did originally at 'Aryatara', well we just have to hire some place. That means payment.

\_\_\_\_\_: Well next year we have 'Sukhavati' and the big shrine room.

**S:** It may be possible then, it may be. At least for puja and meditations.

\_\_\_\_\_: (unclear)

**Chintamani:** 'Sukhavati''s not the city.

\_\_\_\_\_: (unclear)

**Mangala:** I think this Convention's been really good. I think it's unfortunate that.... I mean I was unaware of this dissatisfaction of the women, you know, but I think it's very unfortunate that that aspect has occurred, but other than that I didn't feel any sort of big split because half the people were going back to Archway last night. I didn't feel that was spoiling part of..... I'm very happy here. I think this has been a really good Convention so far and even this room, I think it's fine. I like the city, you know, as well. [Laughter and applause]

**Vangisa:** But it hasn't been decided were not going to have it in the city anyway, it's just been suggested.

**S:** Anyway I was saying originally that we will have lunch. I was saying originally I think we have to compromise here. I think we can't afford a conference centre in the country. I think what we do have to do is to get a hall in London where we can have

the sessions of the conference, whether it's four or eight or twenty or whatever, and where we can all eat together. And if, those who feel really very pressed and don't like to eat with so many people - that may well include me - they'll just go off quietly and eat somewhere else. But for those who want to eat with a large number of other Order members, the possibility will be there. So we just have to ask the Convenor of the Order to bear that in mind, if possible. You may have to start looking as from now. [Laughter] You may have to start looking as from now, yeah. Because some of these places have to be booked at least a year in advance.

**Vessantara:** What's the best time for this?

\_\_\_\_\_: Shall we have lunch?

**S:** No, the reason why we're having this one at this time of the year, so soon after the last, is that we want to have the Convention over Easter so that the end of the Summer is for retreats and study retreats and so on. Anyway it is lunch time now.

### [Lunch Break]

**S:** Devaraja has brought around a letter from Suvratta. I'm supposed to read that out later on in the proceedings. That's something, as it were, organisational, whereas this afternoon we're very much concerned with spiritual topics, if one can be allowed to use that word, perhaps in the narrower sense, perhaps in the predominant sense of the term. We're going to be concerned this afternoon with visualisation practice, the Order Metta Bhavana, and the dedication of 'Sukhavati'.

Now it is very nearly half past two. I think therefore what I shall try to do as these are interlinked topics, is to deal with them in one not very long session, because we've had a quite vigorous morning and no doubt quite a few of you want to get together in the evening in various ways. So I think we won't have any break for tea. We'll have our tea at the end, but I'll do my best to see that the session doesn't go on too long. In any case I think it will be a somewhat more restful session than the one we had in the morning, at least (unclear).

Visualisation practice. I'm thinking here mainly of the visualisation practice which Order members do as part of their practice of reciting the mantra which they receive at the time of their ordination, their private ordination. Just to refresh everybody's

memory, the mantra is, as it were, the sound symbol of a certain spiritual state. One can even say a certain spiritual mode of being, or better still Transcendental mode of being. And the form or the figure of the Buddha or Bodhisattva to whom the mantra pertains is, as it were, the form and colour symbol of that same state or that same mode of being, or if you like that same entity. Just as we have two eyes and we see things binocularly, in the same way we approach that particular spiritual state, that Buddha or Bodhisattva, in two ways - through the sound symbol and through the form and colour symbol. We recite or repeat the mantra, whether loudly or to ourselves, and we try to visualise the form.

Now the main sort of theoretical point that I want to make in this connection at the moment is that the whole visualisation and mantra recitation method ties up with the Higher Evolution as such. In other words, when we think of, or when we have in mind, a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva figure, we are thinking, as it were, of a further stage on in the evolutionary process. We are thinking, as it were, of the goal of that evolutionary process, that process of Higher Evolution, and we're thinking of it in the form of, or in terms of, that particular Buddha, that particular Bodhisattva. And we try to approach that particular Buddha or Bodhisattva through the medium of his or her mantra or form with colour - *rupa*. We have no real word for this in English. It's not form in the sense of bare outline - it's form or shape plus colour. So through the sound and through the form or shape plus colour. In this way, by repeating the mantra, by visualising the form, we try to get more and more closely and deeply into contact with what is our own ideal, which is what is in fact ourselves as we shall be at the end of our development, when we reach the end of the evolutionary process. So in a way we can say that what we are doing when we recite the mantra and visualise the Buddha or Bodhisattva concerned is try to put ourselves in contact with our own, as it were, truer and more real self, though not in any metaphysical or theological sense. Ourselves as we really are, in a sense outside of time. This is what we're trying to do.

So in this way the mantra recitation and the visualisation practice links up with the whole philosophy, as it were, of the Higher Evolution. We need not necessarily see it in terms of Tibetan iconography and so on and so forth.

Now coming to more practical matters, quite a number of Order members still don't have a full practice, especially I think a few who've got less usual mantras and Buddha or Bodhisattva forms that you visualise and meditate upon. So I've been giving this quite a lot of thought for quite some time, and the reason why more hasn't already

been done is simply lack of time. But I have started thinking more and more seriously about all these matters, especially as the number of Order members is increasing. I know quite a few of you have texts but quite a few still don't have them. So what I'm proposing to do is this. In the course of the next couple of months, through the medium of '*Shabda*', every Order member will be getting a sort of circular. In a sense it's a sort of form to fill in, and I shall be asking for this sort of information. First of all of course your name so that I know who it is. [*Laughter*] Then (*unclear*) to boast. One has to give all these simple instructions because sometimes people just get it all wrong. Your name should be there and the address if you think proper, or if it's a new one, and the first question will be, "*What was the mantra which you received at the time of your private ordination, your initiation?*" That's the first thing, and the date of that private ordination. Then there are three possibilities, as it were, three further questions which I shall ask, and you can sort of tick off whether since the time of your ordination and initiation you have - then there are three possibilities - not done your practice at all, that's one possibility. Or you've done it intermittently, that's the second possibility; or that you've done it regularly. So I want to know these things from every Order member. I could of course ask you but I can no longer carry all in my head and remember it all. This is why I want to get it down on paper so that I can put it in a private file of my own and I know exactly where everybody stands. What your mantra is - in many cases I do remember but not in all I'm afraid any longer. What your mantra is, the one that you received, whether you are still reciting it regularly or have been doing that since your ordination. Whether you've been doing it intermittently or whether you are no longer doing it or in fact never did it. These three possibilities. Obviously if you feel that your position is more refined than that or more complicated well you can write about it obviously.

Then, if you feel like writing, either in the space provided or in a separate letter, how you are getting on with the practice, so much the better. That will give me a lot more information. Though again I do know verbally and again through letters from quite a number of people how they are getting on, but anyway fill in as fully as you can or write as fully as you can.

And then I shall want to know, also, especially in the case of those who have been in the Order for a longer period, whether you wish to continue simply with this original practice, or whether you feel the need of any additional or supplementary practice. All right, just to give you an example you might have had the mantra of Avalokiteshvara - *Om Mani Padme Hum* - quite a few of you have this. You might have been doing it

quite faithfully for a number - well even a couple of years or three or four years - many of you have got the text of that. You may be feeling that you need something in addition. You may be feeling that you'd like to take up the practice of Manjughosa and receive that mantra and do that practice in addition to, or as an alternative to, the practice you already have, so as to achieve a sort of balance, if you like, between compassion and wisdom in the case of these two particular forms and practices. You may well feel that. So if you do there'll be a space for you to indicate that. And then there'll be a further enquiry as to whether you would like to, or whether you would be able to come on at least a weekend seminar devoted to either your original practice or the one that you would like to take up in addition to or as an alternative to that original practice.

So I shall be calling for this information from everybody within a couple of months. A form of this sort will be circulated. So don't feel inhibited by the form. I know some of you may feel well this is a bit bureaucratic, as it were, why can't Bhante ask each of us individually, well maybe I could but I couldn't remember it all, you see. I want this information so that I can start thinking and planning these weekend, at least weekend, visualisation seminars, or whatever you like to call them - retreats. If for instance I find that there's a large number of people who are just ready for or wanting to receive the Manjughosa practice well I'll arrange that one first. Obviously if there's only one person interested in an certain practice or already having a certain practice they may well have to wait a little bit. I shall try to deal first with those practices which seem to be already most current and also in greatest demand, and with regard to which people haven't yet received full instructions or instructions sufficient for their present practice.

So in this way I hope to hold a series of visualisation seminars. It may take a couple of years to do this altogether, but eventually I hope every single Order member will be able to come on one or another of these. Practical arrangements permitting you are not prevented from coming on more than one if you want to do so. And I hope every Order member in the course of the next two years will be able to come at least on one such. And either brush up on their old practice or their existing practice and get the full instructions, or else receive a new supplementary or alternative practice.

So I'm mentioning this now so that when you get this form or when you see this sheet in '*Shabda*' you take it really seriously and fully understand what it is all about. Otherwise if I have the same experience as the Order Convenor had, well it will mean

simply that there won't be any visualisation retreats because I shall assume that everyone is getting on beautifully with their practice, there are no further enquiries or no further requests and there's no need to organise any visualisation retreats. So if you are interested, and in any case, just to let me know how you are getting on in this respect and to have it in a form I can refer to quite easily, please do fill in this form, and return it to me with any additional comment pertaining to the matters about which I have asked. If you want to write me a long letter instead please do so. I shall be quite happy to receive it. But I shall have then these completed forms plus any possible letter and I shall know exactly where the whole Order stands with regard to this matter, and we can arrange and plan accordingly.

So any queries or comments about this whole matter?

**Manjuvajra:** When you say you'll ask some questions about whether we've been doing the practice, is that using the mantra or the full practice?

**S:** Whatever you have received. Some people only have the mantra and haven't yet received the practice, but indicate that. *'I received the mantra, I've also received a copy of the text of the sadhana. I have been practising this every day for such and such a number of months'*.

**Jinamata:** Maybe you could clarify the terms 'intermittent' and 'regular'. Is 'regular' every day?

**S:** Yes, 'regular' means every day, though you may not do it just very occasionally once in a while. That is regular. Or if you like we can have a 'very regular'.

**Jinamata:** I think it's good to make those terms very clear.

**S:** Yes, right.

**Jinamata:** Because it's a bit woolly like that.

**S:** We could even say daily practice, irregular practice, occasional practice and no practice at all. That would make four. No practice, irregular, regular and daily.

**Mangala:** Hourly practice! [*Laughter*]

**S:** If you're doing it hourly you don't need any weekend ordination seminar! We will catch up with you later on! *[Laughter]*

**Uttara:** If you received the initiation before you got ordained will you put the date in that you received the initiation?

**S:** Yes. It's not to inform me about finer points but just to let me know what you're doing and how long you've been doing it. That's the basic thing. So that I can take that into consideration when arranging the visualisation weekends. I'm not yet sure how or where these will be arranged. They won't be very large. They will be for small numbers. In any case it may turn out that there's only say four or five people concerned with a particular practice, then there'll be just a weekend for those four or five people. I don't think it will go more than above say a dozen people.

#### **[End of Tape Six Tape Seven]**

If there's say twenty people interested in one particular practice, we just have two week weekends.

But the point that I am trying in a way to stress is that we, as it were, make the connection between our sort of Higher Evolutionary philosophy and outlook and our practise of the mantra recitation and visualization. It's a way of working up to the ideal as it were. This is what stands at the end of the path of the Higher Evolution. I mean Avalokiteshvara or Manjughosa or whatever are you; are what you will be like or what you will be when you get there from one or another point of view. Under the aspect of Wisdom it will be Manjughosa, under the aspect of Compassion Avalokiteshvara and so on. But it's you as you will be.

**Manjuvajra:** Are there any visualisations of intermediate stages?

**S:** What do you mean by that?

**Manjuvajra:** Well (*unclear*) the higher spiritual but mundane levels.

**S:** What do you mean by higher?

**Manjuvajra:** In the same way that we are told that, or I believe I'd read, that the Metta Bhavana can lead to the first dhyana, are there some visualisations that would lead to only the dhyana state rather than to sort of transcendental states?

**S:** No. If one wants to put it in those sort of terms all these visualisation practices are vipassana practices, if you want to have it technically; because when you are visualising a Buddha or Bodhisattva you are visualizing, or trying to visualize, or you are in contact with the Buddha, the Buddhahood, or Reality, in that particular form or under that particular aspect. You are not concerned with probing the conditioned; you're directly confronting the unconditioned in that particular form or from that particular point of view. So in that sense it's a vipassana practice.

**Marichi:** Why is one particular point of view not enough (*unclear*) .....

**S:** I'm not saying it's not enough. If you feel completely happy with one particular practice and wish to stick at that, sure, that's perfectly alright. I suggest the alternative only for those who feel a need for a alternative or something to as it were balance. But if you feel perfectly happy with the one practice you are doing - if you find everything in that - that's fine. Then if you wish to sort of brush up on that practice or have the experience of doing it with other people and therefore wish to come on the weekend retreat for that purpose then, fine, you can come from that point of view. Yes, I must make that clear that even if you don't want any second or supplementary or additional practice and you just want to carry on with your own practice, the weekend visualisation retreat will be for that purpose too, just to practise with other people or maybe go over the practice or the text of the practice again with me. For instance in the case of those who've got the Vajrasattva practice we will go over the mantra or go through the mantra and explain that in detail. I think not everybody has had that information yet, even those who have the practice. There is quite a lot to be said about just the mantra itself and what it is and how one, as it were, uses it.

**Padmaraja:** How do you feel about recording this kind of information?

**S:** No I think it won't be recorded - not taped anyway. People can certainly make notes for their personal use but I think not in the same way as seminars. And no doubt the weekends will be held in the country sometimes. Possibly some at 'Aryatara', that's also a possibility if the people at 'Aryatara' can make these arrangement or have a free weekend. For instance, in the case, say, of Order members outside London then

I will be collecting that information on their case also, say those up in Glasgow for instance, and before my next visit make the necessary arrangements so that I can take them for at least for a few sessions while I happen to be up there. If I have all the information in advance then I can make preparations accordingly for when I do pay my next visit. Or when I go down to 'Aryatara', supposing I discover that say four people at 'Aryatara' are all doing the Tara practice, right next time I go down there we'll have a little seminar and so on.

**Ananda:** If one has different practices presumably people will not be excluded if they want to go on those.

**S:** Indeed one could. *[pause]*

**Vangisa:** I didn't hear Ananda's question.

**Ananda:** I just said that if you had two different visualisation practices would one be able to go on both seminars at the appropriate time.

**S:** And the answer was yes you can. *[pause]*

**Aryamitra:** How important is it, Bhante, to do the practice every day?

**S:** I'm not quite sure what you mean by important. If you want to keep up the practice and get more deeply into it then you have to practise every day. Unless you've been keeping it up for several years and then you can at least drop the daily practice sometimes because you've done it already long enough for the effect not to be lost just because you miss the odd session, yes?

**Aryamitra:** The effect on retreats when obviously we are doing the Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana in a group, I've been under the impression that it's best if you're in a group to do the same practice that the rest of the group is doing, especially on retreats. Would you say this is right?

**S:** I'd say not necessarily. I have sometimes suggested in the case of people who want very much to keep up their personal practice that during the fourth stage of the Mindfulness or the fifth stage of the Metta Bhavana when others are doing that, they could well do their personal practice at that time, even though it isn't for a very long

period, but just to keep up the regularity and continuity. This I think is permissible because it would only be by an Order Member and he will already have participated in the first three or first four stages of the practice that the others were doing, and he will be doing it very mindfully, and I'm quite sure that that would not detract from the spiritual unity of the occasion as it were. After all meditations converge on one goal as it were. So this would certainly be possible. And then if one wishes one could always sit on a little longer after the others had left after the end of the session, and just carry on doing one's own practice. I think on earlier retreats which I was taking quite a number of people used to sit on quite late at night doing their personal practice.

**Aryamitra:** I know that sometimes when there's a lot of people doing the same practice that you can notice it. I was once at Archway and just went up late once and sat down and the image came up and I found out later that they were all visualising the same thing. So it does make a difference, if you like, if you are meditating.

**Ananda:** That happened to me once at *Samye Ling*. I was meditating at *Samye Ling* one evening when everybody in Archway was doing a certain practice, I didn't know about this, and the image of Avalokiteshvara came up very vividly and it turned out that that was what the practice was that everybody was doing.

**S:** Well this brings us straight into another topic. I think I will go straight into it since Ananda's made the connection so nicely, but we can come back to the visualisation if we want to, and that is the Order Metta Bhavana. That is to say the Metta Bhavana that we do on the evening of the first Friday of every month. Has anybody got anything to say about that?

**Ashvajit:** On the occasions when I have not been at a Order meeting and been able to sit down and practise at that time I've found it very beneficial to me. I have really felt practising with the Order and no sense of separation.

**S:** Our theme in the morning was the unity of the order and this is one of the reasons why these topics apply, because everybody in the Order has a mantra and a visualisation practice even though it's still quite rudimentary and all these mantras, all these visualisation practices they all, as it were, cluster around the same ideal or same transcendental ideal, that is that of Buddhahood. So our unity is also there. This is one of the reasons why we have the visualisation and mantra recitation type practice connected with our ordination. There is unity because they are all oriented in the same



direction, i.e. Enlightenment, Buddhahood, Higher Evolution and so on, ourselves as we shall be. At the same time there is diversity because the particular type of practice is determined by our individual needs, our individual attitudes and so on. The way in which we look at, or feel or experience the goal, the aspect under which it presents itself to us, and so on. So in this question, in this matter of the visualization practice, or mantra recitation and visualisation practice, there is a perfect image of the unity in diversity and diversity in unity of the Order. We're all doing different practices but we're all doing the same practice. Or we're all doing the same practice but we're all doing it in different ways or many of us are doing it in different ways, so you should bear this in mind very very strongly. Whether we're doing the practice and mantra of Avalokiteshvara or Manjughosa or Padmasambhava or Vajrapani or Vajrasattva or Amitabha or any of the slightly more exotic ones which I've not mentioned now, it's all the same. These are all different forms, images, manifestations, presentations, aspects of, Buddhahood itself which we are trying to approach through one or another of these various doors as it were. So there's unity, there's also diversity, diversity also unity.

So also there is this emphasis on the unity of the Order through the Order Metta Bhavana which we have on the evening of the first Friday of every month and we then link up. This was what it was originally for, Metta Bhavana link up, Order link up through the Metta Bhavana. So this also stresses the point that we don't necessarily have to be together physically to be together. This is what came out of what Ananda said.

So the non physical togetherness is also very very important. Sometimes you may find that the non physical togetherness is more real. I think I've mentioned before that when I was staying down in Cornwall I quite often felt, even at odd times during the day, that there was the Order, as it were, sitting all around me in a great circle. This was very very tangible and I'm sure others have had much the same sort of experience. So it is good to be together physically, body speech and mind, but it's also very good to be together simply mentally, simply spiritually. I'm sure many of you who have been away on solitary retreats have had the feeling of the Order being very near and being very close to other Order Members. So we mustn't forget this purely spiritual dimension of togetherness and the unity of the Order. It's not only coming together in the flesh, though that is necessary too, it's also, and perhaps even more so, being together, as it were, in spirit and actually feeling that way when we are physically separated from one another. So an Order Member may well be living on his own, on

her own, right away, I know that this is a dangerous thing in some respects, but if one is to begin with spiritually in contact and communes as it were with the Order, even when you are living on your own you feel very much in contact, not at all out of things. But for this to be possible you must be on, as it were, a sort of spiritual plane. If you're not on that sort of spiritual plane - and I don't mean a lofty transcendental plane, but just a spiritual plane - unless you are on that it won't be possible. And if you are on that you can certainly be very much in contact with Order Members everywhere and I know that some of you at least have had some experience of this. So we mustn't forget this.

**Aryamitra:** Would you say that the Order Metta Bhavana helps to produce this?

**S:** I am sure it does help produce it, yes. I mean the fact that you are doing the same sort of practices, even though not at the same time, means you are sort of interlinked spiritually. If you make a definite effort to do the same practice wherever you are, at the same time, on that certain night of the month, then no doubt there's a much greater chance of you again feeling that spiritual unity of the Order. *[pause]*

**Dharmapala:** In the same token I think that if you can't make that particular time then it's still useful to do it when you can.

**S:** Right. Yes. You are not limited to that. You can sit down and direct Metta to the rest of the Order any day that you like in addition. You're not prohibited from doing that. But the understanding is that everybody makes a special effort to do it on that particular night. Supposing it so happens, and I've certainly had this experience myself, that you are out somewhere when that time comes, you are not able to get back in time, then just think that other Order Members everywhere at this time are now doing that practice. Just think that they are doing, you will be in touch even though you are not actually doing the Metta Bhavana yourself. But you will be in touch and feel (*unclear*).

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*) in New Zealand they do it at the same time?

**S:** There is apparently some understanding with them - Suvratta worked out all these things once - that they would be doing it in the morning when we do it in the evening. They do meditate in the morning, and it seemed a bit easier for them somehow or other, I think it's something to do with the climate and the weather. They tend to get

up early anyway. They usually go for a swim and then do their meditation. *[Laughter]*  
*[Pause]*

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: It occurred to me on Order Day that it's the Order anniversary. It would be a good thing to arrange an order Metta at some point during that period this year.

S: That's a good idea. Yes. *[Long Pause]*

It does also occur to me that it would be a good idea if necessary if people in particular Chapters of the Order were careful to inform new Order Members about these things, and it sometimes happens that new Order Members aren't fully informed about this, that and the other. One must be careful of this too, that new Order Members know about this, because it isn't put in every issue of 'Shabda'.

**Lokamitra:** It's difficult to get across the importance of it. Sometimes people don't appreciate how important *(unclear)*. For instance myself trying to communicate it *(unclear)*

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: In a way it's saying how we feel towards each other, what we think of each other, has quite an effect on us individually and the Order as a whole.

S: I think one shouldn't underestimate the possibility of working, as it were, from these levels down. We are so used to sort of trying to sort things out through discussion, mutual analysis, co-counselling, all these things involve lots and lots of talking but sometimes things can be sorted out in other ways, or very often they can. Let's have a Metta Bhavana. I remember when I was in India I was quite surprised once or twice, but I shouldn't have been surprised, at the results. If you have a sort of quarrel or argument with someone *(unclear)* just remember that person when you do the Metta Bhavana, and sometimes you *(unclear due to very loud dog's barking!)* attitude towards you and actually you see they can be quite friendly. Things can be done this way too. We mustn't forget that.

**Chintamani:** A prolonged silent period on a retreat demonstrates that as well. Just watching how things come up and go down again without any talking at all. Everybody working on their own *(unclear)*.

S: So I think we're again emphasising this question of the unity of the Order. It's not necessarily to be achieved through discussion, it's much more likely to be achieved in this sort of way.

**Siddhiratna:** Are we talking about some sort of collective telepathic experience?

S: It seems something like that, yes. Except that it's not so much thought that is transmitted, but more feeling than thought. Almost a sort of spiritual mood.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Is the implication that if you weren't feeling positive as it were that that group of people who were doing the Order Metta would induce a positive feeling in you though you weren't having it at that time?

S: They wouldn't exactly induce it. You could resist it if you wanted to. But just as, for instance, you get up in the morning, you see the sun shining, at once you feel in a better mood, you pick up on sunshine. In the same way in, as it were, the psychic atmosphere there is somebody else's thoughts of Metta sort of hovering around you. You as it were pick up on that. You can if you like deliberately reject it. But I think very few people actually do that. So it isn't that you are powerless, it's done to you - it's just like the sunshine. You respond to it positively.

**Siddhiratna:** I wonder if you hadn't experienced it how would you recognise that that was what it was as it were?

S: You just feel in a better frame of mind. You might not even think where's this coming from, you just feel better and you just start thinking quite positively about somebody. Or you might even start thinking about them but next when you did think about them somehow you just feel more positive towards them.

**Sagaramati:** Is this beyond the karmic level or is it just on the karmic level?

S: This is still on the karmic level.

**Ashvajit:** What is the karmic level?

S: The karmic level is the level, all the levels on which karma operates. That is levels of conditioned mental activity. So this Metta is a conditioned mental activity though

a positive and skilful one which will provide a basis for the purely spontaneous, purely creative, as we call it, transcendental mental activity. That is what leads directly to Nirvana alone. *[pause]*

**Vangisa:** Sometimes literally physical objects, something through the post comes. *[Laughter]* You get something through the post, and before you open it it exudes ..... I got something from New Zealand (*unclear*) not long after the first ordinations. I just picked it up, it just came through the letter box, I can't remember what it was, a card or something from someone I didn't know, sending their best wishes to everybody, and it felt as if there was something radiating from it before from I opened it, I picked something up. Another time I got an unsolicited book actually from the American Buddhist Academy but it did have the same quality. It was just a packet, it looked as if it contained advertising matter or something but it had a very strong feeling. A metta type feeling kind of coming from it.

**S:** I'm sure this is very possible. I would be surprised if it wasn't.

**Vimalamitra:** (*unclear*) when you get tax, from the Inland Revenue! *[Laughter]*

**Vangisa:** This isn't something that's a characteristic of the object itself. It's just something that makes you feel happy. It has nothing to do with the actual contents, it's a separate thing.

**S:** Well presumably it was sent by someone in a happy positive state of mind, directing good will towards you.

**Vangisa:** Exactly, yes.

**Ashvajit:** The tax people ought to do the Metta Bhavana.

**Chintamani:** Maybe you should get employment in London Transport sniffing out bags that have been left by thieves!

**Lokamitra:** Sometimes, I've been thinking Bhante of the practice on the Friday night because they don't feel in a very good state or they just don't (*unclear*) but I feel personally it makes so much difference, the more people doing it. Sometimes it's

almost a quite tangible experience. So I urge everyone not just to consider themselves on the Friday night but also to consider the rest of the Movement.

**Ratnapani:** I think that you can consider yourself inasmuch if you're feeling very much uninclined to meditate, and you don't want to go anywhere near a shrine room, perhaps feeling tired and a bit negative, if one can just make oneself sit down and be a little bit open, often the benefits are very good. I've experienced right at the end of meditation when I've been dozey and drowsy all the way through, just as I'm almost giving up at the end and suddenly Metta pouring in as from nowhere. And I was ready to go to bed, all I wanted to do was go to bed and sleep. It was well worthwhile just to be sat on a cushion for an hour just for the sake of it or just in the hope that there will be contact. *[Long Pause]*

**S:** All right if there's nothing more either on the Metta Bhavana or the visualisation we can move on to the third and last item for the afternoon of this session.

**Subhuti:** Just one point. You did at one stage mention that new Order Members or candidates for ordination should be encouraged to choose certain visualisation or certain.....

**S:** Ah! Yes. I'll explain the thinking behind this. There's a vast number of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas which have come down to us in the traditions. I've once or twice had the experience of an Order Member choosing something really exotic which is, as it were, off the beaten track. A person I'm thinking of particularly is someone who's now resigned so I can speak about it fairly freely without anybody present feeling perhaps I'm referring to them, well I'm not. I'm not referring to anybody present here or who is out in the Order. But it has occasionally happened like this and that the person chooses, I feel occasionally in this sort of case, not so much because of real spiritual need or affinity, but of wanting to have something rare that nobody else has got. You see what I mean? Not the old standard Avalokiteshvara or Manjughosa or Vajrapani but a Bodhisattva, Buddha that is very esoteric and nobody has ever heard of before. So I want to discourage that sort of thing.

Also there is the practical question of the continuance of the tradition. Especially when I'm gone as it were. How is it going to be continued? I have to think very much of this because at present it is dependent upon me. So what I thought is that if there are more and more Order Members concentrating on fewer and fewer practices, and after all the

main ones are - the main Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are the seven whose mantras we chant at the end of the Puja - then there is a chance if there are a lot of people concentrating on a few practices that there will be a few people really good at all the major practices. We need at least someone really good at the Avalokiteshvara practice, really good at the Manjughosa practice and so on. But if everybody has got a completely different practice the chances of having a few people who are really good in the major practices becomes more and more remote. You see what I'm thinking. So I'm trying, as it were, to narrow it down a bit and make it not more standard, but in a way more plain and simple. Supposing for instance you definitely that feel your path is compassion, you want to develop the compassionate aspect of things, you approach Enlightenment through the gateway of compassion, well choose Avalokiteshvara. Don't choose a very obscure form. It also, yes, means compassion, or embodies compassion but which is not really central to the Buddhist tradition and which therefore perhaps we assimilate much less easily. Choose something really central, really bold as it were, well known. Don't go in for the lesser known things or the more esoteric things as it were. Do you see the reasoning?

So compassion, wisdom, purity these are the main aspects, so let's concentrate on those. Not on comparatively subordinate and refined or recondite aspects. Let's get the main energy of the Order as it were behind these more major practices or more central practices. Then there's a better possibility of them being carried on and transmitted by other Order members when the time comes. For instance, supposing - I'm just now thinking aloud, supposing - I am no longer around to give the particular private ordination. All right you ascertain that the candidate for ordination wishes to receive the Avalokiteshvara mantra. Supposing you've got a hundred Order members well versed in that practice, the chances are you'll have say five or six who are really good at it. Well then the Order will have to decide who is going to give the private initiation to that person. I don't see any possibility of one person - say another head of the Order or something like that himself giving all practices - I don't think that can be continued. I don't think anyone will be able to take that on. So therefore I'm thinking of this alternative means of transmission even now. But the chances are that if several dozen people have been doing the Avalokiteshvara or the Manjughosa practice for a number of years, a few of them will be in a position to transmit it. So they will have the responsibility for imparting the mantra and the practice to that particular person on the occasion of their private ordination. The details of that will be worked out some time later. But you see the reasoning behind it. But if everybody is doing a different

practice or there are very very many practices current in the Order, the chances are that you'll get far fewer people really good at any of them.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Does this mean in effect that only practices that you pass on personally will be will be continuing that vision?

**S:** It seems like that. It seems like that. But it's not so very much the form of practice; it's what it fundamentally means. What does it fundamentally mean? An approach to the ideal of Enlightenment, the ideal of enlightened humanity, in a particular way, from a particular point of view. We mustn't think so much in terms of separate esoteric practices as it were, but what you are basically trying to do. In time we may forget about the oriental, the Tibetan or Indian iconography. You may have a much more direct experience of, say, wisdom, compassion and we may have our own yogis or own artists producing their own iconography, based on their own personal experience.

**Padmaraja:** Is that necessary? Can you see that being necessary?

**S:** I think it will happen. It's happened everywhere else in the Buddhist world. Why shouldn't it happen here. (*Unclear*)

**Vangisa:** Outside of the Tibetan tradition (*unclear*) China?

**S:** Some forms quite prevalent. For instance, especially Amitabha. Because there are sutra practices of visualisation of Amitabha, and these widely are widely current in China and Japan. I think the main Buddha figures visualized are figures such as Amitabha, Avalokiteshvara. Not Tara, she's quite unknown in the Far East virtually. Kshitagarbha, Vairocana. These are the dominant Buddha forms of the Far East. But the visualizations are mainly from sutras, Mahayana Sutras. [*pause*]

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: We should stick really to the... I think it's eight...

**S:** Yes. I don't want to be very sort of strict about this. Certainly if someone took a definite affinity for something you've never heard of, well that must be so. He has that affinity. But if someone isn't quite sure well things can be completed in this way. Or if they say well I really like compassion, let it clearly be the Bodhisattva of compassion - Avalokiteshvara - in his most standard form. Don't suggest the name of

a very recondite form of Avalokiteshvara or another Bodhisattva also meaning compassion but who is not so well known as Avalokiteshvara. Best make it, as it were, I won't say as standard but as common as we can. This is another aspect of more and more and less and less.

**Vangisa:** So which form of say Avalokiteshvara? Are you suggesting now the simplest form of Avalokiteshvara?

**S:** The most usual one is of course the four armed one, but I don't know how people feel about that. Eventually people may feel that the four armed figure is not in accordance with Western tradition, as it were; they prefer the two armed one. Personally I'd rather like to introduce the thousand armed one much more definitely and much more strongly. In fact we're going to have one in the top most shrine at 'Sukhavati', the thousand armed and eleven headed Avalokiteshvara for private use of the community, not for the public. I think this is very significant - this particular form of Avalokiteshvara. I mentioned this in a little article I wrote just after I left London and went to the country, that in a way this Avalokiteshvara figure symbolises the Order itself. Each individual Order member being like one of the thousand hands or thousand arms, except that we don't yet have a thousand Order members, but no doubt one day we will. But that's a very good image of the Order itself. If you like you can take the eleven heads as being, well eleven Centres! Or something like that or the eleven Maha Upasikas when we get so many as eleven or something of that nature. But it's an organic thing, it's a unity, all these arms, all these legs sort of sprouting out all over the place. This is the Order. Just like the eleven headed and thousand armed Avalokiteshvara. So I must say I personally rather like this particular form, though according to Western ideas it's terribly bizarre and all that, I must say I don't find it so in the least. I find it very natural to have a figure with a thousand arms and a thousand hands and eleven heads. It looks perfectly natural to me. *[Laughter] (unclear)*

*[Possible break in recording]*

There is a definite meaning. They are the four main functions of Buddhahood. To pacify to mature, to fascinate, and to destroy. The four great functions, the four great Tantric rites.

**Aryamitra:** Does each have a symbol that is relevant?

**S:** Yes. Just remember which is which.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Can you say those four again?

**S:** Yes, well let's go a bit back to the beginning. You've all heard of the Tantric rites.

**Voices:** Yes..... No.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Can you remind us!

**S:** Well let me go back. I have explained all this before somewhere or other. So I'll just give a brief synopsis. The basic point is that Buddhahood or Enlightenment is not something static, it's something dynamic as it were. It expresses itself in the form of various kinds of activities. If you like an infinity of activities. And these activities are sometimes summarised in various sets. It isn't completely systematized. You get a list of four or you get a list of six or you get several sets of four. It's not even always the same set of four. But the idea is to systematize all these different Buddha activities. The activities of the Enlightened being, the Enlightened mind and so on. Now the Tantra, as is well known, at least the Tantra under a certain aspect, ritualises everything. So you've got so many Tantric rituals which correspond to different aspects of Buddhahood and different aspects of the activity of Buddhahood, or activity of Enlightenment. Another question also arises: where do these Tantric rites come from? The Tantric rites are often deeply indigenous and ethnic in origin, and the rites of ethnic origin have become refined and sublimated until they become, as it were, expressions of Buddha activities. Is this clear? Let me give you an example. There's love magic. I don't know if anybody believes in this or has ever tried it, but there's such a thing as love magic which is very well known in India. Supposing you are in love with somebody but he or she is not in love with you. What do you do? Obviously you have resort to love magic. You perform various ceremonies or rites to draw the love and affection of that person. You send forth a sort of hook and you just sort of hook them and then you draw them to you. This is the rite of fascination. So this was a common and a popular rite in ancient India. So what did the Tantrics do? They took over this ceremony and they gave it a Buddhist significance. They said Enlightenment or Buddhahood is intensely fascinating. Buddhahood draws all beings to itself, Buddhahood is the most beautiful thing, the most attractive thing. It draws the hearts of all beings. You get this sort of idea in Hinduism, with Krishna, with drawing the hearts of the Gopis. So Enlightenment and Buddhahood are the most attractive thing.

So when you perform this rite of attraction, the Tantric rite, you are thinking in this sort of way. This is Buddhahood's function or activity of attracting things. Of course for their own good, to help them. You see the idea. So in the same way in popular magic there was a rite of destruction. You performed that rite to destroy your enemies. So in the Tantric context it becomes a rite to destroy all evil, to destroy ignorance. So you perform the same ritual, as it were, but you impregnate it with a Buddhist meaning. You think that through this ritual you are destroying all ignorance, you're destroying all unskillful things within yourself. You are exercising that particular function of Buddhahood and so on. So in this way there are these various rites. There is a rite of fascinating, there is a rite of destroying, there is a rite of maturing or blessing, a rite of pacifying. You get the idea?

**Aryamitra:** Would this be termed as the left handed Tantra?

**S:** Oh No. Not at all. No. That is a quite different context. That is Hindu Kshatra Tantra. It's the Brahma vagga. It's got nothing to do with the Tibetan Tantric tradition. So there are different lists given. There's Four Great Rites, they're not always the same list. And usually the list as far as I remember is: One, the rite of pacifying. You pacify the forces of evil and the colour of that rite is white. The rite of pacification. Then there is the rite of fascinating. Then there is the rite of prospering, or maturing which is golden yellow. Then there is the rite of destroying which is black.

**Aryamitra:** I suppose fascinating would be red?

**S:** Red yes. So these are the Four Great Rites. The four great functions of Enlightenment or Buddhahood. Enlightenment or Buddhahood pacifies all evil states, it calms them down, permanently. It fascinates and it draws in and attracts all sentient beings. It matures them, develops them, increases them, and also it destroys all that is evil, that is negative. These are the four great functions or at least one particular list of the four great functions. And the four arms of Avalokiteshvara - because this is where we came in - symbolize these four great rites. Avalokiteshvara is the Buddha, as it were, through compassion for the sake of all beings, performing as it were eternally, from eternity to eternity you could say, these four great rites. He's always pacifying all that is evil, he is always drawing everything to him as the supremely attractive object.

**[End of Side One Side Two]**

He is also maturing and developing all beings and destroying all evil. So this is the significance of these four arms and four hands.

**Vangisa:** Which arms are which, does it matter?

**S:** This I can't remember, perhaps it doesn't matter.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: Is there any correlation between those four with the Dhyani Buddhas?

**S:** I don't think there is. It may well be that some teacher has at some time or other worked out a correlation but I'm not aware of it. There could well be. But it isn't very well known or very significant.

**Vessantara:** It seems there's an awful lot of background information like that which apart from the lectures on the Tantric series we don't have or are not aware of. I don't know how useful you feel it would be for us to have more of that material.

**S:** I just don't know.

**Aryamitra:** It is in the lecture. It's all in the Tantric series.

**S:** So no doubt Padmaraja would be able to collate what I've said now with what I've said then etc., etc. (*Unclear*) We could go into some of them, those that are immediately relevant to the practice when we have these weekend visualisation seminars. We can go into all sorts of things about Manjughosa or Avalokiteshvara, Vajrasattva, Padmasambhava and so on.

I think we'll call it a day as regards the visualization and the Metta Bhavana. I'm just going to pop downstairs and then we'll finish (*unclear*).

[Pause]

**S:** All right then, the last item or last theme for the session, dedication of 'Sukhavati'. You might be wondering what that is all about. I think everybody knows, I think everybody realises, that there is a place called 'Sukhavati'. 'Sukhavati', by the way, means the Realm or the Abode of Happiness. *Sukha* is happiness and *Vati* suggests or means abode or place of residence. And of course it is also the name of the Pure Land

of the Buddha Amitabha, the Buddha of the West, the Western direction. It's that beautiful realm in which everything is made, I won't say easy, but certainly smoother. It's where you hear the Dharma all the time, even the birds are calling out Dharma notes, where there are beautiful trees blooming all around, where food and drink is provided, where there is no distinction of sex. 'Sukhavati'. [Laughter] So 'Sukhavati', as I think everybody knows, will be a Centre and also a community. Now the centre of 'Sukhavati' will be the shrine obviously and the centre of the shrine will be the image which will be an image, as it were, of Amitabha in the sense that it will be a seated Buddha figure in meditation posture and it will be, we hope, created in such a way as to be suitable for that shrine, bearing in mind where the shrine and where the centre is situated. In other words it will be something created in the - I won't say indigenous tradition because we don't yet quite have an indigenous tradition - but it will be the beginnings, we hope, of a indigenous tradition of the Buddha image. It won't be aggressively Western but it certainly won't be oriental either. So this is what we're hoping to have. But the question is what are we going to put in the image? I don't know if anybody has thought about that yet, but there is a sort of ceremony, as it were, conducted or a ceremony of dedication and when the image is placed in position and the shrine is dedicated there should be something special, as it were, for the image too. What is usually done traditionally is, inside the image you put mantras. You put sacred texts which are, as it were, the life of the image. Because in a way the Buddha image embodies the Dharma, the Buddha is the embodiment of the Dharma. After all what is the Buddha, the Buddha is a man, a human being, who has embodied the Dharma, has realized the Dharma. So inside the Buddha figure, the Buddha image, you put the Dharma in the form of mantras and short texts. So this will be done when the image is dedicated, at whatever stage that seems appropriate - inside the image representing the Dharma, the Reality of which the Enlightened Man is the embodiment, there will be the written mantras and the written texts. So my suggestion is this; that every Order member writes out something to put inside the image when it's dedicated. I'm going to make a further suggestion that every Order member writes out with his or her own hand at least the Heart Sutra and our seven mantras in any way that they please. If they'd like to do it very beautifully, spend a lot of time over it illuminating it, fine. If you simply want to write it out straightforwardly, fine. But at least that. Write out the Heart Sutra and write out the seven mantras that we normally recite. If you've got a favourite Sutra or a favourite saying of the Buddha that you'd also like to be enshrined in that way, write that out too. And then when we've got something from every Order member - I hope that quite literally every Order member does write out or transcribe something - then we will arrange to enclose them all in the

image. And that will be part of the ceremony of dedication of the image and shrine. In this way I hope that every single Order member will be connected with the image and connected to the Centre, because the Centre will certainly occupy a very important place in our Movement and in fact in our whole history. (Unclear) So I think it is very important that everybody feels connected and everybody does something for it and especially for the focal point of the Centre which will be the image itself.

**Vangisa:** What about a tape recording?

**S:** Of?

**Vangisa:** A sutra?

**S:** I hadn't thought of that to be quite honest. It's a bit of a new precedent but [Laughter] How do people feel about that?

**Siddhiratna:** It could be a tape recording of a Puja!

**Voices:** [speaking at once!]

**Chanda:** Must it be the Heart Sutra or may it be your favourite verses or piece of teaching that you get .....

**S:** In any case do the Heart Sutra, Do that.

In any case do the Heart Sutra, do the seven mantras that we chant. If you want to do something else in addition, do that too. I'm given to understand there will be quite a decent cavity inside the image, but no great volumes of transcripts, think of the accommodation. If we do get extra, if it overflows no doubt they could be enshrined in the other image, the standing image in the smaller shrine. But I think it's much more likely that we do get them all into the main central image and that every Order member will feel directly and personally connected with that.

**Ananda:** Is the idea that it be then sealed and that nobody opens it for five hundred years or something?

**S:** Then sealed, yes. Well if vandals in five hundred years time open it, well that's their unskilful action, but it's sealed up permanently.

**Manjuvajra:** How about coming Order members? People that are ordained after that dedication. Would they still feel the same connection with it?

**S:** I hope so. I hope that we will feel more even though they won't feel less.  
[Laughter]

**Chintamani:** We could always have a little slit and on our ordination just put  
[Laughter]

**S:** But don't forget there will be other Centres, there will be other 'Sukhavatis' in all directions of space we hope. There will be other images to be dedicated by these Order members from under the earth.

**Uttara:** What about texts of the Pure Land?

**S:** If you feel like writing out that you do that in addition. Fine. Any other suggestions of this sort? Someone has suggested a tape recording and these suggestions are all being written down and certainly will be taken into consideration. Any other suggestions about anything to put inside the image?

**Mangala:** Paintings or drawings.

**S:** I think we also have to consider also the question of room. But if you'd like to do a very tiny painting, yes.

**Aloka:** Bhante there will be quite a large space inside.

**S:** There will be.

**Uttara:** A human being! [Laughter]

**Aloka:** What about photographs perhaps of other Centres that are connected?

**S:** That's a good idea too.

**Ananda:** What about a personal portrait of the Order member?

**S:** Ah No. Also the main thing is the Dharma, symbols of the Dharma of which the Enlightened mind is the embodiment, it's mainly that. We can put in a few little mementoes and so on of the FWBO but that is relatively unimportant.

**Ratnapani:** This isn't, after all, something where we are storing for posterity, are we. We are putting things there for symbolic ...

**S:** It's mainly for symbolic purposes, yes.

**Uttara:** I was thinking of a teaching which would be.... just in case the teachings do get lost. Do you have any?

\_\_\_\_\_: (unclear)

**S:** A set of 'Mitrata'. [Laughter]

**Vangisa:** Do we sign these things or are they supposed to be nameless, not identified?

**S:** The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will read your signature in your actual writing out of the Sutra. I think that you can put your name on just so that those of us who are collecting them will know whose we have and whose we don't, so it will be much simpler if you write your name on the back for instance or at the bottom, so that we can go through and know that we have something from every Order member.

\_\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: How soon do you need them?

**S:** As soon as possible. I think we definitely want them within six months?

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes.

**Mangala:** Who do we send them to?

**S:** Well, where would be the best place?

**Aryamitra:** 'Sukhavati'.



**S:** Really to me care of 'Sukhavati'. Maybe mark your envelope or something like that.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: If one writes or has written a sort of hymn to a Bodhisattva, would that be appropriate?

**S:** Yes, indeed. Yes, in addition.

**Mangala:** What should we ..... write down the dedication ceremony and things like that.

**S:** Then they can all be held at 'Sukhavati' until I come down. It is not necessary to redirect them to me wherever I happen to be. Someone should be responsible and hold them at 'Sukhavati', if you like. [pause] And of course, copy them out as mindfully and as beautifully as you possibly can.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Watching grammar and spelling.

**S:** I think you'll have the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas after you! [Laughter]

**Nagabodhi:** Perhaps Vangisa would like to print in 'Shabda' the correct punctuation for the Heart Sutra. [Laughter]

**Vangisa:** I'd like to get it right.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: Is the right version Pali or English or Sanskrit or...?

**S:** I think I'll leave that to you. I will say that if you want a correctly pointed transcription of the roman letters of the Sanskrit text, you'll find it in Dr. Conze's two 'Buddhist Wisdom' books. If anybody is able to copy it out in Tibetan or Chinese well please do so. We have one or two people who are gifted in this sort of way. Whatever colour ink. Copy it out if you like in your blood; that's a very traditional practice!

\_\_\_\_\_: Is it really?

**S:** Oh yes.

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Buddhists can't (unclear)!

**S:** There is a Sutra, the Paranavyuha(?) Sutra says, 'Taking your bone as a pen and dipping it in your blood as ink write out the words of the scriptures'.

\_\_\_\_\_: (unclear)

\_\_\_\_\_: (unclear)

**S:** Oh yes, but this will be public and I shall also be mentioning (unclear) Yes we want the Order Members from all over the world. Perhaps we'll draw up a list which we shall keep of the names of all those Order members who had contributed to the dedication in this way. [pause]

I don't yet know what form the dedication of 'Sukhavati' will take and what sort of meetings or celebrations we may or may not have. I haven't really given any thought to this but the likelihood is that things will be going on for a whole week if not more. Meanwhile all Order members should direct their Metta - of course not only Metta but Virya too, to all the Order members and Mitras who are working there. Support them morally and spiritually as well as in any other way that you possibly can. [Pause] I think we are going to finish on time actually.

\_\_\_\_\_: There's Suvratta's letter.

**S:** Oh yes. Suvratta's letter. He says,

*'Please excuse my absence from the Convention and the fact that I am not able to report in person. This is not because I do not value your company but because I need a holiday. I shall be away during the whole of the Convention. Progress with the register has been slow but is being pursued nonetheless. I have a system for a computerised effective register to be produced and the next edition should be available at the end of this month. I have obtained a suitable volume for the chronological register and this will begin to be compiled shortly. If you can continue to tolerate my dilatoriness in carrying out my duties I shall be happy to continue as registrar. If not I shall be*

*equally happy to relinquish the office. My best wishes to you all especially those whom I see regularly'.*

However let's hope that we now have a non dilatory registrar. I think we probably need one. But even though Suvratta has frankly been quite dilatory he has done whatever he could, so I suggest we give him a vote of thanks and we will convey that to him (*unclear*).

**Devaraja:** I think that what he means by that at the end of that is he has devised a program, a computer program.

**S:** Ah, yes. [*Pause*] So a cup of tea?

**[End of Session. Next Session]**

**S:** All right, this is day three, in case you've lost count! Plenary Session Five.

This morning we are going to consider qualifications for the Upasaka and Upasika ordination, for Mitraship including general Mitra status and possibly (*unclear*).

I'm not quite sure how long we are going to go on. Perhaps we should have a tea break, perhaps not, let's see. If we do have a tea break though, let it be a rather short, quick one.

All right qualifications for the Upasaka and Upasika ordinations. That's the first point, obviously it's very very important. I must say that in my own mind things are quite clear as regards qualifications for the Upasaka/Upasika ordination, even though I can't quite put them into words which is perhaps a little unfortunate. [*Laughter*] I get the impression that things are not quite so clear in other people's minds. There have been quite a few instances recently where people have been recommended by a meeting of the relevant Chapter of the Order for ordination and when I've met them, that is to say the person recommended, sometimes for the first time or after a very long time, I've just felt they weren't ready at all. So I've felt that in some cases at least Order members are, if not vague at least quite unsure, even quite mistaken in some cases, about people being ready for ordination. So this suggests that perhaps they are not quite sure what they are supposed to be looking at or looking for. So I'm just wondering whether we couldn't start the ball rolling by people saying, especially perhaps the older and more

experienced Order members, what they understand to be the qualifications for the Upasaka or Upasika ordination, and if at the end of that, I won't say discussion, but at the end of that period, after people have given their own feelings in the matter, if I feel that something has been left out which can be put into words then I shall do so.

So would people like to say what they look for? Now let this not be a discussion. Somebody made the point yesterday that at the last Convention I suggested that people should simply express their own view, their own idea, and leave it at that. Not enter into discussion across the floor with other people. So let's do that today with regard to this matter. Just say what you think. If some one else thinks you wrong he need not point out that you're wrong, but just say what he thinks.

So who would like to start, who would like to say what points he looks for? What points they expect to see in the case of someone who is being considered for ordination, when one is trying to estimate or assess if they are in the position to make that commitment? What is one looking for when one, as it were, one passes on a recommendation to me?

**Chanda:** Well what I am looking for Bhante, is a faith in the growth of his own personality. It seems that (*unclear*) what they feel and what they think (*unclear*).

**S:** So the important point you made to begin was a basis of growth within themselves.

**Gotami:** My understanding of this has changed. At the beginning I was quite clear and after a while I began to be not quite so sure because I'd not been so much involved with certain people being ordained and I thought I really don't know why that person was ordained. In the beginning I would have said that a clear understanding of the fact that that person as an individual wants to grow and develop would have been sufficient. But now I think it seems that the level has in a sense gone up and now I would say that for a person to really be able to belong to the Order, to contribute and even to receive, I would say that a person should have had at least a glimpse of Perfect Vision which is their starting point and a sufficiently uncomplicated life situation so that there is nothing which they might feel was a (*unclear*). So that there was no complication in that person's mind as to where the actual goal was, what was their top priority. And there might be people who in themselves you might feel would be ready for ordination, but I think that if that person is going to be divided as to what his top priorities are, then that is something that will cause them great stress and trouble and

will also cause tensions within the Order. I'm thinking of such things as say a very busy job. That person is really involved in that thing such as may be - maybe a doctor or something.

**S:** And you don't see the possibility, psychologically at least, of them giving it up.

**Gotami:** I think at the moment as the Order is there will be a lot of tension within that person about feeling that everybody else is so involved with the Friends and the Movement and they will begin to feel guilty about not being also time wise as well as wholeheartedly. There would be that split. So at the moment I feel this is what I would look for. I also add another rider that quite honestly I think it is very very difficult for a woman in the Order, and I think it would have to be a very exceptional woman that I would ordain, as you might say, if it was left to me, because of that priority.

**Manjuvajra:** One thing that caused me confusion and causes me confusion is about deciding whether someone should ask for ordination is that.....

**S:** Ah. This is a different question now . Someone asking. You can't stop people asking and you shouldn't try to. If they want to ask let them ask. Yeah. Whether they are ready for ordination, that is another matter. While we are on this, I will make this clear. I have been asked in recent months whether Mitras or Friends have got the right to approach me directly and ask for ordination, as it were bypassing their Kalyana Mitras if they have them. But I said make no attempt to interfere with the initiative of that person. There's no question that they have got to go through the proper channels or anything like that. If they one day wake up in the morning and they think they'd like to ask for ordination and write directly to me, all right, let them do it. Whether that request is granted, that's quite another matter. But these are two separate things. The person asking, and whether the Order as a whole considers someone ready to receive ordination and make the commitment in that way.

**Manjuvajra:** The thing that's confused me about ordination is, for example someone would saying that they wanted.....

**S:** Confused you about the qualifications for ordination?

**Manjuvajra:** Yes, that someone would say that they very much wanted to devote themselves to Buddhist ideals, they want to take the path to Enlightenment. But then

it seems through their actions that they're not really trying to do that in the best way. So it seems as though, like, consciously they want to be ordained, they want to commit themselves, but unconsciously they don't want to. So I've come to the conclusion that really if somebody seems to want to commit themselves consciously to a very large extent then that would be a sufficient qualification.

**S:** I'm not quite clear what you're trying to say because first of all there is this division in all of us between conscious and unconscious and we make a say conscious decision to commit ourselves. We do consciously commit ourselves but there is always some resistance, and still is resistance, from the unconscious parts of the personality. So are you simply saying that we should try to make sure that there is sufficient conscious commitment and that is not likely to be completely overwhelmed by the unconscious resistance?

**Manjuvajra:** Yes.

**\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_:** Are you also saying that you feel that that state must be mirrored in at least some slight change in the person?

**Manjuvajra:** Sorry I didn't hear that.

**S:** Are you saying that this conscious commitment must be mirrored in some slight change in the person's life?

**Manjuvajra:** Oh yes. *[pause]* I have a second point as well, and that would be, I think agreeing with Gotami, that they need to be living in the sort of lifestyle that at least presents the possibility of them being able to remove themselves from it. Some lifestyles are so rigid that you can't get out of them. If a person is living in one of those lifestyles I think they must (*unclear*) be seen to have made some quite hearty struggles to remove themselves from it.

**Aryamitra:** There was this thing that came up in the last Convention about debts, not being in debt. But it doesn't have to be referring to money debt. I mean when you say debt, debt of one's past karma if you like. It might be money. Also it means that they are stuck to paying back a certain debt which is a burden on the Order but they might have also other debts if you like. Say if they are in a very tight situation which they

can't really make much good, they are not very independent. If you like, if they haven't left home.

**S:** Are you thinking perhaps that they should pay their problem debts so that they don't bring too many of those into the Order after being ordained?

**Aryamitra:** Not just problems, but maybe, like Manjuvajra said, their lifestyle. They should have made some kind of effort in previous years to adapt their lifestyle. [pause]

**Vangisa:** I think there's a kind of retrospective criterion, we can look on this historically. A person who was at any time ordained, or ever been (*unclear*) ready for ordination or did not become ready for ordination subsequently as (*unclear*) karma. On the other hand those who have remained (*unclear*) to the very end (*unclear*), the person who does continue, the person who having Gone for Refuge, having asked for ordination, having taken ordination, and has continued for the rest of his life living as a member of the Order; obviously such a person should have been ordained. A person who doesn't have karma (*unclear*) shouldn't. So the thing is basically an individual matter. A person is considered for ordination because they ask for ordination in some way or another. So the first thing is why does this person want to be ordained? Does he know why he wants to be ordained, does he even know why he wants to become a Mitra? What does it mean to him, does he understand simple things like Going for Refuge, does he understand what is meant by the Three Jewels, The Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, and so on? And if (*unclear*) if a person can be by whatever criterion is used (*unclear*), one can recognise these things in the person, then that person is either ready for ordination or a suitable candidate for ordination some time in the foreseeable future, and if not he's not. (*Unclear*) [pause]

**Ratnapani:** So far we've had very concrete suggestions. I think there could be people who don't actually fit a lot of these categories but who still seem to fit the Order, which isn't very helpful, but ..... and perhaps they're not, their (*unclear*), if any apart from Bhante is able to judge. There are people who feel right, whose face seems to fit and they can fail on an objective, or apparently objective criteria - they cannot match up to them. But somehow they seem to be right. So I think if you're looking at any individual, the feel underneath their so called qualifications should be paid very close attention to. And contrary wise I think if you had someone who's got apparently

qualifications but who doesn't actually seem to fit for some reason. The knobs on their bit of the jigsaw puzzle are just too fat for some reason.

**Mangala:** I think that's why it's quite good that prospective Order members are in contact with some kind of ... say another group of Order members, so that this kind of knowing the person can happen. Like someone who you don't see, who you haven't much contact with, there's isn't any way really of knowing that person in the way that you know a person by sort of living with them or working with them. I think that's very important. Because I know I would find it quite hard sort of intellectually to say why somebody was ready for ordination. I also know just through being in contact with the person whether or not I think they are ready, even though I couldn't actually maybe say why, in terms of Buddhism or some formal term.

**Dhammadinna:** The signs that we talked about already were the more sort of objective qualifications like lifestyle etc., it is the emotional feel you get from a person in a situation, maybe within a situation, maybe a retreat situation, where it seems to communicate whether they are ready for ordination or not. The only way I can put that, and it's a kind of difficult thing to talk about, is a kind of feeling of openness in communication, clarity of emotion in communication and a feeling of trust - that you can trust that person with the Dharma, with being in the Order. That's one of the ways I put it when I try to feel my way to someone.

**S:** I've just got one point here. It's only a comment because I also think as you think in this matter. But one or two people have taken me or taken us up on this question of feeling and emotion. I think we should make it clear that what we intend is not, as it were, feeling in a purely subjective arbitrary sense as opposed to intellectual understanding. It is your total response to that person, yes. It's not feeling in the narrow sense.

**Gotami:** That feeling also seems to be based on a clear understanding of Perfect Vision or spiritual (*unclear*). An awareness of the transcendental model.

**Chintamani:** Just as you were talking about this feeling, (*unclear*) total response (*unclear*) I think to me that quality in somebody which suggests that they're ready for ordination is something ..... it's a feeling but it's the same thing. I was going to say that I feel for certain things above and beyond almost like more superficial modes of behaviour or lifestyle; but it's not only emotional feelings for things, it's the way that

a person meets situations, ideas, objects, people, not only with the intellect, with the emotions, with everything, and there's usually a certain quality - I'm getting a bit woolly - a certain sort of quality which seems to come through in all those different spheres, which if you put the emotions of the person and the intellect of the person and all the other things it would be the same quality.

**Gotami:** Is that like because they've had some spark of Perfect Vision (*unclear*) all their different faculties and so (*unclear*).

**Chintamani:** Although they may be quite different feelings.

**S:** In some cases, yes, they may be unsuitable on all other counts. But that spark is there. Sometimes one sees this.

**Siddhiratna:** I think in a lecture series some time ago, Bhante, you talk about people becoming ordained and that that person may become ordained but may not show the commitment until sometime after their ordination in fact. I'm not sure if that was a lecture series or a seminar. It was sometime back now. Do you still feel that same about that?

**S:** I think there must be some expression of commitment, even before ordination.

**Siddhiratna:** Well perhaps the expression is being the request for ordination itself.

**Dharmapala:** I think what you said in an earlier ordination thing was that some people don't actually make that commitment until they've had (*unclear*) ordination.

**S:** Ah, that is true. Yes, that's true. Yes some people are actually committed in the full Upasaka sense before they actually receive the ordination, but there are others who, as it were commit themselves when they are ordained. This is what I said (*unclear*).  
[Pause]

**Padmapani:** Bhante, getting back to... (*unclear*) about how they saw commitment. There seemed to be some sort of feeling quality that you still have, like an X factor. Would that be such a quality called intuition and if it was what's the difference between an intuitive feeling and a feeling (*unclear*) intuitive is a feeling.

**S:** I'm not very happy with this word 'intuition'. I'd rather speak in terms of one's total apprehension. Your response as an individual to somebody else as an individual, and if you use the word intuition at all it is the faculty proper to the individual as a whole, and therefore it will include and subsume emotion, understanding, even action, will. So when you intuit, in this sort of sense, it is the whole individual operating and responding to that situation. It's the faculty of wholeness as it were. When you intuit someone you're fully engaged with them, as it were. You know them, see them, feel them, will them, etc., etc., but it's all one act and that act is your intuition of them. And if there's a transcendental element in you that will be functioning too. In fact that will be what holds everything else together. If there's a transcendental element in them, a spark in them, you will intuit that spark. Your spark will come into contact with their spark and then you will know intuitively. Or, as it has been said, you will feel, but it's not feeling in the ordinary sense at all. We don't know of any adequate terminology for these sort of things.

**Dhammadinna:** Sort of it takes one to know one!.

**Aryamitra:** So why it sometimes seems like it's a separate quality or it's a separate thing like a feeling is that one's not always aware of that, one's not always aware of that feeling in that total way, so that when one is it seems like it's a separate quality. Do you see what I mean?

**S:** Yes. Also some people just have difficulty putting things across in a rational sort of way. Not only justifying but communicating their intuition as it is sometimes, in a conceptual manner.

**Dhammadinna:** It does seem if you were to recognise this in someone else you need to be in quite favourable circumstances, say like somewhere like '*Sukhavati*', a total working situation or even like on a retreat situation where you're really in touch with that aspect of yourself and you're able to see that in other people. Sometimes when I'm in contact with people.....

**S:** It does stress something that we, I think, haven't heard before. That is maybe you can't really judge very well whether somebody is ready for ordination or not until you've lived with them.

**Vajradaka:** Perhaps it's only then that you can know what their real orientation is. The orientation is, the orientation.....

**[End of Tape Seven Tape Eight]**

**Vajradaka:** ..... of all the different parts of them; the intellect, emotions, and their desires even. Which way their desires and volitions are taking them. Whether it is sort of going towards sublimating the desires; towards a sort of a general integration, a general kind of growth, or just, as it were distraction, distracting. I feel sometimes that it's very difficult to see when a person says that they want to commit themselves whether all of themselves is oriented towards the commitment. They might intellectually accept the commitment or.....

**S:** This is what Manjuvajra was saying.

**Vajradaka:** Yes, they might intellectually accept that they can grow and develop, and they might even emotionally accept that they can grow and develop, but there might be a part of them which desires something else completely. And I think one has to judge if that is a very strong desire, or something that could quite easily integrate into the general flood of commitment, because if this desire is very strong then it might eventually pull in a different direction from this general commitment, and I think that it's difficult but we have to look for that, whether there is this kind of deep charge that could possibly go in another direction.

**Marichi:** I'm beginning to feel we should translate 'commitment' as 'drive', assess the amount of drive in a particular direction.

**Chintamani:** If that quality is there then it'll be there in the total being and will be there behind that charge as well. It's not going to be present in some of the faculties of a person and absent in others. If it's there it'll be there in the whole being, if it's not.....

**Marichi:** Yes but is it not to be integrated. (*Unclear*) going in a lot of directions at once.

**Chintamani:** I think it's something that they may need to do (*unclear*).

**S:** Let's be careful we don't get into a discussion.

**Mangala:** This is becoming more the case that with Mitras now becoming more and more involved in activities at the various Centres that this getting to know the prospective Order Member is more likely to take place. There will be a situation for them to come and live and work.

**S:** In some cases already it has happened that a formal decision that someone is ready seems quite superfluous because by living with that person it has become evident to everybody that he's ready and that's that.

**Mangala:** Perhaps, you know, Mitraship, well I suppose it already means this to some extent but more and more so it means like you're already sort of working for the Order very much and in a sense you're already expressing your commitment and the Ordination is almost just a formal signature of that.

**S:** Well it has been mentioned that there's been some upgrading as it were. We can say that some Mitras now are much, more devoted, not to say committed, than some Order Members were some years ago and this is a very positive and very healthy development. And also, this upgrading, by the way, is one of the factors that is accounting for the fact that we probably won't keep up our exponential growth rate, because, in a sense, we have artificially slowed it down by raising the level of requirement, or level of qualifications for ordination somewhat. Fewer people get in now. Even though numerically more, but statistically fewer. [*pause*]

Does anybody else have any comment on requirements for ordination, qualifications for ordination. Any point that you feel hasn't been covered?

**Manjuvajra:** There's one general one which may sound a bit paradoxical and that is in order to accept another for ordination I think they've got to not want to join the Order. I think this has happened in my own case. I craved to join the Order, but it was only when I gave wanting to join the Order that I became ready to join the Order. The idea of the Order being a group, a sort of secret society that you want to join. I think people have got to kick that.

**Chanda:** (*unclear*)

**Vajradaka:** Can't hear you Chanda.

**S:** Can you speak up Chanda.

**Chanda:** (*unclear*) secret society and things like that but I think (*unclear*) in the same way (*unclear*).

**S:** What do you mean, the wrong motives keep you going until the right motives can take over? [*Laughter*] Well they do!

**Chanda:** (*unclear*) enthusiasm (*unclear*).

**S:** It's certainly not as easy as it looks on the packet! [*Laughter*]

**Chanda:** (*unclear*) a different person but (*unclear*).

**S:** I must say I have seen quite a few changes in people over the years so I'm quite convinced that change is possible. [*Laughter*] Even in the most unpromising cases or apparently unpromising.

**Lokamitra:** Something you talked about a couple of weeks ago on Order Day was the difference between devotion and commitment. This is something that seems to be becoming clearer to me; that in a way devotion isn't enough to be ordained. In a way one of the ideas of Mitraship is that those people are devoted but aren't able to commit themselves. So distinguishing between these and seeing when devotion becomes commitment. Another point - this is taking up Gotami when she said that she thought that it would be hard for some women to be ordained, or there would be fewer women than men - it does seem from my experience at 'Pundarika', I think with the people I've come into contact there, that women do find it harder - I'm generalising - to commit themselves in this way than men I've come into contact with round there. A lot of the women round there seem to be very devoted but there aren't many who seem to be able to commit themselves in the same way that, on the whole more, proportionately more, men can.

**S:** Perhaps I should say a little bit more clearly what I mean by devotion as distinct from commitment, whether in the case of women or in the case of men. Devotion seems to be associated with the group, that you like the group, the group feels good

to you, you're very fond of the group, you like what it's doing, you like to help it; but you don't think in terms of - at least you don't consciously think in terms of - developing yourself and committing yourself as an individual. You just like to support that group because you feel happy with the people who are involved in it, and someone with this sort of attitude can give a very great deal of devotion, and do a tremendous amount of work, without ever perhaps really understanding what those people are actually really doing and what the whole thing is really about.

**Dhammadinna:** Is it a basis for commitment?

**S:** Well, it's a basis, certainly it is. You can't really think of commitment without devotion, though you can certainly have devotion without commitment.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: There needn't necessarily be that much devotion.

**S:** No, not necessarily, no. So you can really see sometimes that somebody is very devoted, will help you, really likes you, will work for you, give you money; but what Enlightenment is they haven't a glimmer of an idea. They just don't want to know.

**Dhammadinna:** So it's coming back to commitment. Some glimmer of commitment.

**S:** It is coming back to that, yes.

**Vessantara:** Is this maybe somehow akin to the professionalism we were talking about yesterday?

**S:** No, I think the professionalism that I was talking about yesterday is something much less healthy than this. I am speaking about this sort of devotion in rather ideal terms. It does sometimes exist in this ideal form, as something very pure and genuine. Or sometimes again it is adulterated and people make demands upon the group in return for their devotion. This also sometimes happens. I'm thinking - when I contrast devotion with commitment I'm thinking - of a pure and more ideal form of devotion. But even if someone has that pure and more ideal form of devotion, that by itself does not constitute readiness for ordination, and that is very misleading when someone has been along to so many classes, they've brought you so much, they've given you money, they've done typing for you, they've done all this faithfully for several years,

they're very devoted, but no commitment, as far as you can see, no possibility of commitment. That situation can exist.

**Marichi:** This means real individual commitment.

**S:** Real individual commitment. You'd commit yourself to that particular ideal if necessary even if there wasn't a group.

**Marichi:** Yes, and even if it had to mean going against the group.

**S:** Even if it meant going against, yes.

**Ratnapani:** In fact with this sort of devotee, if I may use the term, doesn't that tally more with the original Eastern Upasaka, the lay person who was....

**S:** It does that very very much, yes. I mean the good Upasaka, the real Upasaka, in their sense. In modern India gurus always distinguish quite sharply or many gurus distinguish quite sharply between what they call their Bhaktas and what they call their Sishas. Their Bhaktas are their devotees - Bhaktas are people who come and along and listen to the (*unknown name of a type of teacher*) and get all carried away by the singing and say, "Oh Swamiji, Guruji how wonderful you are, you are God", you know, [*Laughter*] but they don't actually practise anything. They may give you money, they may invite you for a meal, but they don't meditate, they don't recite a mantra even and they're not very strict in their moral life, but they're really carried away and very devotionally, they're Bhaktas, and there are thousands of them sometimes. Your Sishas, your pupils or disciples are those who follow your way of life, who study your teaching and try to practise it, and try to reach the goal that you point out to them - they are your Sishas, and gurus will sometimes say "I've got ten thousand devotees, ten thousand, Bhaktas, I've only got two or three disciples." Some gurus of course don't know the difference. [*Laughter*] That's their problem!

**Dhammadinna:** The division with us isn't quite so clear cut. You may get that devotion and then people are also meditating.

**S:** Right, yes, yes. It's harder for us to say.

**Lokamitra:** It seems that we're going to come up against this more and more. That people who are merely - if I can use the term - devoted, are going to be asking for and wanting ordination, so in a way we have to develop the Mitraship a bit more.

**S:** Right. Sometimes such people will be genuinely puzzled why they are not considered ready for ordination. They just won't be able to understand it; because they will say quite rightly, "Well, I'm so devoted, what more do you want me to do? Just tell me".

**Dhammadinna:** If they could understand it, they'd be ready!

**S:** Right! Yes. If they could understand why they weren't ready they would be ready! [*Laughter*] Or at least there would be the possibility of their being ready.

**Jinamata:** I feel though that there are people in those categories who have an ideal, have a goal, which is to become happy, healthy and human; and I think this is a very positive goal for a lot of people if they are below that standard, but maybe this thing about the individual commitment, to that person seems to be that they are wanting to be happy, healthy and human, whereas the one you are really after is a different one. So people by their devotion can genuinely change and grow and become much much healthier (**S:** Well surely) even though they don't know anything about the actual goal and this may be satisfied by Mitraship. I don't know.

**S:** Except that if they can't really make the distinction between devotion and commitment, they may be (*presumably?*) puzzled why they aren't as it were being promoted to the next highest grade. They tend to see it like that, why they're not getting their service stripe in due course - They've done all the right things, and sure yes, they are doing all the right things. but that isn't enough.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: I think that would be a very positive situation for that person.

**S:** I think it would be, yes.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: Because if they stayed with it so long, or they might actually get very angry with you or something, at that point they would have to break through. It's no good saying, oh you've done it when you haven't.



**S:** And also there is the possibility that they may actually see, though they don't understand what commitment is in spiritual terms, they may actually see that Upasakas and Upasikas are living in a way that they possibly couldn't. They would recognise that. For instance they might be very devoted and go along to the Centre, such a person, but they couldn't go away, say, on a six month solitary retreat. And they've known perhaps that some Upasakas and Upasikas do this and they know that they just couldn't. *[pause]*

From what has been said so far by some Order Members, has this whole question of qualifications for Upasaka or Upasika ordination become clearer to those perhaps to whom it wasn't clear before? Or do some people still feel it isn't clear enough or that they would like it to be clearer.

**Uttara:** I still find it isn't clear just in general with people who aren't very clear in themselves about what it's about..

**S:** Which people are you referring to?

**Uttara:** Just everybody who was coming across there and stood in some way. I still don't feel that they really know what it is.

**Padmapani:** Are you talking about generally or?

**Uttara:** Generally.

**Subhuti:** I think perhaps because of its inexpressible nature that people don't. In any given situation a lot of people probably don't know whether somebody should be ordained but not because they don't know what ordination is or what ordination should be, but just unsure of their own faculties.

**Dhammadinna:** Also *(unclear)* the general situation. When you are actually considering there is a person there. *(Unclear)*

**S:** I also notice that in certain cases everybody is quite clear and sure and definite that such and such a person should be ordained; in others there's a lot of discussion and weighing of pros and cons, which sometimes goes on for quite a few months, without even, in some cases, a decision being reached. I think it would be good if we could

arrive at a decision in this sort of very definite and unanimous and clear-cut way. I'd almost go so far as to say that you couldn't be mistaken then. If the decision that someone is ready to be ordained was taken or arrived at in that sort of way. I'd almost say that the Chapter of the Order feeling in that way about a particular person with whom they were in contact, could not be mistaken.

**Dhammadinna:** Sometimes when you do have doubts and again those doubts are inexpressible and you don't quite know.....

**S:** Yes, I'm excluding the inexpressible doubts.

**Dhammadinna:** But if you do have a doubt like that then you should really not ...

**S:** Not just keep quiet. Just say, I have a doubt but I can't quite put my finger on it and say exactly what I'm doubting.

**Dhammadinna:** That's very important.

**S:** But I'm referring to the case where no-one has any such doubts, everybody feels quite sure and happy that such and such a person is ready for ordination. Whether or not they can put it all into words and say why. I think if a Chapter of the Order consisting, say, of at least ten Order Members takes that sort of decision or feels in that sort of way about some particular candidate, I would almost go so far as to say - you notice the 'almost' there(!) - *[Laughter] (unclear)* But even that is saying quite a lot.

**Vimalamitra:** I've often felt that some people have got what's necessary for ordination, but I've also felt that in a way it needs more time, they need to wait. I'm not quite sure about that. Quite often I feel when people mention the names of those who are brought up for ordination, yes, they will be ordained, but the question of time comes in.

**S:** Quite a lot of people, quite a lot of Order Members have said this about quite a lot of people asking to be ordained. I wonder if those who have at some time or other made this sort of statement would like to say what exactly they meant by this.

**Dhammadinna:** I think sometimes you do see a spark in them and then for a long time you don't. You recognise something and then it seems to.... either you can't see it or it's covered up and then you see it again. With some people once you see the spark well it's there all the time. That's the only situation in which I would say you feel they're moving but it needs time for that to really come out more.

**S:** You want to make quite sure that the spark wasn't, as it were, just a flash in the pan that isn't going to re-appear and that needs time just to see.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: One thing I've been wondering about recently, Bhante, is the presence of a lot of very young Mitras at 'Pundarika'. I can't help wondering how can these people of this age really be committed, and yet they seem to be. [*Laughter*]

**S:** If we go by the Scriptures, there are seven year old Arahants [*Laughter*] but I'm not suggesting that even your favourite Mitra is an Arahant [*Laughter*] but I think we have to be very careful about this business of age and people not getting involved enough to know things of that sort. No. I think the older, more world-weary battered type of Order Members ought to be really careful here! [*Laughter*] I'm quite sure that there will come into the Movement, indeed to the Order, relatively fresh unspoiled people who haven't got this terrible trail of problems behind them. They are coming to the Order wearing crowns of glory if anything. I think that will be very good for the Order as a whole. I look forward to seeing more such young, enthusiastic, unspoiled problem-free definitely committed Order Members who would be a shot in the arm to all of us!

**Vangisa:** Could I go ahead with a lead-in to the opposite. A lot of what has been said (*unclear*) does presume the person to be in the category in which most Order Members are. Very young, in a position to live in one of the communities around Archway and so on, which is a very good situation, and they quite enjoy the situation, but there the question of the minority of people who are a bit older with children and that kind of thing, and it could well be that (*unclear*) that we mightn't be all that badly off with one or two more people who don't (*unclear*) If one or two of the existing ones do feel more or less excluded by the others, but yet with the way things are at the moment people tend to think of qualifications in terms of a person being young, childless, without debts (*unclear*) could be construed in this kind of way, a debt to other people. (*Unclear*) I just wanted to raise this point.

**S:** I've been a bit concerned once or twice seeing some such older people, whose debts begin to be discharged, i.e, you know, their children grow up or have grown up and they are theoretically free, but seem not to be able to express their commitment more, in accordance with their increased freedom and mobility.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: Why do you think that is?

**S:** I think they've got into a rut. That's putting it very broadly and bluntly. It's a bit more conscious than that.

So I think even in the case of your older person, what has been said in general still applies. That they should be prepared for some change of life-style, 'prepared' is the word, not that they should do it immediately, but prepared. Obviously if they've got young children, they have a responsibility for those young children, which they can't, and in a sense shouldn't, give up. But one has a right to expect that when their children are grown up that then they give more and more expression to their commitment. If they don't, well quite clearly there is something wrong.

**Vangisa:** I would agree with that. It's just purely and simply that because of the present situation people tend to look at it in a certain way as the kind of expression that is given by the young Mitra, for instance, around 'Pundarika' at the present time, and ignore anything else to some extent.....

**S:** I think the Order even now does cover a sufficient range of age groups for that misunderstanding not to arise. We do. We do have people at both ends of the scale, as it were, don't we. Well if anything - what's the age of our oldest Order Member, 65? I don't think Chanda's the oldest; there's one other actually, 65 roughly, and the youngest - 22? In New Zealand, I think they are. So 22 to 65; that's not bad, is it, really. There are several in their 40s and 50s, not to say 30s, and a whole lot in their 20s.

**Ratnapani:** I feel about this - talking about debts both to family, jobs and financial debts - that you can see in somebody's attitude that - or quite often you can see it, though sometimes unfortunately you don't see it until after ordination - people say, "No I can't, I've got this, no I can't I've got that, no I can't I've got the other", rather than saying "I'll try and manoeuvre things so that I can. Maybe I won't be able to

manoeuvre them". One hears for example Order Members, and presumably one might pick this up before ordination, this constant excuse, "No I can't, No I can't".

**S:** One would be able to pick up that they really do genuinely like to change, and will change when they get the chance, even though they can't do so now. But not get the impression well that's the way it is and they're going to see to it that that's the way it remains indefinitely, they're not prepared to change, even when they get the chance. This is what one must try to see.

**Padmapani:** There certainly seems to be a kind of life-style (*unclear*) Is this a product of Buddhism or is it a product of Western ... our sort of social .....

**S:** Well what is this lifestyle that's clearly referred to?

**Padmapani:** Well it's a kind of um... it's a kind of loose lifestyle.

**S:** Loose! *[Laughter]*

**Padmapani:** Not morally loose. Totally morally strong.

**S:** Good, thank you, yes! *[Laughter]* I'm greatly assured!

**Padmapani:** There's a lot of mobility. Geographically loose.

**S:** Well, who are more mobile than the Bhikkhus in the Buddha's day?

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_: They didn't have motor cars! *[Laughter]*

**S:** They didn't need motor cars! *[Laughter]* They flew through the air. *[Laughter]* With ease!

**Dhammadinna:** It seems absolutely vital that most Order Members are mobile if the Movement is going to expand.

**Manjuvajra:** But there's other factors as well as mobility. The kind of places that we live in are not sort of acceptable to a lot of people.

**Chintamani:** Money. Pure money, that's all it is. As far as I can see..... I don't want to - OK it's going to be a bit of a discussion.

**S:** Say what you think.

**Chintamani:** OK. I don't think there is actually a life-style, there's a marked lack of life-style. The way we live simply stems from our total involvement in the movement, and the way we live is determined by the work that various people have to do for the movement, it's determined by our meditation. I mean we don't for instance on a very sort of superficial level, you don't wear tight trousers if you want to meditate. It's as simple as that. The type of food one eats etc., etc. The sort of exercise one takes is all geared to our practice, if you like. So really in that sense it's a lack of life-style. The life-style has grown up incidentally round the central important issue.

**Dhammadinna:** You did make the point on WBO day that in the Buddha's days he (called?) one of his followers from the wanderers already there, so he didn't actually change their life-style. He may have modified it slightly. Then they took Refuge in the Buddha. In the same way you've done a similar sort of thing with young, fairly mobile people.

**S:** Yes, in a way it was their lack of life-style that enabled them to take up another one.

**Dhammadinna:** Yes, and in the same way there were monks in the Buddha's day, they took Refuge, they modified their life-style. It wasn't demanded that they left home or (*unclear*) (**S:** No, Right, yes.) It seems to be a very similar situation for us.

**S:** I would like to say a word or two about this age question. I think actually that we shouldn't stress it too much, this question of difference of age. I know some people do and even feel it but I think if you are spiritually committed, you have a basis on which you can meet regardless of age. I think you should try to meet more and more on that common basis of commitment. Rather than they're all very young, I'm very old, they don't want me around, kind of thing.

\_\_\_\_\_: A lot of that is true.

**S:** They wouldn't understand anyway. Young people don't know what it's like to be old and have responsibilities. They're all free, they've no conception. This is the sort of thing I've heard from some people in the past - not from Vangisa! *[Laughter]*

**Vangisa:** It's usually the other way round.....

**S:** But all right, maybe a younger person doesn't understand the mundane responsibilities that an older married person with a family has, maybe not. But that's irrelevant. That person doesn't understand what it's like to be a young person, or has forgotten. But what you both ought to know is what it is like to be a Upasaka or Upasika; what it feels like to be committed - if you both know that then that's the most important thing.

**Dharmapala:** I was going to ask if we could define this mobility a bit more. Perhaps even for just ten minutes. *[pause]*

**Aryamitra:** It seems that the sort of person who has got a profession, who has got a house and loads of responsibilities and so forth, isn't the sort of person or is an unlikely person to even come in contact with the movement, because he's so involved with other things, with business, etc.

**Gotami:** Looking at what has happened to a lot of people in the Order it seems very clear to me if you use the word 'priorities'. If their priority is (*unclear*) Enlightenment, then that's OK, there's no problem (*unclear*) whatever it is, that's their priority. Everybody knows that's their priority and they also manage their other responsibilities (*unclear*) but very often you really have that wish to develop (*unclear*) but you don't feel capable at the moment of putting it into the top priority. You are trying to sort of balance a ship with two priorities equally, and this just does not work. It tears families apart, it tears the people apart, (*unclear*) but if suddenly it's very clear what the priority is everything else will fall quite naturally into place. If they can't do that; if their work is priority or their family is priority, whatever it is, then they simply cannot say "I am totally committed" It's not possible to have two different priorities.

**S:** Yes, it's not so much what they're actually doing but the place it occupies in their scale of priorities. If someone could be running a very big and important and lucrative business, maybe his own business, and still be committed - because if it came to the point he'd even miss an important contract or interview to be on retreat, or to attend

a Convention. If it came to the point that would be sacrificed and not this. So that person is committed, even though he's running a big business.

**Vangisa:** There's another factor involved. If your first commitment is, say, Enlightenment. If it's your being an Order Member that has gone for Refuge, that comes first, some of (*unclear*) falls in place but let's say you've got a family, well you're much nicer to them than you were before! *[Laughter]* You're kinder to them, you're more patient with them, you're more tolerant of them, you get on better with them. *[Laughter]*

\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_: Does Marie agree with that?! *[Laughter]*

**Vangisa:** Well you may be thinking of me! *[Laughter]* The relationships are very much improved but it's important that it's the spiritual commitment that comes first. If the family commitment comes first then I'm afraid you don't get anywhere with the spiritual commitment. If the spiritual commitment comes first it just seems you're more successful than with anything else.

**S:** Well, secondary commitment or secondary priorities flourish as secondary priorities. (**Vangisa:** Exactly) If something which is not of first importance is given the place of first importance, then that thing itself will go wrong.

**Manjuvajra:** I can't necessarily agree with you there, Vangisa, because I think that even if you do make your spiritual life a priority, there may still be other things that you're doing which will create conflicts by their very sort of existence, and so I don't think that if you commit yourself to your spiritual life, everything else falls into place. Quite often other things fall out of place.

**Vangisa:** It's not that everything automatically becomes perfect, but it certainly puts other things into their proper place. You're involved in other things (*unclear*) into a kind of perspective Undoubtedly if your relationship with your environment (*unclear*).

**S:** At this point, I'm going to suggest someone puts the kettle on, so that in about ten minutes time we have tea because I think we have still quite a bit of comment and we will carry on.

**Vangisa:** There are undoubtedly conflicts. These progressively become resolved.

**S:** For instance like jobs. One's spiritual commitment has priority. You have a job. You may as a result of that spiritual commitment find conflicts between your commitment and the job, so you don't sort of stop work altogether, you find another job. A job which is more in consonance with the spiritual commitment and your whole way of life. In that way job, as it were falls into place.

**Gotami:** Coming back to what you were saying about young people, you said what do people actually mean when they say give it a little time, on the occasions when I've said that I think it has been like for instance in the case of Nigel, where he's very young, one sees he's got a very clear spark there but he's just on the point of leaving to go to another town where no Order Member has gone for years, and therefore I say give it a little time. Because I have no doubt whatsoever that he's spiritually committed and will most likely be ordained sometime. I don't particularly know when.

**S:** While we're on the topic at sometime or other - I forget when - I've said or was reported to have said that if someone is nearly ready for ordination, then they're ready, and I think some people found this rather infuriatingly cryptic. *[Laughter]* Does anyone?

**Voices:** *(unclear)*

**S:** Anybody else? Perhaps I should expand a little and say what I meant. Did everyone pass it over? Is it because they understood it clearly and had no doubt what I meant, or they didn't read their '*Shabda*' or ....

**Sulochana:** I did write a letter to you asking because I knew you wouldn't answer because you were already inundated with letters.

**S:** Sorry, I missed that.

**Sulochana:** You were very inundated with letters.

**S:** Right. Very nice letters, but certainly inundated. So if someone is nearly ready for ordination, then they are ready. Now what do I mean by this? What do you think I mean by that? You read it in '*Shabda*'!

**Sulochana:** That they're destined for ordination at some time.

**S:** No, I didn't mean that.

**Sulochana:** But it is a good thing to tell a person who's going to be ordained that they are a possibility, that it is a possibility, because they might get the idea that it's not.

**S:** That brings up a separate point which I will come back to - this question of how you tell someone to wait as it were. I wasn't thinking of that when I made that statement.

**Uttara:** If you see growth has started in the person, then that's it begun.....

**S:** You're getting a bit near. What I meant was this. For instance, I had some cautious souls, some cautious Order Members speaking to me about a certain person who had asked for Ordination and they'd say for instance things like, "Well, he isn't ready, he's nearly ready. I think, in about three weeks' time he will be!" *[Laughter]* . So what I meant was that if you know him so well and are so sure and can confidently predict that he will be ready in three weeks' time, well, he's ready now. Otherwise, you wouldn't be able to predict with such certainty that he will be ready in three weeks' time. This is what I meant. It's quite simple.

Anyway to come back what Sulochana was saying, if we have to ask people to.... if we think that they are ready, as it were, in principle but they need a bit of time to mature it or something of that sort, then I think we have to communicate that to them; it's our responsibility to communicate it, in a very positive way. Not just as it were, say "You've got to wait". Or if we feel that there's something they've got to work on, so that they can give more effective expression to their commitment, or if they've got to clear the decks in any particular way, then we should tell them this quite frankly, and say, "Please work on it. You need to work on it and clear it up that before you will be really ready for ordination".

For instance, Aryamitra and I both had a word with someone who had asked for ordination about his debts and it was made clear to him that he had to pay off at least half his debts before he would be considered at all ready for ordination. So I have been working on that.

**Lokamitra:** What about the person who you feel absolutely nothing in terms of ordination for? There have been several cases of that.

**S:** Yes, there have actually. Well in a way it is quite difficult. Personally I feel very sorry for them in a way because they really do feel in some cases that they ought to be ordained and are ready. They just can't see any reason not. They think that they are being somewhat excluded or rejected or you think that they're not good enough or they think they are and they might go a bit resentful etc., etc. I don't know that there is any sort of clear-cut thing that one can say to people in those circumstances. One would just have to use one's own tact and sympathy and do your best. It probably won't be good enough. They may well feel quite resentful or rejected and so on. You have to handle it very tactfully.

**Aryamitra:** It could be helpful in that sort of circumstance if you've got something particular or something definite and you can say this is why, even if it's just one aspect.

**S:** That might not be the truth, you see.

**Lokamitra:** There are certain people you just couldn't say that much to.

**S:** It's not that they've got no redeeming qualities. They've got lots of redeeming qualities but they don't add up to even the beginnings of a possibility of commitment as yet.

**Marichi:** In a way without that it's very difficult to communicate what...

**S:** Indeed, yes, indeed. They don't really know what you're talking about. They're just hurt sometimes, and you feel very sorry to have to hurt them because you see they're really good positive people, and very devoted, but what can one do? So your non-acceptance of them appears to them as a sort of arbitrary exercise of some sort of authority.

**Vessantara:** That was very much the situation a couple of weeks ago with a Mitra. I tried to point out all that things that..... I didn't feel that kind of spark was there and I pointed out various other practical things, and that person still said, "Well I feel ready. I wouldn't have asked unless I felt ready. I feel very much in contact with something". And I didn't see any point in saying, "No, you haven't got it." All I said was, "Work with that and lead with it. If you've got a feeling just keep on leading with it and that seemed to....."

## **End of Side One    Side Two**

**S:** One of the things one can say is, "Well look, if you feel committed, I can't dispute that but the unfortunate fact is that nobody else sees it. You'll just have to go on expressing it until such time as everybody sees it and people can't help seeing it. You just have to go on. Either it is possible that the Order is wrong, and in that case well that's just unfortunate, but if you just carry on being committed and expressing it, even this blind and imperceptive Order will have to admit it in the end".

**Padmapani:** Have you ever had a case like that, Bhante, when the Order's seen the Mitra or prospective candidate for ordination and you've seen that they're perfectly ready, and the Order's totally sort of rejected them.

**S:** No. Well we say Order; usually now it means a Chapter of the Order. No, it's usually been the other way around, that a Chapter of the Order has felt someone was ready; when I've met them I've found they were not ready. But I think the Order is quite good at screening out unsuitable people up to a point, but not completely. But the Order is very good, or Chapters of the Order are very good at recognising at once someone as ready who really is ready. I think the Chapter of the Order sometimes feel quite shaky about in between cases when there is discussion and some come down on one side and some come down on the other for various reasons. But the unanimous verdict of a Chapter seems on the whole very remarkable. When it is in favour of someone being ordained it is very positive.

**Dharmapala:** The other way round of you accepting but other people not, is that even a possibility when the ordination is in part acceptance by the Order? Even perhaps if there's just one who cannot see it.

**S:** Well, it is a possibility that then the Order would have to accept that in this particular case it's made a mistake and it had just better learn to get on with that particular Order Member! [*Laughter*].

**Lokamitra:** Could I please go back to the point that came up earlier. The point about having some other commitment besides say (*unclear*) Enlightenment in a relationship, a family, or a job or some other such situation. I've noticed that the tendency is that people try and share these ideals; they try and compromise one and elevate the other.

They try and put the two on a platform together, so that very often the spiritual commitment is quite severely compromised.

**S:** In other words you don't raise one commitment to the level of the spiritual commitment; you have to bring down the spiritual commitment or ideal to the level of that other commitment or ideal.

**Lokamitra:** Well in a way you don't do either. You keep the spiritual commitment there and the relationship or job there, instead of trying to make the ideal relationship tie in with the ideal spiritual life or the ideal job. Certainly I have noticed this within the Order and outside.

**Marichi:** I don't understand what you mean by *(unclear)*

**Lokamitra:** You have a primary commitment and then, say you happen to be married, or you happen to have a relationship with someone or a job; you have a secondary commitment. But if one Goes for Refuge then one must make one's primary commitment that Going for Refuge.

**S:** This is what Gotami refers to as the question of priorities.

**Lokamitra:** But what often happens, it seems to me, is that people can't accept for some reason, sometimes, that what they're doing is secondary or they can't follow up, give themselves entirely to the Going for Refuge. Therefore they try and rationalise the situation by talking about the ideal job, the ideal home, the ideal family, the ideal ....

**Marichi:** But that would mean both halves are equal.

**Lokamitra:** Yes that's trying to take the secondary and conjoin it with the.....

**Marichi:** It's trying to spiritualize something which is supposed to be mundane.

**Lokamitra:** Yes.

**Ratnapani:** It's as if the activities put into the mundane were to find some methods a spiritual help, so in trying to build up your ideal business or establish this ideal

sexual relationship with somebody else, somehow helping spiritual development and was helping towards Enlightenment. It's rather thin.

**Vessantara:** I don't understand this whole idea of first and second priorities. It seems to me that if you go for Refuge there is only one priority and you haven't got any others. You only follow things which conduce to Enlightenment, and anything else should be out the window.

**Ratnapani:** Yes, that's the ideal, but...

**S:** Better close our window! *[Laughter]* *[Various inaudible comments and Laughter]*

**Vajradaka:** Something I noticed in Europe was that a lot of people were talking about "The Path", capital P, double inverted commas and what they meant by "the Path" was their life and everything that happened in their life, like a period of time between when they were born and when they die, which isn't really "Path" capital P, double inverted commas, but they.....

**S:** *(unclear)* *[Laughter]*

**Vajradaka:** Right! *[Laughter]*

**Chintamani:** I think this thing that Lokamitra was talking about, seems to be labelling as spiritual that which you feel most strongly about in your life. You get quite often people who come along who right in the forefront of their minds is this great sort of burning thing and they say, "It's so important, it's got such a lot of energy that it must be spiritual".

**Lokamitra:** But quite often Mitras will, or Friends will think in these terms but I think the point is that these aren't confused when they come for ordination.

**Vangisa:** I must say I agree wholeheartedly with what Vessantara says. The first priority - there aren't any other commitments or priorities. (**S:** It's not a numerical question) It's not a numerical question. There is only one commitment, only one priority. On the other hand throwing everything else out of the window is only slightly different really, because what do you mean? You mean throw eating out of the window or throw breathing out of the window! *[Laughter]* *(unclear)*

**Vessantara:** No, because those things conduce to Enlightenment. You have to have a physical body in order to be Enlightened.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_: And three thousand a year and.....

**Vangisa:** What I mean is there are other things that can't be thrown out of the window without being in conflict with your one and only commitment.

**Dhammadinna:** Then you don't throw them out.

**Vangisa:** You don't throw them out, exactly. But it is possible however to make one's... er.. to try, what should happen is that automatically one's way of life, one's lifestyle and so on just naturally becomes an expression of one's prior commitment whatever it may involve.

**S:** What one has to beware is hanging on to the lifestyle because you're attached to it and affirming in the face of all evidence to the contrary that that is your way and that is in fact helping you, when it's quite clear to everybody else when it isn't.

**Vangisa:** Well that's quite a different thing altogether.

**Aryamitra:** That's what you were pointing out is it, Lokamitra? [*Laughter*]

**Siddhiratna:** I wonder if we could go back to this thing about devotion and commitment for a minute because it's not terribly clear in my mind. I can imagine somebody being committed but not doing particularly much work obviously for the organisation of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order; being very committed to their own development, to the gaining of the Ideal, and somebody who's in fact done a lot of organisational work and that being read as being committed, but in fact being merely devoted, and I wondered if it's very clear what's the difference. How you read one from the other.

**S:** Well in the case of the person who is devoted, as I said, he or she tends to be devoted more to the group. Sometime ago I said, putting it in very extreme terms, that there are some people who may be working very devotedly for the Friends, they like the atmosphere, they like the people but they're quite blind to the ultimate Ideals of it all. In a sense they'd be just as happy working with a nice positive sort of

commercial firm, and really devoting themselves in the same sort of way. It is very much a sort of group thing.

**Siddhiratna:** Yes, but I can imagine group being read as spiritual ideal.... by Order Members.

**S:** In what way?

**Siddhiratna:** Well that one is working for the group, the organisation, and that is read as a commitment to the ideal.....

**S:** It can be an expression (*Siddhiratna keeps talking*) of a commitment. I've made this clear I think on several times before. That can be an expression of a commitment, but it's only one possible expression. There are other expressions, and I mentioned - and I'm sure I mentioned this some time ago - either on a Convention or on a seminar - that not all Order Members would necessarily be involved with the activities of Centres. There might be some who are working quite by themselves, as it were, though in contact with Order Members, but doing their own work, making their own contribution, getting on with their own path and their own practice, but not necessarily functioning organisationally through a Centre. I thought I made this quite clear in fact.

**Manjuvajra:** I personally noticed a considerable difference since the last Convention. When I came to that, I had very much the feeling that to be committed to the Order meant that you had to work organisationally, but this time that seems not to have been mentioned and I haven't thought about it. It seems to have completely disappeared.

**S:** I also made the point that inasmuch as we had one or two quite big projects on hand, a higher percentage of Order Members are involved with the organisational work of Centres than ever before, but I have pointed out that this should be considered an abnormal development just to meet a particular sort of situation, and that once that situation has been met we shall, I hope, revert to a more sort of balanced situation in which perhaps not more than half the total number of Order Members are actually involved with Centres. Others may be living in the country, others may be meditating quietly, others may be just travelling from Centre to Centre just visiting.

**Siddhiratna:** Perhaps the running of the Centres should be given to those that were devoted, the Mitras.



**S:** Well, there's no doubt that Mitras can do quite a lot. You see, this is what they've discovered in Brighton. I hope I'm not speaking out of turn here, but in Brighton, Mitras do quite a lot of running and I quite agree with this but the direction of events and the planning of policies, this must be in the hands of Order Members but there's quite a lot of the, as it were, donkey work that can well be done by Mitras. So that Upasikas and Upasakas can get on with the things which only they can do. For instance, it isn't necessary for Upasikas and Upasakas to personally run every jumble sale. You ought to be able to give it to your Mitras to get on with and then they just pay the money to the Treasurer. Mitras can happily occupy themselves in this sort of way if they feel so inclined (*unclear*). But there's no need for Order Members to do all this. In a sense it's a waste of an Order Member. Though an Order Member should be ready to do anything that is required, but in a sense it's a waste of an Order Member to have him or have her running a jumble sale. That's just a crude and simple example, but, yes, in the actual running of Centres, Mitras I'm sure could be used very much more. In some Centres they are being used. And people who are devoted enjoy this sort of work very often. And, yes, it's part of their training. Some seed of commitment may emerge from all this.

So even as regards the work of the Centres, at least in due course, at least eventually, it'll be the work of the Upasakas, the Upasikas, more to guide and direct than to do every detail themselves.

**\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_:** I think in the past what has happened quite a lot and maybe still will go on is that the people who are running the Centres are well aware that they need a lot more energy for that sort of work. Every time you meet them they seem to say, "well can you sort of collate this newsletter", or "can you give us a hundred quid" or something. [*Laughter*] To the extent that Upasakas are not very clear about what they are doing themselves, or feel the division between wanting to be accepted by the group, then that will be a guilt situation for them, and they will feel the only way to be an Upasaka is to work in the Centre. But if your relationship with other Order Members is clear, then you don't feel that. (**S:** Right, yes). But when it is dull or when you are feeling guilty or.....

**S:** Or even if you're working on your own or even if you're not involved with the functioning of a Centre, it remains important - in fact vitally important - to keep up your individual contact with other Order Members, so that you understand them and they understand you, even though you're doing quite different things, but you're

meeting on common ground as Order Members, preferably regularly by way of the weekly Order Meeting and monthly Order Day and so on. Anyway I think probably tea's going to be ready. Perhaps that's a good point to stop.

### [Tea Break]

**S:** All right, we are going to consider now the qualifications for Mitraship, including General Mitra status, and then qualifications for becoming a Kalyana Mitra. So first of all the qualifications for Mitraship. Now the accepting of Mitras is something which has practically passed out of my hands now, which is a good thing. So I think it would be a good idea if some of you, or those who have been actively concerned in the matter, just tell everybody else, tell all of us, what you look for in the Mitra, including the General Mitras. Then perhaps if anything needs to be added then that will be added. So what have all of you, who have been concerned with this matter been looking for when someone asks to be a Mitra, whether a Mitra with Kalyana Mitras or a General Mitra? Once again, just give your own view. We'll try not to enter into any discussion at this stage.

**Chintamani:** It's something I've only concerned myself with very recently; since I've been at '*Sukhavati*', but what occurs to me now is nothing very concrete, although I expect one could be more concrete about qualifications for Mitraship than for ordination. It seems to me that the sort of feeling somebody gives off when they're on the doorstep of a rather huge mansion that hasn't been explored for a long time, and they really intend to go inside and have a look round. There's that sort of feeling.

**Ananda:** I think the word that comes to my mind in connection with a Mitra is openness to change and progress and just the hint of a possibility that they may be able to accept a change in their lives, something higher than themselves.

**Dhammadinna:** I think there also needs to be a reference towards both the group and individual Order Members and the Order. There wants to be a positive feeling towards the Friends in general, which you don't get from everyone who comes to a Centre.

**S:** Some people who come to the Centre can be very much put off by Order Members. They can be very critical and even hostile towards them. Such a person clearly wouldn't be immediately in line to become a Mitra, however interested in Buddhism they might be or however much they were practising meditation.

\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_: So any problem in that area has been resolved. (*unclear*)

**Vimalamitra:** Can you speak up, please. We can't hear.

**S:** She said any problem in that area has to be resolved. [*pause*]

**Lokamitra:** I find that I see it in these terms: that someone who has been coming for some time perhaps, maybe, not necessarily for that long, will want to cement something they feel towards the Movement and with the possibility of ordination, but not absolutely necessarily. But they do want to express something, express something for the movement by becoming a Mitra.

**Vimalamitra:** I think it's if they are involved actually. You can usually tell who should be a Mitra because they are involved - in the Friends.

**Aryamitra:** There is this point which came up about some people who might be Mitras (*unclear*) and so in that sense one is not necessarily looking for people who intend to become ordained, but I feel that people who want to become more involved; they actually see something; they want to give; they want to become more involved; they want to participate more. But not necessarily - this is the General Mitras anyway - that they want to become ordained.

**Marichi:** Most Mitras seem to want to be Mitras in the first place because they want to be ordained, while they may change their minds later.

**S:** Well they may not understand what ordination means, but still they want to have it in mind.

**Marichi:** And that does seem to be the sort of complication we've been asking for.

**Ananda:** The Friends has a sort of duality.

**Padmaraja:** Also, more for me anyway personally, rather than them actually wanting ordination, it's more that they have something they want to give, contribute, a kind of freshness. Not just coming to you to want to suck you dry and take from you. It's going to be a very constructive relationship.

**Dharmapala:** I think people don't always know what they've got to give and maybe the rest of the people do. They can see what this person's giving to (*unclear*)

**S:** It's more like a willingness or readiness. Not a conscious thinking, "well I can give this or give that", but their whole attitude is a giving kind of attitude.

**Ananda:** Could I just say that I felt, over the past something like six months or maybe more, that there's been a sort of twofold structure or nature in the whole Mitra system. It almost seems to fall into two levels: those Mitras, those people, who want to be Mitras because they feel the Friends has got something - they don't know what it is and they've no idea about ordination, they've never even thought in terms of ordination. They just want to find out. They want to have some way of getting in touch with this higher thing which they feel but they don't know what it is, yeah. And the other level which is they definitely want at sometime.... they know they want to be ordained at some time in the future. And it seems that there's quite a clear division between the two.

**Vangisa:** (*unclear*) danger (*unclear*) older Order Members who have never been Mitras and an increasing proportion who have.

**S:** The original batch of Order Members, or several batches, just never had that opportunity. I'm sure it helps you, even when you are an Upasaka if you have been a Mitra.

**Ratnapani:** I think the two levels that Ananda mentioned have been sort of mentioned before. Those who are, as it were, Friends of the Friends; those who are supporters of the movement. Basically sympathetic to the Dharma who would like to be involved, basically Friends of the Friends, of the movement; and those who are thinking about thinking about ordination. The two..... it's as if some people have an emphasis on one aspect and others have an emphasis on another. Presumably the first category - the Friends of the Friends - could then progress further, but it seems as if they will almost grow into, in fact, two Mitraships. But as things stand, I would expect someone to be thinking about thinking about ordination and have it in the back of their mind. Although of course for many it's more than at the back of their mind - they have to be told to be a Mitra when what they actually want is ordination. I think that's possibly the majority at the moment.

**Aryamitra:** I'd like to see the way it develops. If it's not like this now. I think probably now it's for most people because they want ordination and it's just a matter of form that they have to be a Mitra first, but I see it growing, if it's not already, towards just the Mitra system being not even with thoughts of ordination, but just thoughts of Mitra, and ordination maybe coming later, maybe not. And so the Mitra system develops like it has to a high standard. So that Mitras now coming in are like Order Members of a few years ago coming into the Order, so that the Mitra system itself becomes something in itself rather than just a step.

**Mangala:** I think this has been a problem and will happen more with Mitras. I suppose it's like the Mitras could sort of organise themselves into sort of, you know, doing let's say practical things like running Centres, in a sense, almost without too much Order supervision, if you like.

**S:** A bit of that is happening already.

**Mangala:** Yeah. So that they become a sort of body in themselves and have a feeling of identity.

**S:** Well, the Mitras are cooking our lunch.

**Vangisa:** I think probably there is a danger - this is something that has been crossing my mind over the past day or so actually, although I haven't thought of it in the context of any particular discussion, and that is a class distinction. I'm not saying that this is happening at the moment, but it has occurred to me that there does seem to be a slight danger of this attitude creeping in.

**Chintamani:** There's always that danger.

**Vangisa:** I mean English people, you English are so fond of your class system, are you perhaps unconsciously thinking of creating another one here! The idea for instance of Friends and Mitrahood does sound to me rather like a form of proletariat.

**Marichi:** It is a bit like that having the Mitras cooking our lunch.

**Vangisa:** It is, yes. (*Unclear*)

**Marichi:** It just feels like having a servant class and we are encouraging them to be a servant class.

**Devamitra:** Surely it's just a hierarchy that's developing.

**Marichi:** Well, maybe an uncomfortable hierarchy.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Mangala:** Perhaps for them being a servant isn't a lower position. Perhaps they feel very honoured, you know, to.....

**Marichi:** It's not 'perhaps for them'. Maybe, you know, if somebody wants to cook a meal, then that's fine (*unclear*)

**S:** That is what happens.....

**Marichi:** Sometimes it's sort of 'the Mitras should do it'.

**S:** I've not heard of that.

**Marichi:** Well, I have.

**Subhuti:** I think you'd have great difficulty in getting them to do it, under those conditions.

**S:** Under present conditions, you'd have great difficulty stopping them doing it.

**Mangala:** I think they're probably very happy.

**Chintamani:** I must say that when the Mitra system really started flowering I considered demoting myself to Mitra because I've been missing out! It's a really wonderful opportunity to be a servant. I think it's something that not many people experience and I think they should. As I said yesterday you can't lead until you've been a servant.

**Mangala:** It's something which in this country is frowned upon, like if you serve someone or you know do something like perhaps cooking, well then you're classed as working class, or a servant. And the whole idea of service as something which one is happy to give is completely... I don't know if people in this country really know what it is. I don't know if they experience it; they just see it as being some kind of lowly post which they've been put into, you know.

**Padmaraja:** I don't think that of the Mitras at all actually.

**Ratnapani:** Yes, I think one is helping somebody's growth if you give them the opportunity for *dana*, if you set things up so that they can be generous and produce an atmosphere in which it is pleasurable for them to be generous, and it is a particular pleasure to serve. I think most of us enjoy taking Bhante a cup of tea, for instance; we enjoy looking after him. *[Laughter]* (unclear) notable exceptions from time to time *[Laughter]*

**S:** I enjoy looking after you

**Ratnapani:** It's a pleasure to serve that which we respect and that which perhaps we aspire to ourselves. It's a very good contact and we're not being servants. We take it with a feeling of pride.

**S:** I must say I really noticed this in the East, especially with the younger monks. The attitude of the younger monks towards the older monks and the older to the younger regardless of any degeneration of Buddhism that might have taken place, doctrinally and spiritually: this sort of relationship is really admirable everywhere.

**Marichi:** Yes, I would agree with that. I think I'm just touchy about being manipulated, and sometimes feel that other people are manipulated, but if they're not then that's lovely. I think it's beautiful.

**S:** I do agree that our sort of social environment and our English conditioning is very much against us. I quite agree with that.

**Subhuti:** They also said they thought they were having much more fun than we were *(Laughter)*.

**Ananda:** I think this is quite an important topic in connection with the class thing, in that although we're pretty united in understanding but it isn't linked with this idea of social superiority, the servant class and all that, but people outside the Movement could misunderstand.

**S:** Because also for instance within the Sangha in the East, it is a rule - if you'd like to call it a rule - that if your pupil or a younger monk gets sick you must look after him; you must nurse him personally. There is another side to it as well.

**Ananda:** Sure, yeah. In this country that is almost totally lacking, that whole concept. As someone mentioned the other day, the idea of apprenticeship is probably the nearest we ever get to that and that is dying out.

**S:** I really must say that when I was in India it was so nice just arriving in some strange or maybe not strange monastery or centre where there were monks of various kinds, and you'd be really sort of welcomed by the younger monks and looked after by them. And they clearly thoroughly enjoyed doing it. There was a very pleasant atmosphere and very very rarely one encounters anything like that in this country. It happened previously even in the family, yes, but we don't get that now in the family either. It's a sort of general loss.

**Dharmapala:** I think what we do get now though, I don't know what the present situation in London is now but most people who come into contact initially get served by Order Members as *dana*, and they learn from that.

**Chintamani:** The reason that people manipulate the servants is because they haven't been servants themselves. If you have been a servant and you work through that, or if you have been through your apprenticeship of serving and placing yourself under something you trust, then when you actually get into the position of being a leader, you will have understood that and you will have understood all the various things that go on when you are in that position and you don't abuse it. Whereas if you don't have that opportunity you abuse it automatically, and that's why people are abusing it because the idea of serving has disappeared or is disappearing.

**Siddhiratna:** I thought the usual idea of the Mitras was that they were being prepared to become Order Members. I think if that's kept in mind, this idea that there's some serving, the problem shouldn't arise, there should be no problem.

**Vangisa:** No this arises specifically in such ideas as permanent Mitrahood or the Mitra.....(*unclear*)

**Siddhiratna:** (*unclear*)

**S:** .....It's only (*unclear*) in the sense that they themselves do not wish to go further. If at any time they wish to go further well, the road is open.

**Siddhiratna:** Yes, I think that should be emphasised and if you've got this idea about permanent Mitraship.....

**S:** (*interrupting*) That is true throughout the Order. If you're a Friend and you want to become a Mitra you can. If you're a Mitra and you want to become an Upasaka and if you're ready, you can. If you're an Upasaka and you want to become a Maha Upasaka and you're ready, you can, and so on and so forth. The way is open all the time.

**Gotami:** Right back at the beginning when there were no Mitras what happened was that anyone who became an Upasaka immediately found themselves in the middle of bills and money and finance and organising. That was the only way you could express anything towards the Order, because you weren't capable of taking classes, and everybody was very glad to do that. But you became an Upasaka very clearly with the idea that maybe you would never rise to the level of Maha Upasaka. There was no feeling of "Oh, I'm being kept in Upasakaship. You know what I mean, and I think this is now the case with people who are becoming Mitras. People become Mitras and give what they can give, leaving other people free to do their thing.

**Siddhiratna:** Sorry, did you say that there was no possibility of becoming a Maha Upasaka, but I should have thought that as Bhante has just said the way is always open.

**Gotami:** Well yes, but those people who asked for ordination in the same conditions as now one asks to become a Mitra, there was no feeling that you were being put down because you weren't automatically accepted for Maha Upasaka.

**Siddhiratna:** You could only be accepted when you were ready. I expect to get Enlightened.

**Aryamitra:** The point I was trying to make about the Mitra system when I said that was, say, following up from what Gotami said, was that you didn't become an Upasaka because you wanted to become a Maha Upasaka, did you? And I don't think Mitras should become Mitras because they want to become Upasakas necessarily, but because the Mitra system in itself is something worthwhile one wants to get into it, not because they want to be Upasakas.

**Siddhiratna:** Is that so? Is the Mitraship a thing in its own right?

**Aryamitra:** I think it's very much like that.

**S:** The one doesn't exclude the other. In a sense you've got a next step ahead. You know there's a theoretical possibility, like when you go to college; you don't join necessarily with the idea that you are going to stick it out as long as possible and get a PhD in the end. That becomes more and more of a possibility as each year of college goes by. You don't think about it at all probably during your first year at college, but when you are in your fourth or fifth year, you start thinking in terms of a PhD maybe quite seriously, or you decide, no, that that's not for you. So in the same way the healthy Friend wanting to be a Mitra knows that there is the possibility of becoming an Upasaka but he might not think about it very concretely, because he has his Mitraship ahead of him waiting to be experienced, so if you like, experiencing that first and then he'll start thinking about becoming an Upasaka.

**Siddhiratna:** I'm not sure about that, Bhante, I should have thought that if one came into contact with Buddhism, in particular with the Friends, that one became aware of the possibility of Enlightenment and as one became involved with the Friends, then you'd start finding your own level within the organisation, whether it be Friend, Honorary Mitra, Mitra, etc. But I think you had this idea of Enlightenment as the end product when you became involved, as it were.

**S:** I think actually as the Order, as the Sangha grows stronger and more positive, fewer and fewer people come in with this idea of Enlightenment from the beginning. Their first contact is with the Sangha and with the Spiritual Community and they think more in terms of becoming involved with that, and it gradually dawns upon them that what gives life to the Sangha and the Dharma is the spirit of Enlightenment.

**Siddhiratna:** It sounds then as if they come in because of a group.

**S:** In a way, yes. In a way, yes.

**Siddhiratna:** But not the spiritual community because they'd need to understand that fully, what that meant.

**S:** Right, many do come in drawn by the positive healthy group and then..... (*both speaking at once*)

**Siddhiratna:** If that's all they want maybe it's quite good for them to remain then as Mitras as it were, but if they're wanting more then they should not be.. (*both speaking at once*)

**S:** (*unclear*) wanting more but they've no idea about anything more, really. They might have read about Enlightenment in a book, but that's quite another matter. At the beginning we did not have a strong positive spiritual community for people to make the initial contact with. We didn't have it, but we have it now so more and more increasingly people's initial contact and point of departure is that. They start asking, "What makes this spiritual community tick" and then they find out that the ideal of Enlightenment is there behind it; and then they start thinking in those terms for themselves. I think this is going to happen more and more, as we get in people who have never heard of Buddhism, but just like the feel of the Friends.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_: I wonder if it would be possible as the system develops to correlate the Mitra system with the level of healthy psychological development and ordination as the higher spiritual way of.....

**S:** I don't know. I'd like to leave that.

**Siddhiratna:** Could you re-state what you just last said?

**S:** Well, in a way it means looking at the sort of history of Buddhism in this country. First of all people heard that there was such a religion as Buddhism that had been founded by the Buddha, so they knew a bit about the Buddha, a bit about the life of the Buddha, and they'd maybe read "*The Light of Asia*" and they had some sort of devotion towards the Buddha and that's about as far as it went. And then along came translations of Buddhist texts and they started understanding something about the Dharma, the way to Enlightenment, and so an and so forth; but it was mainly

intellectual. Then came Buddhist societies and Buddhist groups, and now comes along the spiritual community; and the spiritual community is getting bigger and stronger, so people come into contact with that first. They don't, say, study comparative religion and learn about the Buddha and about Enlightenment or read translations of texts and know all about the Dharma, the teaching of Buddhism and then start looking for a organisation or community to join. No. Their initial point of contact is the spiritual community itself. Maybe like someone living in Bethnal Green might start coming to 'Sukhavati'. You may know nothing at all about Buddhism, may not be interested in comparative religion, may not be interested in psychology, may not be interested in yoga, but maybe he gets to know someone living there so he starts coming along; he starts feeling, "well this is really very positive, what's it all about, where does it come from?" He might be quite surprised to learn that we follow a spiritual tradition originating in India and that's what it's all about. It might be a bit of a shock at first, but anyway he thinks, "never mind, it's such a good community and a good atmosphere I can even swallow all this oriental stuff, never mind", and he may then start understanding the general principles known as the Dharma and then he might understand well, that's all directed towards something they call Enlightenment. "I don't what that's all about" he might think, but anyway, "it must be all right, they seem a pretty reliable bunch" and that's how many people will come in now.

**Siddhiratna:** Yeah.

**S:** Not having an idea of Enlightenment which they're aiming at, and then they start looking for the teaching to lead them to it and people who can help them; they just come into contact with the spiritual community or something else first, and this can happen now that we have a spiritual community, which we didn't originally.

**Subhuti:** So the Mitra.... the moment at which somebody becomes a Mitra is when they get in contact with the spiritual community and say, "I like this, I want to stay around".

**S:** Yes, I want to be involved with this.

**Marichi:** So this is a new model based on what you think is happening with 'Sukhavati' or will happen because of 'Sukhavati'.

**S:** It's of course been happening quite a bit at 'Pundarika' already. People are popping in and liking the feel of the place and the people. At least a few.

**Marichi:** I thought most of the people had some inkling of what it was they were looking for.

**S:** Well, you have no idea how different things were originally. When people used to come along to the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, they played the Pali Canon in translation. Some of them had learned Pali, some of them had started learning Sanskrit. They'd made a study of comparative religion, they could tell you all about it, and then they came in contact with you and sometimes proceeded to tell you all about it and what you really ought to be teaching. We don't get those sort of people any more, at least I don't meet them. Maybe you shield me from them! *[Laughter]*

**Marichi:** It's just the I get the feeling, for instance, that most of the Order Members here didn't just sort of breeze in off the streets, and they had some idea.....

**S:** A lot dropped in at 'Sakura' in the old days and just liked the place and liked the people who they saw trickling down to the basement, and just stayed on and joined in. Some came on retreat like that. It occasionally happened that someone in the neighbourhood would see that we were having a retreat and like the look of us and came over and asked if they could join in. This used to happen sometimes in the old days, but not knowing anything about Buddhism. Sometimes the people who were working there would ask if they could join in.

**Dharmapala:** I think even in the early days a lot of the early Upasakas - myself included - didn't really understand what the spiritual community was. Because it wasn't there to be seen. We were part of it but we couldn't see it in a sense because it wasn't like a group of people who were working together.

**Siddhiratna:** So what is our attitude towards people who do just breeze in off the street? Are they there to cook food or answer the telephone or are they there to learn about Buddhism?

**S:** They're there to get involved as much as they wish to be.

**Siddhiratna:** Yeah, as much as they..... so the onus is on them how much they wish to become involved, and that presumably also applies to how much inclination they have to cook food etc., etc., etc.

**S:** There's not necessarily this emphasis on cooking food. *[Laughter]* They might feel like doing other things. But when you judge that they really are hooked, as it were, on you, then you might consider that they're ready to become Mitras. But they're definitely involved with the Friends and begin to have an idea what it's all about, and really want to be, as it were a permanent part of it. Even though they may not fully understand as yet what everything is all about. But they've got at least some idea and some feeling for the Movement and just want to be part of it and to give, as it were, to it, in whatever way that they can. Maybe cooking, maybe their efforts for the jumble sale, maybe just tidying up the Centre, maybe anything.

**Padmapani:** I might have misunderstood here but, Siddhiratna, do you mean that people coming in off the street should want to help meditate and so on. Do you think they'll just sort of do it spontaneously or do you think they're going to have to go through some sort of structure in order to help; some sort of hierarchy structure where they can't do what they want, they can only do certain things that they are told by Order Members to do?

**Siddhiratna:** As far as I've seen people come in and they attend maybe two or three classes; they realise that there's work to be done there; that they can contribute purposefully in action let's say doing various things like cleaning the Centre, preparing the shrine and things like that and they just seem to naturally get into it.

**S:** There has to be a certain amount of guidance and direction. They might want to whitewash the shrine and you might not want it whitewashed! *[Laughter]* So you can't give them a completely free hand. And after all if they're sensible people obviously they'd realise that.

**[End of tape Eight Tape Nine]**

**S:** .....I don't see that there's any real difficulty.

**Padmapani:** Because I remember a particular instance just after I was ordained I had a lot of enthusiasm to get things going and I just went on ahead and did it, and after

I did I really got told off by certain Order members, that I shouldn't have done it in that way, I had to go through this system, you know. I had to go through the committee and...

**S:** A meeting about the committee!

**Padmapani:** I've been around for years. *[Laughter]* *(unclear)* right up against a brick wall and I was very very disheartened and a lot of my confidence went right down, went flat.

**S:** But do you still think you did the right things?

**Padmapani:** Oh yes, definitely. Because that's my sort of natural way anyway. I just go out and do it. If it needs to be done.....

**S:** No, it's not necessarily the right thing. For instance you might have felt like changing the image on the shrine and just taking off the one that is there and putting your own favourite one there. It would be very spontaneous and direct. *[Laughter]* Things like that.

**Padmapani:** Well I would have done it if I felt it needed to be done but it didn't! *[Laughter]*

**S:** If every Order member functioned in that sort of way there'd be chaos wouldn't there *[Laughter]* There has to be some sort of consultation between you. It's not that you've got to do what they tell you to do, but you should all let one another know what you intend doing so that it all fits together and harmonises and you're not pulling in different directions.

**Padmapani:** Sure, I understand all that sort of stuff. *[Laughter]* Don't get me wrong, I'm not naïve but *[Very Loud Laughter obscuring a few comments]* enthusiasm is going to be dampened by that sort of bureaucratic attitude.

**S:** Yes. Well obviously there is going to be always a tension between spontaneity and bureaucracy but maybe once again you have to strike this well worn Middle Way.

**Padmapani:** As far as I'm concerned I'm not going to do it for *(unclear)* *[Laughter]* *(unclear)* feel a bit more positive.

**S:** Good. *[pause]* Well obviously one mustn't, say, insist on everything going through the proper channels which just doesn't need to go through the proper channels. In that case it isn't the proper channel.

**Ananda:** I feel that something that Padmapani said has been a bit missed at some point. I feel that this point really opens another problem, the necessity as I understand it of what is the function of a committee or such like for doing things which tend to be more inspirational. Is that more a *(unclear)*. Is that what you were trying to get at?

**Padmapani:** Can you phrase it again?

**Ananda:** As I understood what you said, and if it wasn't I didn't get a chance to *(unclear)* but what is the place maybe of questioning the validity of having committees and such like in certain circumstances to deal with functions which are more inspirational and spontaneous.

**Padmapani:** Yes. It started when I started questioning what Siddhiratna said. I went on from there but it's basically when you express yourself and you feel that you're right in what you're saying, but you feel that there's a certain structure around you which somehow people's minds seem a little bit dull, yeah. There might be one person who's sort of like kingpin on the committee, yeah. Now that person can sort of dampen people's enthusiasm, and like after a while your personal enthusiasm, or the energy which is yours, your enthusiasm, gets dampened down to the general level of whatever body you're functioning through.

**Chintamani:** If it's really enthusiasm and inspiration you'll raise everybody else up to the level of your inspiration.

**Padmapani:** I don't quite agree with that. I think that's an ideal.

**Devamitra(?):** Do you feel that your initiative was cramped? That you weren't maybe allowed.....



**Padmapani:** Oh yeah. I tend to see things in terms of energy and being blocked and being sort of pushed down.

**Sagaramati:** But once it's out it's not blocked. You've expressed it.

**Marichi:** And it's also a matter of refinement of energy so that it suits that situation.

**Padmapani:** What do you mean by that, suits it?

**Marichi:** Well, you know, I could come smashing through this door, banging the door - that's energy, or you can come in in a relatively graceful manner and it doesn't disturb anybody. It's still energy.

**Padmapani:** But you can also come through the door in a way where your energy is blocked and you are shutting it quietly but you just haven't got the energy.

**Marichi:** Frightened to disturb anybody. Well it's a middle way, isn't it!

**Lokamitra:** Maybe I could invite anyone who has serious qualms in this area to the meeting we're having later today, as an observer, just to perhaps see what happens.

**S:** Make it clear what meeting this is.

**Lokamitra:** Yeah, this is a meeting of.....

**S:** Office bearers of various Centres. *[pause]* But there's also another point to be raised - this is going a little off the present subject but I'll make the point and then we'll go onto something else - I have made this point before but I'll make it again because very often people don't hear what I say. Which is that there can be, and in fact should be, many different kinds of Centres. What is a Centre basically? A Centre is a number of Order members getting together to do things in a certain way, and there can be many different kinds of Centre. Just as you've got, say, an active Centre like say 'Pundarika' or like 'Sukhavati' will be, with a planned programme of activities of various kinds, you can have other kinds of Centres like a meditation centre in the country, or the Centre, to use that term, which is a number of Order members putting out publications. That's also a Centre. So it's a question of creating a number of different centres with different Order members functioning in different ways together

in accordance with their respective ways of doing things and the particular things they want to get done. So it may well be that you, for instance, find the way of doing things at 'Pundarika' too bureaucratic for your taste. That's not a criticism of that particular set up because it's a number of Order members doing things in a particular way to produce a particular result, but that may not be your way. It doesn't mean that they're right and you're wrong or vice-versa, but if you feel that very strongly then you should get together a few other Order members who have got more your way of doing things, more your style *[Laughter]* and decide what you want to do in your, as it were, less bureaucratic or maybe completely spontaneous way. That possibility is open.

**Vangisa:** As regards activity and work anyway we're still (*unclear*) within certain limits doing more or less the same thing. That is what there is to be done. Perhaps two or three different kinds of things. For instance we're not necessarily all doing the particular things that we are good at.

**S:** Right, yes. Or that even in some cases that we really want to do. Sometimes we just look around and see the general situation and we can't do the thing that we would very very much like to do, but we accept that positively without regret as our contribution to the Movement and our own spiritual life. That we have an aware and responsible attitude. We do the thing for the time being at least that is not absolutely, in a sense, the thing of our choice. It's not that we sort of knuckle under with a groan, but we quite happily and positively accept that we are going to do this thing, because it's the thing that needs to be done. Even though it isn't the thing that chimes in completely with my mood and my feeling and my inclination and so on. That's the attitude of a relatively mature and responsible person.

Anyway I think we must pass on to the next topic, though this is closely linked with the one that we have just been discussing, i.e. qualifications for Mitraship. We are going to pass on now to qualifications for being a Kalyana Mitra, and maybe we can go back and link the two towards the end.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: Nothing's been said about General Mitra which I don't know anything about. Would someone just enlighten me?

**S:** Could someone? *[Laughter]* A General Mitra grounding?

**Padmaraja:** Well I was going to try and start (*unclear*) by a talk so leave it to then.

**S:** Right, so, qualifications for being a Kalyana Mitra. First of all hands up all the people who are Kalyana Mitras themselves or have been. *[pause]* That's about half. OK, put them down.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)* *[Laughter]*

\_\_\_\_(Man)\_\_\_\_: Oh now, now! *[Laughter obscuring comments]*

**S:** *(unclear)* Kalyana Mitras, that is to say who have Mitras under their own individual wings or have had but no longer have because the Mitras become Upasakas. So you are not now technically a Kalyana Mitra, though you have been. Are you in that category?

\_\_\_\_\_: I'm not. *[Laughter]*

**Dharmapala:** Does that relationship finish at ordination?

**S:** In that technical sense, yes, but the relationship goes on, it just continues, obviously. You don't sort of wipe the slate clean. You can't feel, as it were, that your ex-Kalyana Mitras are just the same as any other Order member, no. You feel for them in a very special way I should hope. But anyway what are the qualifications for Kalyana Mitraship? Maybe we should have a sort of little confessional session now. Perhaps it would be interesting to hear whether anybody felt that when they became a Kalyana Mitra they took on something that they didn't really understand, and if now they have a clearer understanding of it. What they have to say in the light of that clearer understanding.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: I don't think any excuse is *(unclear)*

**S:** *(unclear)*

**Vajradaka:** I think that Ashvajit and I were actually the first Kalyana Mitras, and it happened in almost a kind of an accidental way, sort of a leftover remnant from the original, or the previous, system where you were still thinking out the Kalyana Mitra system, and Ray, to name the name, was.... it was just suggested that if you wanted to ask for ordination that he should have two Order member friends who were quite willing to sponsor him, and then this kind of got changed into being Kalyana Mitra,

and it wasn't really very clear then, what the Kalyana Mitra was. So I think that in my case particularly it wasn't at all clear what it was. Though I think it's clearer now.

**S:** As far as I remember Ray Drew did have a Kalyana Mitra ceremony.

**Vajradaka:** Yes, he did.

**S:** And it was explained in that ceremony that the Kalyana Mitras were a link between the Mitra and the other Order members and the Order generally. This was the main point. That was explained.

**Ratnapani:** I was in fact one of your prehistoric, as it were, Mitras. *(Unclear)* told to get to know you.

**Vajradaka:** Right. *[Laughter]* I think the point was, or the point is, that now Mitras think about who is going to be their Kalyana Mitra quite carefully, but then I don't think so much emphasis was placed on them.

**S:** No, I'm quite sure it was, because I remember clearly saying in every case that you choose two Order members whom you feel a sort of affinity for, or you like, and ask them to be your Kalyana Mitras.

**Aryamitra:** I think the case there was that there wasn't so much contact with Order members as there is now for prospective Mitras.

**S:** Well there were fewer Order members, so your choice was rather limited.

**Aryamitra:** I felt in a way the Order members weren't so open anyway. So it wasn't that good communicating between Order members and Friends. I think myself it was just like not realising the responsibility, The Mitra system to me seemed like a bit of formality that one went through before ordination. This was when it first started. It's a bit like the pre-ordination classes. I found them very boring and I just went along because it's a sort of formality, and when the Mitra system started out I felt almost the same - that it was just a sort of formality. It hadn't sort of got underway. There wasn't any real relationship, there wasn't any real openness there. And it wasn't until later when I realised the responsibility involved and I think it's changed quite a lot since then.

**S:** What do you see as that responsibility now?

**Aryamitra:** I think in communication and the relationship with the Mitra. In contact. Responsibility. You've got somebody who looks towards you, if not up to you, that you can't sort of treat very lightly.

**Mangala:** I think especially, if one is doing other things as well, some part of me thought it was extremely (*unclear*) this suggestion that Kalyana Mitras should be.... that ideally they should be somebody of say five years' Order experience, and then that might be above me or at least (*unclear*) function. I think if that was the case it would be much better because your energy would be going in a very definite direction. I think if you may be doing other things as well perhaps with a few Mitras, well then your energies are divided and you can't quite (*unclear*) to perhaps follow things up like that, as much as you should, in terms of communication.

**Nagabodhi:** I think you really need to be used to being an Order member and in good contact with the Order, so that in a way you've got over the kind of self-conscious feeling of being an Order member *vis a vis* the Mitra so that you're free to have the kind of total response to the person that Dhammadinna was talking about earlier. So that you can, as it were, once again relate just as an individual. But I certainly found that very difficult because I think I was too close to ordination and still quite self conscious about being an Order member.

**S:** You couldn't, as it were, forget about it.

**Nagabodhi:** Sure, right.

**Ananda:** I very much go along with that, especially I really feel now I should not have not have become a Kalyana Mitra at all because until I felt able to completely resolve all what it entails to be an Order Member which I'm just discovering even now, and I think that for some people that takes a long time, and I feel the responsibility of being a Kalyana Mitra is really tremendous.

**S:** It does seem also, and this is just a sort of passing thought, that some Order members seem, at least, as it were temperamentally more suited to have that sort of contact with other people. They seem to get along with other people well or particularly well to begin with and be particularly open and particularly sympathetic

and encouraging and helpful. Some people seem to be just like that just by temperament, and others may be very worthy and very committed and very well-meaning but not able to relate quite in that sort of rather free and easy way which is often necessary in the case of the Mitra, especially if he's, say, rather young.

**Vangisa:** It seems to me that there is more than one kind of relationship on this (*unclear*), and I have noticed myself, there are different people who can establish a particular kind of relationship in which they function. (*Unclear*) one person and another and you notice this when you've got a lot of activity going on for instance. (*Unclear*) a mitra who may sometimes go to 'Sukhavati' and work, even coming over to West London and doing some plastering or something like that, this kind of thing, whereas somebody else wants the kind of... or needs the kind of relationship where they are going to just sit around and chat. I suppose there are different kinds of Kalyana Mitras and so different people are good at relating in these different places. One person is good at sitting down chatting, somebody else is good at joining in with the plastering or whatever it may be, so there is like a need for more than one kind of Kalyana Mitra relationship.

**S:** If the Mitra or proposed Mitra's got a very active mind and reads a lot of Buddhist philosophy, it might not be a very good idea in all cases to have an Order member who's just not interested in all those things as his Kalyana Mitra.

**Vangisa:** Exactly, because some people do want to talk about, they even maybe want to discuss the Dharma for a couple of hours from time to time. [*Laughter*]

**Dharmapala:** It goes back to what we started with, that some people who have that facility and like being, be they plasterers or (*unclear*) or whatever. They do that have that ability to relate (*unclear*)

**Vangisa:** It's a question of what is happening in the course of the relationship, whether it is an active kind of relationship in which both parties are doing something together or a different kind of relationship where they are just talking together. Because different people coming in contact with the Friends gravitate - I was told this - towards different kinds of Order members. They can communicate better with the person they can just sit down and talk about it with sometimes, or other people it may be better if people are getting on with the work like 'Sukhavati'.

**Gotami:** I was asked if I would be a Kalyana Mitra a little while ago and I felt, from what I understood were the qualifications for a Kalyana Mitra I was far too far away from London, where this person lives.

**S:** The first requisite is to keep in touch.

**Gotami:** Also I wasn't in sufficient close contact with a large number of Order members. Do you feel that this was a.....

**S:** Well, as I said the first requisite is to keep in touch, and if you're widely separated geographically that is just very very difficult.

**Chanda:** Some time ago, Bhante, we were discussing (*unclear*) Kalyana Mitra (*Unclear as the speaker is very far from the microphone and people are moving about and obscuring the speaker's voice*)

**S:** No. I think there are some Order members who can definitely handle more than one, practically speaking, especially if they're all under the same roof. I think it's sometimes the case.

**Uttara:** Does it come under a sort of natural friendship or... in the Kalyana Mitra system, just a natural friendship growing, or are you trying to create a ..... organise sort of friendships or do you feel that it just happens that way that such and such will just.....

**S:** Well personally I'm happy to let it happen. I think one of the points that has been made, and this is a very good point, in connection with the whole system, is that when the Kalyana Mitra ceremony is held and those three people come together in that little ceremony with me or with some other senior Order member, it should be a sort of, if you like, ritualisation, of something that has already happened. That they already know one another, they already are on friendly terms, they already have a working relationship, they've developed that already through retreats and classes, social contact, and the Kalyana Mitra ceremony just, as it were, formalises that.

**Dhammadinna:** I think that's very important. I think in the early days that wasn't the case or the situation and (*unclear*) and I personally experienced (*unclear*) the question of distance was.....

**Aryamitra:** There was a formality in the early stages and now there is more communication with Order members and Friends, that doesn't happen.

**Lokamitra:** This is one of the advantages I think of having Mitras first of all not having Kalyana Mitras because it does enable them to have them.

**S:** This is true.

**Lokamitra:** And gradually get to know people in a relaxed situation, not feeling they have to have those Kalyana Mitras before they can have that sort of.....

**S:** I remember one Friend, one particular woman, felt quite desperate that she couldn't get Kalyana Mitras because she wanted to go on Mitra retreats, and she was sort of desperately hunting around for two Order members to be her Kalyana Mitras, and clearly that wasn't very good.

\_\_\_\_\_: Are there cases where someone ceases to be a Kalyana Mitra, if you like... um.... [*pause*]

**Aryamitra:** I think there could be even just practical reasons like an Order member's away or is on retreat or takes up some kind of occupation or some kind of job which involves him a lot.

**S:** Obviously when he makes any such change he should bear in mind that he does have Mitras with whom he is responsible for keeping in touch.

**Aryamitra:** That he already has.

\_\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_: Take them with him.

**S:** Yes, if that's possible, why not. Yes, that's the best. Conceivably some Order members can travel around with a little party of Mitras. [*Laughter*] Go on retreat together, go on holiday together, go and work together. That's best in a way. Really get to know one another. I've even heard it rumoured that Kalyana Mitras and Mitras are occasionally seen down in the pub together. [*Laughter*] But they're together. [*Laughter*]

**Vimalamitra:** My experience as a Mitra at the beginning, I was living at number five at the time and I had quite a lot of contact with Order members before, and I felt quite in communication. I felt after the Kalyana Mitra ceremony that in a way between myself and the two Kalyana Mitras there was a feeling of slight separation. The communication had machinery, a kind of new machinery kind of thing, which made direct communication a bit more difficult.

**S:** This is probably because you didn't know them well enough already to begin with.

**Vimalamitra:** Um, I didn't think so actually.

**Dhammadinna:** If you were an early Mitra it may just have been like sometimes when you're first an Order member, like Nagabodhi was saying he likened it to that, and suddenly you're a Kalyana Mitra.

**Vimalamitra:** Yes, I think that was it. I think it was new and it's a bit kind of.....

**S:** Well as I said you didn't know them, yeah.

**Ratnapani:** I remember the atmosphere around the beginnings of the Kalyana Mitras was possibly Vimalamitra's Kalyana Mitras were wondering what on earth they should do with him! *[Laughter]* They were just friends and then suddenly they had to do something with him or to him or for him *[Laughter]* and they didn't know what it was!

**S:** But they were clearly told, every one of them, to keep in touch.

**Ratnapani:** Oh, yes the instructions seemed to be clear but the muddled headedness was quite noticeable.

**Lokamitra:** There is the other side of it, that the Mitra suddenly realises they've taken on something else, as it were. It's not just one-sided.

**S:** We are going to stop for lunch in a few minutes by the way.

**Gotami:** I feel quite unhappy about the fact that an Order member has Mitras but the Mitras are their only contact with anything to do with the Friends or the Order. If the

Kalyana Mitra doesn't bring them to classes or they don't go to Order meetings and yet they are still Kalyana Mitras. In a way the Mitras are acting as the encourager of the Kalyana Mitra. That doesn't seem quite right (*unclear*) Kalyana Mitras are very out of contact (*unclear*).

**S:** When this does happen and it certainly has happened in at least one case that I know of then the relationship must be terminated as soon as it conveniently can. Ideally by the Mitra becoming ordained, if he or she is ready.

**Dhammadinna:** What about this question of how long after you've been ordained. When do you become a Kalyana Mitra?

**S:** I'd like the level to be pushed up all the time. I must say in the light of experience I think there aren't very many Order members that I now feel completely happy about being Kalyana Mitras. I don't want to be invidious, I don't want to have to say well you and you and you and you are not really fit to be Kalyana Mitras or vice versa. That would perhaps be a bit unfortunate, but there are certainly a few that I've seen from experience are eminently suited to be Kalyana Mitras, and some others unfortunately have not done as well as I had hoped. So I think each individual chapter of the Order has to look at every suggestion that such and such person should become a Mitra with such and such persons, Order members, as Kalyana Mitras, should look at every such proposal with great care.

**Dhammadinna:** So those things should come up in Chapter meetings.

**S:** Yes, yes. I think the Chapters can still look after these things. I think it's pretty evident to most Order members who has done well as a Kalyana Mitra and who hasn't, and who seems in a few cases to have a natural gift for that sort of thing.

**Dharmapala:** Would it be useful in addition to that for this prospective Kalyana Mitra to meet with other suitable Kalyana Mitras and have discussions with them on top of the local Chapter discussing?

**S:** I think this might be coming up this afternoon in connection with the functioning of the Kalyana Mitra system. Is lunch actually ready? Could we check? If it is I think we should break up. If it isn't we can tell them that we shall be ready when they are ready.

**Vessantara:** When you said that we should be, in a sense, upgrading all the time, would you like to give some kind of general guideline?

**S:** Just upgrading. More and more and more of whatever it is you wanted.

**Aryamitra:** I read the other day - I forget where - that it's not until after ten years.

**S:** I said five years preferably.

**Aryamitra:** Maybe some scripture somewhere.

**S:** Well that's a quite different context. That's within the bhikkhu context. You can't take pupils until you've been a bhikkhu for ten years, but in some cases that is relaxed to five. Never less than five.

\_\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_\_\_: Ten minutes.

**S:** Ten more minutes.

**Siddhiratna:** Because - something that I've found living with somebody who's just become a Mitra - that we have discussions together and I sometimes realise that it's almost performing the function of the Kalyana Mitra, being aware of what that - or in fact I'm not being aware of what that entails - but I often feel pretty cautionary in conversation which in some cases I think almost has a negative effect, as though I'm being secretive about something. I explained to them what the whole system was as far as I knew, sort of thing.

**S:** Well one can always add the rider, "well this is it as far as I've understood it. If you want to be really sure you can ask so and so".

**Siddhiratna:** Yeah, well that's what I did in the end.

**Lokamitra:** I think one does find that living and working with Mitras, they may not be one's own Mitras as it were, but one will form this sort of relationship inevitably. I think it's quite good as well in some cases.

**Aryamitra:** What do you mean? What sort of relationship.

**Lokamitra:** A relationship of Mitra and Kalyana Mitra. You will work in that way.

**S:** And it can be formalised when everyone feels it's ready to be formalised. There's also another point that perhaps I should mention of a more general interest. Let me sort of get into it by way of a sort of illustration from the East. If you go to say a Buddhist monastery in the East and if you catch hold of a young monk there and ask him, "what rules are you observing, what *vinaya* rules are observed in this monastery?", very often he can't tell you. He doesn't know what rules are being observed. Now why is this?

**Gotami:** Because he's learnt from someone else in an experiential way.

**S:** Right, exactly, yes. He hasn't sort of sat down before anybody in the monastery, learned a set of rules and then tried to apply them to the monastery, no. He's just been admitted there, he just does what everybody else does. So I think with us also, as we get especially more communities, this will increasingly happen. That things, people will get involved in things and be doing things in a certain way, but not in a very self-conscious way, and you may be involved in the situation with them, but you may have difficulty in explaining it theoretically and maybe you couldn't write it all out in some satisfactory form, but you are in the midst of it and actively living it.

**Ratnapani:** I found this already being asked by outsiders about the movement and particularly about communities - well are you allowed to do this and are you allowed to do that? - and the question doesn't apply. It's just that one lives in this lifestyle which is trying to be mutually helpful.

**S:** A lot of people are quite interested in rules and they think you ought to have a set of rules, and the first thing they think of doing sometimes, before they've even got any people together, is to draw up a list of rules for them to observe! Some people imagine the Buddha doing that, sitting down under the Bodhi tree after his Enlightenment drawing up a list of two hundred and fifty seven rules [*Laughter*] for his bhikkhus to observe, but it just didn't happen like that at all. Two hundred and fifty seven for the bhikkhus - I should make it quite clear - and two hundred and fifty for the bhikkhunis, that is to say the nuns. They have a few extra ones, like not eating garlic. [*Laughter*] There's a long story attached to that and I'm not going to go into it. [*Laughter*] [*pause*]

All right then, perhaps we'd better allow the session to fade away into lunch time.

**[Break]**

**S:** Now first of all the report of the Convenor of Men Mitras and then reports of the acting Convenor of Women Mitras. After that we will consider the functioning of the Kalyana Mitra system.

So first of all Padmaraja's report as Convenor of Men Mitras.

**Padmaraja:** I'd just like to draw your attention to a mistake on this here. Under the Christchurch Mitras it's got Richard Hamilton being a General Mitra and Dexter Muir as being a General Mitra, whereas in fact they both have Kalyana Mitras.

**Vimalamitra:** Who are their Kalyana Mitras? Do you know off hand?

**Padmaraja:** I've got the information but don't know off hand.

#### *The Functioning of the Kalyana Mitra System*

*In all there are a total of seventy seven Mitras throughout the world. Forty seven of these are Mitras proper, so to speak, twenty nine General Mitras and one Honorary Mitra. Since the last Convention seven Mitras have been ordained. Now if we look at these figures a little more closely we see that there are a total of forty four men Mitras - that's twenty four with Kalyana Mitras and eighteen General and one Honorary. There are a total of thirty two women Mitras - twenty two with Kalyana Mitras and eleven General.*

**Aryamitra:** So these are corrections are they?

**Padmaraja:** Yeah.

**Marichi:** The corrected figure comes up

**Padmaraja:** Yeah the corrected figures (*unclear*) twenty six men with Kalyana Mitras and sixteen General. A corrected list will be going out in 'Shabda'.

\_\_\_\_\_ : (*unclear*)

**Padmaraja:**

*On the last Convention we examined in some detail the principles underlying the Mitra system. In this report we should be looking at the working out of practical expression of those principles in everyday terms. We should be seeing the functioning of the Kalyana Mitra system. In my last report I spoke of how the Mitra system was introduced to 'replace', single inverted commas, personal contact with Bhante. I spoke of the second generation of Mitras, the children of the system proper, who, though having had little personal contact with Bhante, were almost ready, if not ready, for ordination. Since that time five of these Mitras have been ordained - Mahavira, Anoma, Aloka, Kula and Punya - and I believe there will be two, possibly three, ordinations quite soon. In short the Mitra system is starting to work.*

*In England the Mitra system is in operation in four main areas - North London, 'Sukhavati', Surrey and Brighton. In New Zealand in two areas - Christchurch and Auckland, and its application varies according to the nature and needs of each of those different situations. So we'll look at each of these areas one at a time.*

*First of all North London. Theoretically there are twenty eight Mitras associated with 'Pundarika', the North London Centre. North London offers a unique situation for Mitras. Most Mitras and Order members live in small communities within the vicinity of the Centre, within the immediate vicinity of the Centre. Last session a 'Pundarika' Council was formed comprised of Mitras and Order members from the local area. The Council is responsible for the running of 'Pundarika'. Generally speaking this kind of situation with Mitras living and working alongside committed Order members has proven to be the most effective for a genuine sense of involvement and commitment for Mitras. Now the study groups in North London. Since the first session of 1976 all the Mitra study groups in North London have been single sex - two women's both led by Dhammadinna, assisted in one by Marichi, and one men's led by Hridaya assisted by myself. The groups meet on a weekly basis during*

*session time. Dhammadinna will be giving a report on the women's groups and women's activities in general and I will say a little about the men's group. Last session the men's group studied the Five Precepts within the context of 'Morality, Meditation and Wisdom', using 'Mitrata', various extracts from seminars and Chintamani's article, "Leaving Mother; an initiation into Manhood" as a basis for study. I have experienced this study group as the most problem-free, enthusiastic and rewarding that I have ever attended. As far as I can see the group's success is due to five main factors:*

*One, it has been single sex.*

*Two, the small size of the group - eight people.*

*Three, the immediacy and relevance of the study material, especially the recent seminar extracts.*

*Four, the high level of commitment of those Mitras attending, and*

*Five, Hridaya's inspiring leadership of the group.*

*I would say that most of the Mitras attending the group are pretty close to ordination. Next session the group will be led by Hridaya assisted by Sagaramati. I would like to extend my thanks to Dhammadinna, Marichi, Lokamitra, Hridaya, and Suvratta for all their efforts in working with the Mitra study groups over the past few sessions.*

*Mitra Nights. Once a month Order members and Mitras in the North London area come together at 'Pundarika', meet socially, to enjoy a meal, to meditate, perform puja and sometimes listen to a talk given by an Order member. So far talks have been given by Vajrabodhi and Lokamitra. Bhante has attended two of these occasions.*

*'At home'. 'Pundarika' and 'Sukhavati' have recently been at home to Mitras and Friends from Brighton.*

*Ordinations. Since the last Convention, four Mitras from North London have been ordained.*

*Now we look at 'Sukhavati'. There are eleven Order members and eight Mitras in residence at 'Sukhavati'. With the exception of three people, 'Sukhavati' is comprised entirely of Order members and Mitras.*

*Study Groups. There are four study groups meeting on a weekly basis. Two studying 'the Udana', one 'Dhyana for Beginners' and one 'The Three Jewels'. These are open to Mitras and Friends. Whereas there are no special facilities for such, one might say that 'Sukhavati' is one big facility for Mitras.*

*Ordinations. Since the last Convention two Mitras from 'Sukhavati' have been ordained.*

*Surrey. There are five Mitras associated with the Surrey Centre, one of whom is a resident there and is involved in the running of the print shop. There are no special facilities there for Mitras. One obstacle to the growth of the Mitra system there seems to be the lack of any facility for a creative involvement in the running of the Centre. There are four Order members in residence at the Centre. Nagabodhi is leading a weekly Dharma study group which comprises Mitras and Friends.*

*Brighton. There are twelve Mitras and only two Order members associated with the Brighton branch. The Brighton Mitras would certainly benefit from more contact with Order members and Mitras from other areas. The Mitras in Brighton are quite unlike the Mitras at 'Sukhavati' or 'Pundarika' inasmuch as many of them are married and involved with professions and responsibilities in the world, so to speak.*

*Study groups. There is a weekly Mitra study group led by Vessantara which uses 'Mitrata' for the basis of its study. I try to attend this once every two weeks.*

*Brighton Council. Mitras are encouraged to play an active part in the running of the Council and the Windhorse Bookshop.*

*Mitra Day. Brighton has recently produced a programme of monthly Mitra Days. Mitras and Order members from all other Centres will be*



*encouraged to attend. Dhammadinna will be spending a week in Brighton immediately following the Convention to establish further contact with women Mitras there. [pause]*

*Now for New Zealand. In New Zealand the Mitra system is in operation in two main areas - Christchurch and Auckland. We'll look at Christchurch first of all. There are seven Mitras and three Order members associated with the Christchurch Centre. One of the Mitras, Richard Hamilton, is overseas at the moment. According to my last letter, from Megha, Mitra and Kalyana Mitra meetings have been discontinued due to the temporary absence of a couple of Order members. These meetings usually consisted of meditation, stupa visualisation, puja and occasional study. While there are no special facilities for Mitras at the moment, Mitras are encouraged to play an active part in the running of classes. As I said my contact with Christchurch is Megha.*

*Auckland. There are twelve Mitras associated with the Auckland Centre.*

*Monthly Order and Mitra Days. In the morning the Mitras and Order members have separate meetings and meditations. The Mitra Meeting.....*

#### **[End of Side One Side Two]**

*..... also Robin Stephens, who are considered to be senior Mitras. Mitras and Order members get together for lunch and then study 'Mitrata' in the afternoon. Order members and Mitras think very highly of 'Mitrata', both for group and individual study. On the New Year's retreat the seminar transcript on openness and on Buddha Nature were used as a supplement to their study of 'the Udana'. To give a more clear picture of Auckland and the Mitra system in New Zealand I'd like to read you an extract from his letter sent to me by Purna, my contact there.*

*"Now for some general comments on Mitras and the Mitra system in Auckland. Jeff Lynne, Rosemary Sharples, Dennis Iverston, Jim Sharples, Robin Stephens and Tom Palmer are all still very much involved with the Centre and attending classes regularly. Jim and Dennis are particularly worthy of mention. I feel the sense of commitment they have shown in the last year since their ceremonies. Jim has handled our advertising and much of the*

*artwork for our last journal, and at the moment is virtually single-handedly putting together and getting printed our latest publication. Dennis of course is living at the Centre and has been very much involved with most of our classes, taking on quite a strong supportive role for the Order member leading. Stephanie McKey is now no longer living in Auckland and contact with her Kalyana Mitras, even by the mail has been very poor. Debbie Knapp had not attended any FWBO activities since Bhante left, but contact has been maintained with her Kalyana Mitras. Keith Addams has remained in regular contact with his Kalyana Mitras but rarely attends FWBO activities. He feels his primary commitment lies with his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati. I think he is a Hindu Tantric teacher whose ashram he has spent some time in in India. He seems to feel little or no commitment to Buddhism as his path. Jane Johnson has been very involved with bringing up a baby and has attended very few activities since Bhante left but keep in regular contact with Padmashri and obviously with her husband Padmasiddhi. [Laughter] Elizabeth Starsky has very little contact with the Centre or FWBO activities but her Kalyana Mitras have maintained contact with her. She has been quite busy with examinations for different periods, but I personally feel she has been avoiding contact with FWBO somehow, particularly since one of her Kalyana Mitras, formerly Mudita, resigned as an Order member. So you can see that our Mitras have turned out to be a rather mixed bunch.*

*One difficulty with many Mitras is that I feel they got onto the Mitra bandwagon in the fervour of the few months while Bhante was here, and interest waned almost as quickly once he had left. As an Order we lacked any experience with the Mitra system and tended to recommend for Mitra ceremonies almost anyone who showed enough interest. I think we are learning from our mistakes and will not feel too shy in future about turning a first request down or insisting that potential*

*Mitras have been involved with the Centre for quite a long period. Our three latest Mitras have all been involved with either the Auckland or Christchurch Centres for about a year and have shown evidence of their willingness and commitment during that time."*

So that's a look at the main Centres where the Mitra system is in operation.

**S:** There is an individual Mitra in Helsinki. You've not mentioned him.

**Padmaraja:** No I haven't. There is one Mitra in Helsinki. *[Laughter]*

**S:** I do know he was on retreat with Buddhadasa at the last retreat that they had. So he's still in circulation.

**Padmaraja:**

*Next I would like to remind the Order of some important points arising out of the Mitra system since the last Convention.*

*Acting Convenor for Women Mitras. Since the first session of 1976 Dhammadinna has been fulfilling this function.*

*General Mitras. On the last Convention the problem was raised of those Friends who wished to become Mitras but had been unable to do so because of a lack of suitable Kalyana Mitras. An amendment has been made to the system whereby it is possible for such Friends to become what is termed 'General Mitras'. General Mitras are afforded full Mitra facilities i.e. retreats and study groups. To quote Bhante, "This not only enables them to participate in a group with a more advanced level of commitment but also brings them into contact with potential Kalyana Mitras". One of the main advantages of this new extension of the system is that proper relationships between General Mitras and potential Kalyana Mitras will have the time and space in which to grow naturally, so that when the Mitra ceremony takes place, it will be the expression of an already existing friendship and reinforce it and strengthen it.*

*Mitra Retreats. It was decided that from the beginning of this year all Mitra retreats would be single sex. So far there have been two retreats this year. Dhammadinna led the women's retreat which lasted for seven days, and I led the men's retreat which lasted for nine days. Up until now 'Pundarika' has been in charge of the organising of Mitra retreats but in the future other Centres and branches where the system is in operation will be encouraged to do more in this area. Brighton have finally agreed to organise a men's retreat this summer.*

*Mitra Days. Since the beginning of the year the monthly Mitra Days at 'Pundarika' and 'Aryatara' have been replaced by a series of weekend retreats. These enable all Mitras to attend at least one retreat per session. Last session four such retreats were held, two men's and two women's. Hridaya and Vessantara led the two men's and Dhammadinna led both the women's.*

*Local Convenors. It has been agreed that each Centre or branch where the Mitra system is operating should have a local Mitra Convenor who will;*

- 1. Be responsible for looking after Mitras affairs within that community, and*
- 2. Keep me in touch with the local situation.*

*Hridaya has been acting as the local Convenor at 'Sukhavati', Dhammadinna and myself at 'Pundarika', Vessantara for Brighton and nobody seems to be fulfilling that function at 'Aryatara'. Next session I would like very much for the Mitra Convenors to meet more regularly and to form a basis for a Mitra Council.*

*It was agreed that Kalyana Mitras should meet once a month within the context of an Order Meeting to discuss their various Mitra/Kalyana Mitra relationships. I regret that this was not possible last session at all.*

*Finally, 'Mitrata'. 'Mitrata' will now become available to the general public, therefore 'Mitrata' is now a Friends' publication and no longer an Order publication. Under my editorship eight issues were produced last year. We intend to produce six issues this year. Publication dates have not as yet been fixed. I will continue as the editor of 'Mitrata'.*

*'Mitrata' will continue with its policy of publishing the edited transcripts of Bhante's lectures as well as various seminar extracts. We intend to publish the first eleven issues of 'Mitrata' in book form dealing with the theme of Morality, Meditation and Wisdom, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. This work will provide a training manual in basic Buddhism.*

**S:** I think perhaps we could well receive Dhammadinna's report and then discuss them together. Before that though, just one in a way minor point, it's only just a matter of elocution, as it were. This 'it has been decided'. I would prefer that we avoided that. If you took the decision say 'I decided', as Mitra Convenor, or if it was several of you just say who decided. Otherwise sometimes people get the impression of some faceless anonymous organisation turning out the decisions, you see. Do you see what I mean? In a sense it's a very small point but I think it is nonetheless quite important. If you yourself decided then say that - 'I decided'. Then people know exactly who to quarrel with. I'm sure you did decide actually.

**Lokamitra:** What issue was that about?

**S:** It was decided to have single sex retreats.

**Padmaraja:** We decided this at an Order Weekend.

**S:** Well in that case it should be put. Such and such Order Meeting decided. You needn't have put all that in the report and the date of the meeting and all that, but if it's written out or published, well that full information should be given. Where and when the decision was taken. Not simply 'it has been decided'. So that where the responsibility rests can be quite clearly seen if anybody wants to disagree or take up with them. Now Dhammadinna.

**Dhammadinna:** Khema can you take notes. (*Unclear*) All right I've been acting Convenor or Women Mitras since the beginning of this year. There is some background to that which goes back to.....

**S:** Perhaps you should speak up please, yes.

**Dhammadinna:** There is some background to that which goes back to the Autumn which is included in a letter from Bhante to me which I would like to read extracts from. This is from October 23<sup>rd</sup> 1975, from Castle Acre,

*"As you probably know in the course of my recent stay in London I talked with a number of women Friends and Mitras, particularly with those such and such - I won't mention any names - particularly with those who had asked for ordination. On the whole I was very surprised and disappointed. While most of them were obviously extremely devoted to the Movement and were working for it in a truly admirable fashion, I could see little or no sign of individual spiritual commitment to the ideal of Enlightenment" - that phrase is underlined. "So far as some were concerned indeed I felt that they could just as well be working with the same sincerity and devotion for some cultural organisation or even a business firm. Thinking things over back here in Norfolk, I have come to the conclusion that quite a lot more spiritual work is needed on and with the women Friends and Mitras - not that I really like though having to distinguish them in this way from the rest of the Movement - before any of them will be in a position to make the effective spiritual commitment which alone can give meaning and value to ordination. It occurs to me that it would be a good idea for you to devote less of your time to administrative work and more to the teaching and training of Friends, Mitras and Order members, particularly the women, by way of study groups and retreats etc. Indeed it seems to me that a special effort is needed to help the women in the Movement to develop psychologically and spiritually. At the moment with few exceptions they do not seem to be doing very well. I therefore cannot help feeling that perhaps you should devote yourself to intensive Dharma work among the women in the Movement. Such work could of course be done by some of the men Order members but I see more and more clearly how important and how difficult it is for women to become psychologically independent and not to depend upon women as men. Unless they are able to do this there can obviously be no question of improving themselves spiritually."*

That's a bit of background, and then later in the letter Bhante suggests that it would be a good idea if I became Convenor of Mitras for women, acting Convenor of women Mitras. So that's the background.

Mainly I'm concerned with women living in London and Brighton. I have had no contact with women Mitras in New Zealand as yet. I hope to make some contact there later. But mainly people with whom I can have personal contact. There are sixteen women Mitras in London, five in Brighton. Before I actually became acting Convenor of Women Mitras I was leading a women's Mitra study group based on '*Mitrata*'. Since Christmas I have led two women's Mitra study groups; a new study group of newer Mitras based on '*Mitrata*', going back over the '*Mitrata*' study, and the second study group which was with people who had already been in study groups for some time. What we did this time was I asked them to prepare and give talks to the group. It was partially successful and partially not successful, but those who did it did it very well and those who didn't didn't do it at all; and then also in that session we studied sections from '*Mitrata*' which were taken from seminars. There were two women's Mitra weekend retreats. One on which Anoma was ordained and one in Court Lodge. There has been one women's long Mitra retreat. One was at Easter. The women's retreat at Christmas consisted mainly of women Mitras but we had two or three people who weren't. Some of them have since become Mitras so I think I can include that. So those are the sort of activities that have been done so far, and also more personal contact with the women individually. Apart from the women in London, some of these are more or less out of contact or very out of contact. Basically (*unclear*) twelve people and eight of those women are in one of the three women's communities. Most of them are concerned in some way with the Archway Centre.

I feel in the past few months that those are the activities I've got. Also if we take into account Bhante's letter there is a lot more that needs to be done. In a way I feel I've only really started, hardly started, and it's very early days. In a way I have to really think about it a lot to find out what needs to be given to the situation, what sort of direction it needs and I'm only really just beginning to see that. I feel that the situation in London around '*Pundarika*' with the women has become really very stagnant and quite groupy, and that something really has to be done about that, which I tried to do on the previous retreat we've just had. It was quite an intensive retreat in terms of there was a lot of meditation and a lot of silence. It was mainly meditation, yoga, puja with two hours study a day on the *Bodhicaryavatara* with help from the transcript. I also had good strong backing from Anoma and Khema. It was, I think, a successful retreat in that it did show me certain things. I wanted to break up the kind of groupy feeling where people depend on one another and lean on one another for sort of emotional help by providing a lot of attention with a lot of silence, and I think that worked. I feel, although it's not been conducted in London very long that the situation

amongst the women who are Mitras has changed, in some cases quite dramatically. Some people have felt since that retreat that they need to move back away from the Movement because I think they've begun to see what Mitraship involves and that it does involve a (*unclear*). What I feel is that some of the more problem orientated - what I call 'old lags' - people have begun to move away and that actually makes the situation quite a bit different. One can see in a situation like that how some negative people can make the whole situation a bit negative and when those people move away from that situation you see that there is actually quite a lot of positivity there, and I feel with the newer Mitras in London, younger Mitras, that there is potential (*unclear*). There are also two Mitras in the London centre who are seriously being considered for ordination.

My plans for next session at the moment in terms of activities is again two study groups, though possibly one because I haven't yet been sure of who is going to be in London - there are a lot of people moving away, some to new situations within the Friends - and we will continue studying the *Bodhicaryavatara* because we did find that very inspiring and very good on the retreat. There will also be women's Mitra weekends and I'm considering the possibility of having day seminars with more intensive study. I would just like to say that there are one or two difficulties with the women Mitras and their readiness for ordination as far as (*unclear*). I think it is quite a long term thing. I have felt sometimes in the past few months that having put in quite a lot of thought and energy I should be able to produce ten people ready for ordination but it's not really like that. I did feel a bit encouraged by what Bhante actually said to Manjuvajra yesterday about Cornwall, that sometimes you put energy into a situation and there seems to be no apparent return, and you just have to keep going, and I think that's what I have to do in this situation.

**S:** You might find you have ten ready all at once and take you by surprise!

**Dhammadinna:** [*Laughs*] Maybe. But I feel that the sort of ground has been cleared. Really it's during this last retreat and that the people who are sort of left around I can work with them in a more positive way. One of the things that I do feel that also came out of the retreat was that there is a need for say a women's Order Convenor to be in London to provide the kind of feel in the right direction and so on, and this is going to happen. Anoma and I definitely are going to live together, and I think that in itself will do quite a bit. Exactly what it's impossible to say, but there isn't that focus for the women as there is for men. A lot of men Order members, a lot are living and working

together with something very positive to orientate towards. With women Order members there are very few and we're much more scattered. I think that is in a way the first step and then from there other things will emerge and we'll understand a bit more what they'll be. I feel with regard to taking on new women Mitras.... we talked this morning as though anyone who wants to be a Mitra that was fine, but I actually feel I would like to know that person quite well. I'd like to be quite sure, because I feel the whole thing can otherwise be just pulled down and it's definitely in the other direction at the moment. I do feel it's probably going to be necessary to provide some working situations, some more different working situations for women Mitras but as yet I'm not sure what that is. There is a possibility of a typesetting business in London. Someone who's just asked to be a Mitra I discovered is a qualified typesetter so that may help! There seem to be more things in that area necessary but (*unclear*). I don't really know what. So mainly I feel things are moving but moving slowly and that's the way it's going to be for some time. [*Long Pause*]

In fact I'd like to make another point and that is - I don't know if this has been discussed on the Convention, it's been discussed at Order Meetings - I think it's better that the women Mitras have just women Kalyana Mitras. Many of these have got mixed - one male one female.

**S:** This is something I've been thinking about.

**Dhammadinna:** Yes, I think it's just not good. It's probably right in a different situation but as elsewhere I think this is very important. It may mean that many women Mitras have to be General Mitras because there are only actually three female Kalyana Mitras in London, but I think that's better than having men and women Kalyana Mitras. It doesn't seem to work. [*pause*]

**S:** Any other points?

**Dhammadinna:** No.

**S:** So those are the two reports, so perhaps first we could take just any query or clarify anything that has been said or if they need to provide any further information on any point.

**Manjuvajra:** There's one very quick and easy point. When you were talking about General Mitras, I got the impression that a General Mitra was sort of like a waiting category, and that one then went on from there to be a sort of Mitra. Was that right or can one go from being a sort of General Mitra.... do people only ask for ordination from being a General Mitra (*unclear due to lots of moving of chairs*).

**Padmaraja:** The possibility could be there for somebody not even a Mitra - a Friend being ordained - so why not a General Mitra.

**Manjuvajra:** From what you were saying I got the impression that if there weren't Kalyana Mitras around then someone was made a General Mitra, so that they would then be able to look around for Kalyana Mitras.

**Padmaraja:** The probability becomes much more of a possibility for them to find Kalyana Mitras if they are General Mitras, inasmuch as if they attend Mitra activities and they enjoy a much closer relationship to the Order.

**S:** And if it so happens that they become more and more ready for ordination, still without having found Kalyana Mitras they can still be ordained without having had Kalyana Mitras. I think this has happened, hasn't it, just once recently? Wasn't somebody ordained who hadn't had Kalyana Mitras.

**Voices:** (*murmuring - unclear*)

**Padmaraja:** Alaya was an honorary Mitra, inasmuch as he knew Bhante.

**Ananda:** Can I just clarify that there's a possibility that someone could become ordained without first being a Mitra. Is that so? I didn't think that was the case.

**S:** Well I think this raises an important point. We make these structures which apply to most people and in most cases but I hope I've already made it clear that I reserve my own right to disrupt the structure at any time I please! [*Laughter*] So we mustn't consider it an absolutely rigid thing through which everybody has to be processed. I might meet somebody who's not in contact with the Friends and all that kind of thing and doesn't know the Mitra system or have any Kalyana Mitras, and I might through my own personal contact feel that they are ready and then ordain them without having gone through any part of the system at all. So I think though we have this sort of

system we must be quite flexible and recognise that for one reason or another a few people may not go through the system, not completely, or even at all, and be quite ready to accept that where that seems right.

**Ratnapani:** The system, after all, is to help those who are not ready for ordination. It's not to process those who are (**S:** Right) and do anything (*unclear*).

**Subhuti:** I feel that we've still not got the emphasis right with the General Mitras and the Mitras with Kalyana Mitras. I think we should give the General Mitra status much more of an independent existence as it were. For instance when you describe it, you often say it's for those who can't find Kalyana Mitras. I think we should much more see it as being something that people become in its own right.

**S:** Then that means another stage.

**Subhuti:** Effectively yes.

**S:** If that is required well.....

**Subhuti:** I don't think we should even think of it like that. I don't think it's necessarily a stage. Perhaps quite a lot of people will never actually be able to get Kalyana Mitras.

**S:** Well it's a stage in the sense it's potentially a stage.

\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_: It's not a level that's necessarily lesser than a level where you have got a Kalyana Mitra.

**S:** Not necessarily. If you've got Kalyana Mitras you've just got more specific facilities.

**Subhuti:** Right.

\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_: Well you've got to choose a different path.

**Lokamitra:** So there are Mitras and some of them happen to have Kalyana Mitras.

**S:** Right. This also raises the question of Honorary Mitra. I think originally my intention was not to distinguish Honorary Mitras from General Mitras. This has happened but it doesn't really matter because there's only one of them. I think we should just leave it (*unclear*) much what exactly it means.

**Ratnapani:** Can I just come in on what Lokamitra just said. That rather than there being two types of Mitras, there are Mitras. Some have got Kalyana Mitras, some haven't. So that's where I feel it to be at the moment.

**S:** On the other hand we don't want to underestimate the importance and significance of having Kalyana Mitras. That is a very great additional facility.

**Subhuti:** But I think the main thing is we want to stop this sort of mechanicalism that was there at the beginning. I think there is still a danger of that, that people feel that they're not getting the real thing. They're only surrogate, and they sort of scramble around to try and find an Order member who will accept them.

**Aryamitra:** They still do.

**Subhuti:** This still happens to some extent. I don't think nearly to the same extent. Somebody asked at '*Sukhavati*' recently, and he didn't even really seem to know about the Kalyana Mitra system. He just wanted to be a Mitra.

**S:** Well it's as though the Kalyana Mitra system has become a Mitra system.

**Subhuti:** Sorry I missed that one. [*Laughter*]

**S:** It's as though the Kalyana Mitra system has become a Mitra system.

**Subhuti:** Ah, right, yes. [*Laughter*]

**Manjuvajra:** Bhante, will the status of General Mitra be available for people in a centre such as Cornwall where there aren't any Kalyana Mitras? Am I right in assuming that?

**Marichi:** I'd have thought you would still need Kalyana Mitras who are in relation to those Mitras.

**S:** You need Order members.

**Marichi:** Yes, Order members basically.

**Ananda:** Well that's not (*unclear*) it isn't.

**Manjuvajra:** What I'm saying definitely is could people in Cornwall become General Mitras? Would that be acceptable?

**Vajradaka:** Why not?

**Lokamitra:** (*unclear*) I don't think they could in a way really continue..... I think the Mitra system does need Kalyana Mitras.....

**S:** Well you mean Order members or potential Order members.

**Ratnapani:** I imagine that the General Mitra could only exist where there's the potentiality for being a Mitra with.....

**S:** Well you can have a Mitra with Kalyana Mitras if you have two Order members as Kalyana Mitras, but it seems you can have a General Mitra only when you've got a complete Chapter of the Order.

**Manjuvajra:** How many does that need?

**S:** And then the General Mitra is the General Mitra of that whole group of Order members, that whole Chapter of the Order.

**Aryamitra:** But they could they be Mitras, say, in Cornwall knowing that they're not going to get Kalyana Mitras unless they meet Order members up in London, unless they move in fact.

**Lokamitra:** In a way we have to be more careful here I think because when we take Mitras without Kalyana Mitras they're the responsibility of no one in particular so we have to be even more careful and therefore in a way it's better to perhaps have done that where there is a (*unclear*) .....

**Aryamitra:** I was thinking two things. One thing that they would be the responsibility of the Centre where they are.

**S:** They can't be the responsibility of a Centre, they'd be the responsibility of the Order members there. Mitras are never the responsibility of a Centre as such. Mitras are the responsibility of Order members with or without a Centre.

**Aryamitra:** Of the Order members there. What I was thinking also that it would give say Cornwall a stay of commitment for the Friends.

**Marichi:** As it stands with one Order member down there, at least one person would have to take all that weight of that Mitra system there.

**Manjuvajra:** I don't agree. I think that if.....

**Marichi:** I mean there only is one Mitra there.

**Manjuvajra:** I think that if there was a stage for people in Cornwall to feel a contact with the Order as such, then the Order would sort of take some of the weight rather than it all being put on the Order member in Cornwall.

**S:** You can't put in on the Order in the abstract. I mean there will have to be actual concrete other individual Order members there, or they would have to be in other regular contact but that seems a bit risky.

**Manjuvajra:** No, because we were talking this morning about the difference between the attitude of someone who's a devotee and the attitude of someone who's committed, and it seems to me that people can become devotees to the Movement if they are given the opportunity, if they're given the structure that will encourage them to do that, and then they'll feel the connection with the Movement. You see at the moment there's no opportunity for people to feel any connection with the Movement in Cornwall.

**S:** Well there is really, but they want to have it there which is not possible at the moment. I think we have to be very careful not to have the Mitraship as a sort of membership thing. Being a Mitra means being in contact either in a general way or a specific way with Order members.

**Devaraja:** (*unclear*) the category and you talked on the last Convention about the things that were special about the Friends (*unclear*) a particular time on Sangha Day during the offerings they became sort of a special category of Friend. I don't know if this would still apply. I mean surely that would apply to people in Cornwall. But I think that to make Mitraship so synonymous with say devoteeship is really quite dangerous.

**Manjuvajra:** Well this is what I understood was being announced here.

**S:** Well yes but devoteeship in a rather different sense. That is devoted to the Movement as embodied in, especially a Centre, and a group of Order members. Then you know what it is all about. You can't be devoted to it and then sit and have some experience (*unclear*) contact.

**Aryamitra:** The advantage of it though would be that say Friends in Cornwall if they are, ones that want to have the basic commitment, would then be able to come onto Mitra retreats, meeting other Order members, other Mitras, and in that way may strengthen the whole Centre.

**Lokamitra:** But wasn't provision made for this at the last Convention anyway, that those people who were considering ordination but not in enough contact, they would have Kalyana Mitras and so on, that they would in certain circumstances be able to receive 'Mitrata' and go on Mitra retreats.

**S:** Now they can subscribe to 'Mitrata' anyway.

**Lokamitra:** (*unclear due to two people speaking at once*)

**Lokamitra:** If there's anyone Manjuvajra feels particularly should definitely go on a retreat, a Mitra retreat, since last Convention all he's had to be able to do is write to Padmaloka and say so. Yes.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_: Yes that's true.

**Aryamitra:** So they've actually been encouraged then?

**S:** Well that would apply to someone like say Malcolm Webb. He does want to have contact with other Order members, he came up to see me in Norfolk. But as a matter of general sort of principle, I don't think you can have General Mitras until you've got a general Sangha and a general Order, yeah.

**Manjuvajra:** It seems to me more and more likely that (*unclear*) genuine Sangha (*unclear*) [*Laughter*]

**Ratnapani:** On this business of the devotee and I assume you just answered half my question about you've got to have something to be a devotee to or with, I gather from what Dhammadinna was saying, and from the report in New Zealand, that in fact the (*unclear*) perhaps there don't seem to be people who are not committed who seem to be an asset. They're the people who aren't committed I gather - I might be wrong - have in fact been a bit of a nuisance, have tended to be a bit negative, those who were of the devotee category seem to have been sorted out on the last retreat, for the women that is, and to have gone off. Decided that this isn't for them after all, having been faced with commitment.

**S:** No there's only one who could be referred to as having possibly marched off and I don't think she could be described as a devotee. She might not even have really fully marched off. (*Unclear*)

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*)

**Ratnapani:** I got the impression - I was wrong - that more than one person was involved.

**S:** One person as a result of Dhammadinna's exertion of pressure does seem to have...

**Vangisa:** Moved!

**S:** It's not completely sure in which direction, but she's certainly moved and I certainly had a very sort of positive talk with her. I think it's had a good effect, whether she stays with the Friends or not, but I think it has been positive anyway.

**Ratnapani:** Does the devotee exist then or are there in fact people who are either committed, show every sign of being orientated in that direction, even if a bit hazily,



and the dead weights, the old lags, are there just in fact those categories and not in fact....

**S:** I think they overlap a bit.

**Jinamata:** I think they overlap and it's not really identical.

**Dhammadinna:** It's difficult to categorise people like that anyway.

**S:** Dhammadinna just called them 'old lags' because she's getting a bit fed up with them and they're not moving fast enough and they're maybe not moving at all and they seem to have been like that an awful long time. *[Laughter]*

**Ratnapani:** I just like to know how people are getting on.

**Dhammadinna:** You can come on the next women's Mitra retreat then.

**Ratnapani:** I'm not allowed to! *[Laughter]*

**S:** That's good.

**Vajradaka:** (unclear) *[Laughter]*

**Ananda:** I'll have a word with you when you get back! *[Laughter]*

**S:** All right any comments on any aspect of the two reports?

\_\_\_(Woman)\_\_: There doesn't seem to be any mention of Glasgow. Are you going to be having a Mitra Convenor up there?

**Gotami:** (unclear) at the moment. I haven't felt a strong necessity for it up there. Things seem to go on all right (unclear). We study 'Mitrata', so in a sense anyone who comes to the study class is a Mitra and then most of the committed people that come, we just allow them all in. I'd say it works more on that basis.

**Nagabodhi:** How many people are in the study?

**Gotami:** Well we have (unclear as spoken very quietly) and five or six in the (unclear)

**Dharmapala:** (unclear) at the moment people who are really on other paths.(unclear)

**Vairocana:** There's only four steady people really that come along to the other group now with Dharmapala and I. So there's six in that group now really, six. I think there's the possibility of a Kalyana Mitra system in Glasgow because I think there are a few people who are more into it there than what they were before. Order contact with them may not be a bad thing.

**S:** Well that could be considered before my next visit. If when I come up next you do feel that there are some people who could benefit by becoming, as it were, officially Mitras that can certainly be arranged.

**Dharmapala:** Sorry what could be arranged?

**S:** The ceremony. If you, that is the Glasgow Chapter, come to the decision that certain people should become Mitras. In other words that the Mitra system or Kalyana Mitra system should be extended to Glasgow, then I would be quite happy to perform the ceremony when I come up if you feel that Glasgow is ready for that. (Unclear) By the way it did occur to me a few minutes ago that do people feel it might be a good idea to have to speak of it as the Mitra system now, and not Kalyana Mitra system.

**Voices:** Yes.

**S:** It makes it shorter!

**Subhuti:** I think also it cuts the General Mitra. Just talk about Mitras.

**S:** How do people feel about this?

**Murmurers:** (murmurs of approval)

**S:** The Mitra system then and there will be just one category of Mitra. It means we also drop the Honorary Mitra. They're all just Mitras.

**Lokamitra:** There have been various offerings or things for Mitras without Kalyana Mitras, I think it would be useful for us to just hear what has been done and maybe possibly to some extent standardise it but I'm not sure. But certainly it was made definite.

**S:** I think this is something that's been started up independently of me, as it were, but I know what is being done and I'm quite happy for that. It seems quite appropriate, but I should just perhaps outline it. What seems to be happening is that when someone wishes to become a Mitra, (*unclear*) not the ceremony of making you the Mitra of two Kalyana Mitras but just becoming a Mitra, then one presents oneself at a puja at which there are a number of Order members, and during the first part of the Sevenfold Puja - I think this is how it's usually done - at the end of the first part an Order member leads the chanting of the *Om Mani Padme Hum* mantra and you come forward and you make your offerings, taking them from the hand of the person officiating, who had previously announced the fact that you would be doing that and that will signify your becoming a Mitra. This is what has been happening so far?

\_\_\_\_\_: Three Sadhus.

**S:** Three Sadhus.

**Lokamitra:** Is that what's happened in Brighton too?

**Vessantara:** Yes.

**S:** So I'm quite happy with this way of doing things. It seems quite suitable.

\_\_\_\_\_(*Man*)\_\_\_\_: Where do the three Sadhus come in?

**S:** Presumably when the chanting has stopped.

**Subhuti:** Is that's what's supposed to happen actually happening?

**Nagabodhi:** It's happened at 'Aryatara' but we didn't do the chanting. [*Laughter*] We thought the chanting would not be appropriate.

**S:** *Om Mani Padme Hum*.

**Vangisa:** If this is the case and it looks as if for the General Mitras, who are probably going to be in a majority if they're not already, should not (*unclear*) and you change it to a Mitra, say calling (*unclear*) as the Mitra system (*unclear*) perhaps another whole rethinking of the whole thing is..... [*Laughter*] If somebody becomes a Mitra now, not a General Mitra, somebody becomes a Mitra, they're making offerings (*unclear*) increasingly a minority of them, where they either (*unclear*) or more often later on have what now call a Kalyana Mitra ceremony, and it seems to be a little bit uncoordinated.

**S:** It seems quite all right to me.

**Vangisa:** What does the Mitra ceremony become when he's already a Mitra?

[End of Tape Nine Tape Ten]

**S:** It's the ceremony of linking him with his two Kalyana Mitras.

\_\_\_\_\_: With the Order.

**Vangisa:** Could we not have a similar ceremony for a Mitra who hasn't had Kalyana Mitras and is linked to the Order by the Convenor and the local Convenor or something like that.

**S:** I think it's enough. It takes place within the context of the Order, there are Order Members present. That seems to be enough. I think it's felt as enough.

**Subhuti:** I think the point is that the Kalyana Mitra ceremony would be the formalization of something that's already existing.

**S:** Yes

**Subhuti:** In other words that person has begun to develop a relationship specifically with two Order Members.

**Aryamitra:** We talked on the last Convention about some kind of offering to the Mitra, like a tee-shirt or..... I don't think that came up but [*Laughter*] something to tie round the wrist or wear round the neck.

**S:** Several people have submitted specimens and so on. There seems not to be much general agreement about it. People seem to feel quite strongly about having something to remind them. I tended to lose interest a bit, quite frankly. But it's still, as it were a possibility. Everyone agrees that the Mitra could be given a .... let's say if it was the Mitra having Kalyana Mitras, could be given a Buddha, a Buddha image, a complete set of *Mitrata*, but they really couldn't agree about that green ribbon or green kesa or whatnot. And one or two people felt really strongly about what they thought should be done. I didn't. In fact I couldn't work out to whom I can give what! *[Laughter]*. Are you quite happy about the idea as an idea? It's sort of pending at the moment. But any thoughts on this, without getting into any violent topic? *[pause]*

Perhaps if a Mitra is given something when he has Kalyana Mitras, you could argue perhaps he ought to be given something when he just becomes a Mitra?

\_\_\_\_\_: Like a grand!.

**Ananda:** It seems to be that it would be appropriate to some people to give them something like a green Kesa but I don't think that it would be appropriate to all people becoming Mitras, because a considerable portion of people when they first become Mitras may not be even thinking of further commitment in terms of ordination.

**S:** Well they could still have their green Kesa, but they just go on wearing their green kesa.

**Ananda:** Yes, I mean I like the idea very much of the green Kesas.

**S:** I think that's one of the things that will just have to.... I don't think it's really very important. If we do come to a conclusion and agree about it, yes, it will be a nice additional thing, but I think probably the system will work quite well without it until such time as we can get it together. I notice Subhuti is wearing a green jersey. I don't suppose that's got any..... *[Laughter]*

**Subhuti:** I've also got some green tights on! *[Laughter]*

**S:** Green is nature, you see. The Mitra is, as it were, green. This beautiful natural positive pagan sort of person that comes along and is slowly and gradually civilised *[Laughter]*.

\_\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: That's what's happening!

\_\_\_\_\_: yes

**S:** Anyway lets not linger too long on this. Any further query or comment on these two reports on the general state of the Mitra system?

**Marichi:** It seems much more's happened since last time.

**S:** Good

**Lokamitra:** It is. I think it seems to have settled down, especially in London.

**S:** Also I must say that quite a bit of work has been put into it by Padmaraja and by Dhammadinna. So we accept these reports with thanks and gratitude. And of course there is this question of the appointment of the Convenor of Mitras and a Convenor of Women Mitras - you won't be acting convenor any longer - for the ensuing year. So it looks to me as though it's inevitable that these two people continue with that responsibility. Does everybody agree?

**Lokamitra:** Three *Sadhus*.

**Marichi:** Is the convenor of Mitras the convenor of male Mitras or the convenor of all Mitras?

**S:** No. It was suggested that there should be a convenor of men Mitras but we weren't able to think of anybody who was both suitable and available. We also felt that Padmaraja could well keep an eye on the workings of the whole system, so that Padmaraja remains convenor of Mitras in general and, all the Mitras, and Dhammadinna has special responsibility for the women.

**Subhuti:** It sounds to me like we've got the germs of a system developing there anyway, in that Dhammadinna said that she could only really have contact with - she could only really be responsible for those that she could have contact with. For instance Hridaya at '*Sukhavati*' is able to have perhaps more of an oversight of people there than anybody else and so on. We're getting people responsible for (*unclear*).

**Aryamitra:** You mean at the separate Centres?

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)*

**S:** There's no reason why Padmaraja shouldn't have assistant convenors all over the country.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman1**)\_\_\_\_: It's a bit weird *(unclear)*

**S:** *(unclear)*

\_\_\_\_(**Woman2**)\_\_\_\_: Unless of course you happen to be Bhante.*(unclear)*

**S:** It seems to be. It's not too bad! *[Laughter]* Get away from Norfolk. I can of course see the whole thing from a distance, in some respects very clearly. I think it makes things even clearer to me when I'm out in Norfolk than when I'm down in London. Because here there's such a mass of detail obviously, but there one can see things as a whole much more easily and one just sort of thinks over better *(unclear)*.

Any other point about the functioning of the Mitra system? We're probably going to finish early today which might not be a bad thing.

**Vairocana:** Is it important to have two Kalyana Mitras; not just one?

**S:** I think it is so that one can, if necessary, correct the deficiencies of the other. Or one may be available when the other isn't available.

**Vairocana:** If a Friend just had one Order Member that he considered a friend, would another Order Member have to be introduced.

**S:** Well I thought we'd made that clear - that you get to know both first.

**Vairocana:** I was thinking of a place like Glasgow where there's a limited amount of Order Members and you wanted something like that to function there, and say one person was getting on quite well with me but they weren't getting on say reasonably well with....

**S:** Anybody else.

**Vairocana:** anybody else, and you wanted to make that....

**S:** I think you would have to look rather carefully at that person, if there were four or five Order Members he couldn't get on well with. I think you'd have to think quite carefully and perhaps even ask why he did get on well with you or you with him. *[Laughter]*

**Vairocana:** The friendship has to be there in the first place.

**S:** It may well be that even among the two there is one that you get on with particularly well. Fair enough. It's not expected to have exactly the same feelings for both your Kalyana Mitras.

**Dhammadinna:** It's a bit the same with women Mitras *(unclear)*

**S:** Yes. You mustn't of course become too much of a muchness so there's not really any choice between any of you!

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)*

**Dhammadinna:** *(unclear)* chalk and cheese.

**S:** I think someone should be asked to put the kettle on.

**[BREAK]**

**S:** It's the last day in case anyone was under the impression that we'd be going on and on in a heavenly sort of way. This is the last day, and this is plenary session seven and according to the programme I'm to make comments on points raised in '*Shabda*' etcetera. You might be wondering what the etcetera is. But the idea roughly is this. Obviously I read '*Shabda*' every month when it comes out. Sometimes I read it twice. Occasionally I read it three times. Sometimes there have been points that I felt like saying something about. Or even writing about, especially when I felt that there was perhaps a misunderstanding or I felt perhaps that things weren't completely clear or

not clear enough. Sometimes I felt like writing but there seemed no time to write so I've kept a few of these points over from 'Shabda' just to talk about this morning.

The etcetera covers two or three other points that have been raised either by people in letters, or in the course of conversation; I'm not sure now quite which. But anyway, the general idea is that I'm just going to make a few comments on various points of this sort arising out of 'Shabda' or correspondence or just out of talks with people.

There aren't very many of these points. I think altogether six or seven. But some of them are of some importance. Incidentally, in raising these points I'm not directly concerned with the source where I've originally encountered them, so if for instance I've made some comments on some points that you particularly made, don't think my comments refer just to you or to the point as you made it. It's more like the point sort of set me thinking and I offer my comments dissociated from the original context. So even if I offer any criticism I'm not getting at you, the person who originally raised that point or presented it in 'Shabda' or in any letter.

Having made my own few comments on each point I shall probably ask for comments from other people and their experiences but I think it better not try to have a discussion - just people making their own points, their own contributions, their own comments - because discussions don't seem to work very well when there's about fifty of you: and when you have to raise your voice to make yourself heard on the other side of the room. This isn't the best way of conducting a quiet discussion. So just comments from all of you, or those of you who feel like making them, when the time comes. I've not got these points in any particular order. I've just jotted them down in a little notebook from time to time as I came across them. So it's not going to be a very tidy discussion.

I think I'll start with a nice easy one just so that we can get into these points. I've got a note here in my notebook. I forget how this arose. I think it was in the course of a conversation. I'll read you the note itself so that you can see my thinking in its pristine form, as it were:

*"Leaders of classes not to be too heavy handed with beginners. Remember what it is like to be a beginner."* I feel that this is very important. Very few of you are any longer really beginners. Some of you have been not only practising meditation but taking part in giving talks perhaps for several years in some cases. I think it's very

easy for us to forget what it is like to be a beginner. In a sense of course we are always beginners and it's good to remember that. And putting the whole thing in more general terms we can say that it is very good that we try to keep in every way on every level what the Zen people call the "*Beginner's Mind*", especially when we have been in it, as it were, doing it, as it were, for so many years, it becomes more and more important to keep that "*Beginner's Mind*". So that even though you've taken that beginner's meditation class a hundred times before, though you've given so many lectures, perhaps, and explained certain things so many times, every time you do it, or every time you do your own practice, it's as though you do it for the first time. You are completely fresh in your approach. You don't think it's the same old practice that I'm doing: the same old words to the same old Puja that I'm reciting. You don't think it's the same old point about sitting cross legged or the same old point about counting your breath that I'm explaining. Each time just try to do it as though for the first time. In a sense it is the first time because that particular situation has never been exactly repeated before. You've never had exactly those people. You've never been in exactly the same frame of mind. So in a sense it is new, it isn't the same old thing, it is a completely fresh situation. So if you can retain this sort of "*Beginner's Mind*" in this way with regards to your own practice and with regard to your attitude towards activities, classes and so on, you'll certainly find that it will help you very, very much.

So this in a more sort of general way; but more specifically, remember that the beginner is a beginner. I've sometimes felt - not so much recently but in the past more particularly - that sometimes people who were taking classes didn't always remember this. There might even sometimes be a sort of feeling to show the beginner how well you could do it, or for instance how long the regulars could sit. Sometimes I think there was a sort of tendency to almost show the beginner, there's always a slight tendency to show off, not remembering that the poor beginner couldn't keep up, and in that way you make him feel a beginner, or her feel a beginner, in a slightly negative way. In comparison with you, or in comparison with others who are not beginner. So one should have a very sympathetic attitude towards beginners - realise that for some of them to sit cross-legged for ten minutes is difficult, and bear that in mind. And make sure that if you're taking a beginner's meditation class that they've got enough time to relax; that they're not kept sitting cross-legged in the same position for too long; that you don't take them straight through all four stages of, say, the Mindfulness of Breathing at once, necessarily on the same evening. Maybe you take two stages one evening and then the other two stages the next week or something like that. But really try to get into the shoes - or onto the meditation cushion - of the beginner, and not

forget what it's like to be a beginner. I think it's very, very important that you really empathise with the new person, not only in the class situation but in every way, realising that to the new person everything is new, everything is strange, everything is unfamiliar. To you it's just like your own home almost, the Centre, you're so familiar with it. You know every stick and stone, you know every stain on the wall, you're so familiar with it; but for a new person it may be a completely unfamiliar environment, a completely strange environment. So try to, as it were, tune into that, and help the beginner to adjust and to get into things. But keep not only the "*Beginner's Mind*" yourself, in that more spiritual sense, but also remain aware of the needs and the situation of the literal beginner, however experienced you may be yourself.

Anyone like to make any comment on this? Has anyone found themselves tending to forget the needs of the beginner or losing the freshness of the "*Beginner's Mind*"?

**Ashvajit:** The first lesson I learned; it was quite a hard lesson in a way, because I really thought that I knew it, knew it all, but that's exactly the wrong attitude. You have to start with the idea or feeling that you know nothing at all, and every word that you say is a fresh word, and is perhaps not understood by people who are listening.

**S:** I have heard some Order Members say that it's very invigorating to work with beginners, literal beginners, because of the freshness of their approach. Because it is all very new and sometimes very wonderful. And you yourself, if you're getting a bit tired and a bit jaded, can pick up this freshness of the beginners, which is a very healing sort of thing

**Jinamata:** I've sometimes found it difficult to keep the balance, let's say, for the length of the sitting. There are some people from whom I feel well they can sit, it doesn't matter. One can go on, it doesn't have to be twenty minutes, it can be thirty or even forty, and some others can't do it, and I found that difficult sometimes, in the beginner's classes just to sense, you know, how to keep the balance between that. Sometimes they can differ a great deal.

**S:** Yes well this is partly a question of the proper organisation of classes. But I suggest that if you do sometimes find mixed people in this way, you just make it clear, you just say, "I know that there are some people who can sit longer, but let's not forget that there are some new people, so we shall only sit for fifteen minutes before breaking off,

but I know that some people would like really to sit longer but let's not forget the beginners: we ourselves were beginners once." Why not say something like that and then it will be appreciated and understood.

**Jinamata:** I've also forgotten that, you know, because I myself would have liked to have sat longer and I haven't been aware of that always.

**S:** That's a very important point because sometimes the person taking the class would like to sit longer himself or herself; but then you must remember that you're not there to sit as long as you would like. You're there to sit as long as is helpful for the beginner, but that's, in a way a great temptation, that you yourself feel like sitting on, you don't feel like breaking off. But then, you're not there, in a sense, in that sort of way, to do your own meditation. But I know this has sometimes happened, that the leader of the class has sort of felt like carrying on and has carried on, and the beginners have felt more and more uncomfortable.

**Jinamata:** It's an extension of what you were saying in the lecture in the Eightfold Path series on Perfect Speech. It's not only to speak the truth of a situation but with an awareness of the person to whom you are speaking.

**S:** Right yes.

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear due to scaping of furniture*) if I sort of try and do that simply. It's not half so good as if I just open up to those people (*unclear*) whoever it happens to be (*unclear*).

**S:** You must be very aware of the people in the group. Some time ago - I'm not going to give any details, I was present when an Order Member was taking, or going to take, a communication class, and I was quite shocked in a way that he didn't check that people were even seated comfortably and properly. Some people were squeezed up together in a corner; they couldn't communicate sitting like that, so I took over and sorted people out but he clearly hadn't noticed that.

So this brings me in a way to another point with regard not just to the meditation classes but the communication courses if you do decide to take them. You're to be no less aware there, just see where people are, and begin right from the beginning by getting them seated comfortably, whether on chairs or cushions on the floor, opposite

each other, at the correct interval, at the correct distance from each other, not too close, not too far apart, make sure they're visibly comfortable. If you're leading a class or a group you must attend to all these things, which means really putting yourself in the situation of those people, really seeing what is happening, being really aware, which if you're not very careful you won't do that. So this is very, very important.

This also brings me to a point that I hadn't intended to speak about, it isn't in my notes but it's in my mind now so I'll talk about it; that is taking communication courses. I get a feeling - I know that we're not taking so many communication courses now - that it sometimes happens that people are taking communication courses who ought not to be taking communication courses. In the sense that they're not sufficiently in communication with themselves, and do not have enough liveliness and vitality themselves to be able to do it successfully, which means they do it a bit mechanically as a routine and therefore it doesn't work. This is just something I've picked up generally. I don't know of any particular instance but this is something I've been feeling - the odd remarks that I've heard. Anyone like to say anything about that, taking communication courses?

**Vessantara:** I think the only point which I can pick up with regard to that it that it's quite rare now for Order Members to actually do them themselves. Like I've taken quite a number of courses on retreats and things but it must be eighteen months since I actually had the opportunity to do the exercises.

**S:** That doesn't matter if you are in communication, because the purpose of the exercises is just to help you to be in communication. So if you're in communication with other Order Members or with people you meet, you don't need any exercise, you go straight into the course and take the course and explain the exercises. You don't need to do them in that sort of way, you don't need them. So I'm not referring to keeping up your own practice of the communication exercises, no, not like that; but you mustn't go into that communications course in a dull tired fashion and just be communicating the methods and techniques and getting other people to do them. You must be lively and vital yourself; and I've been getting an impression that this doesn't always happen. Now I may be wrong but this is the impression I've been picking up. So I ask people to watch that.

**Lokamitra:** I remember an occasion long before I was ordained on a weekend retreat - I doubt if you were present Bhante - and I was in a more delicate state then,

*[Laughter]* but I remember the time when I was perhaps least sure of the situation was in the communication exercises when you were always a very strong, secure figure. And I think it's always been in my mind since then that the person leading them must be very secure, always there, not go out for cups of tea or anything. Anyway, know exactly what they're doing.

**S:** Hmm, yeh. Also, there's one point applies here very much, which is connected with what I was saying before about beginner's classes. Sometimes, it's happened, and I've seen this - the Order Member taking the communication courses, does not feel quite sure of his ability to do so, so in order to sort of reassure himself he tries to get results. And how does he get the results? By stepping up the pressure. That is to say by making people do the communication exercises longer than they should because he wants things to start happening. If people start giggling or exploding a bit he feels a bit relieved, "Ah, I'm doing it all right, things are happening". In other words he doesn't have the trust in the method and the situation. He wants a tangible result to reassure himself that he's doing it OK, that he's leading the group OK. So one must really watch this. I forget where it was but I did notice that since my absence from London, the period that people were being asked to do the communication exercises had been lengthened quite a bit. And I think I talked with someone about this. But I forget who that might be or with whom it happened. Does anyone remember?

**Marichi:** You talked about it at the last convention.

**S:** Did I? I'd better not talk about it took much on this convention! *[Laughter]* But anyway, has anyone noticed anything of this sort during the last year or is it now a thing of the past?

**Aryamitra:** I think it's changed

**S:** You do. Am I correct in assuming we don't have communication exercises as much as we used to?

**Voices:** Yes

**S:** Am I correct in assuming that within the Order we don't really need the communication exercises because we are all in communication?

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_: Most of the time

**S:** Most of the time. But is it still felt that for beginners and new people, especially on beginner's retreats, the communication courses are helpful?

**Voices:** Yes

\_\_\_\_\_: Very much.

**S:** Do we really find people loosening up and livening up as a result of them?

**Voices:** Yes

**S:** And are we satisfied that we're sufficiently lively ourselves?

**Voices:** Yes! [*Laughter*]

**S:** Well good.

**Aryamitra:** There is one point - that with communication exercises sometimes they're a bit too much of a technique if you like; that people communicate in the exercises but when they come out they're suddenly closed off again.

**S:** I think this is a danger, yes. That you think that communication is something to be almost strictly confined to the communication session: it's OK then, it's tolerable.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes

**S:** I remember in this connection that when I was at Yale one of my students was going to all sorts of body awareness groups and sessions where they were touching one another, handling one another, rolling on the ground with one another. So he was telling me all about this. So I said, "Yes, that's fine, I'd really like to hear about this," and he shrank away! [*Laughter*] So I said, "Oho, it's only permitted within the group situation, not in real life." But we have really to watch that.

Anyway I'm sure the point is sufficiently taken, but any further comments from anybody on what I've been saying so far: Beginner's Mind, considering the needs of

the beginner, whether in the context of meditation courses, communication courses or indeed the whole situation?

**Ananda:** I'd like to say Bhante in correlation with that, I do feel it's important if people take courses of any sort for a lengthy period of time that they need to maintain inner contact with their own practice especially, and just with themselves and on a feeling level and I think to this end it's necessary to be alone or at least do a solitary retreat.

**S:** Well certainly not only those who are taking part in the courses but all Order Members. It is assumed that all Order Members keep up their own regular individual practice regardless of what else they're doing..

**Ananda:** Hmm.

**S:** I mean, not simply that if you happen to be taking a course or class, well, you'd better brush up on your practice a bit first before you do that. No, you should be keeping it in trim, as it were, all the time. Maybe before a course or class you need a little extra preparation, but in a sense the preparation should be going on all the time.

**Manjuvajra:** Lokamitra just now mentioned in connection with communication classes; that he thought it wasn't a good idea that the person taking the classes went out of the room....

**Lokamitra:** I didn't say quite that but.....

**Manjuvajra:** No. I found it useful sometimes to leave the room specifically, because people quite often feel inhibited by my presence because they feel they have to do..

**Ananda:** Speak up a little bit!

**Manjuvajra:** Yes in communications people sometimes seem to feel inhibited by my presence and I find it useful to leave the room to sort of relieve them of that tension.

**S:** Has anybody else found that?



**Ashvajit:** Yes, it has happened sometimes but in that case you can just, sort of, turn your back on the people, look out of the window or something like that. Then their attention goes back onto what they're supposed to be doing.

**Manjuvajra:** It's partly because I'm doing it in a very small room.

**S:** And with a small number of people, because I don't remember this at all.

**Marichi:** But it does occasionally happen in you take, sort of, less than eight people or something.

**S:** Right, yes. Because you count then as one, but if you're taking thirty people, once you stop they're so eager to talk to one another in most cases they just don't notice you stumbling around, unless they actually want to talk to you about something. You're no doubt right if it's such a small number of people. You're more noticeable and you may need just to quietly, either absent yourself, although not too far away - keeping your ear on what's happening or look out of the window so that people don't feel that you're watching them or something like that.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes

**Jinamata:** Following this kind of experience, I realise that I'd made in my own mind a little note not to take communication classes unless there were at least eight people. I feel quite strongly that I shouldn't take communication classes unless there's at least eight people because of that kind of situation. And I was wondering how many people . .

**S:** And also you can't swap them around much.

**Nagabodhi:** Six, I once had to do it with just two pairs and that really wasn't . . . they were very conscious of each other, more than me. But three pairs, somehow it was all right.

**Vairocana:** It depends on the people really as well. If they're sort of inhibited types.

**Marichi:** Well if they're communicating clearly anyway they wouldn't be needing....

**S:** I'd say up to thirty is fine, twenty to thirty is all right. This is what I used to find.

\_\_\_\_\_: (unclear)

**Marichi:** Going back to that point about being able to communicate ourselves before we take communication courses. in one I took recently someone came along who was apparently very confident and so on and told me he'd actually led communication courses....

**S:** Yes.

\_\_\_\_\_: And they were exactly the same, he'd learnt them from somebody else, and he was the only person in the room who clearly was totally unable to communicate.

**S:** Well, I've found that at least three times. I remember once at *Keffolds*, someone came along and he said that he had learned a kind of communication exercise. In this case not quite the same as ours because I'd made some modifications on the exercises that I'd learned originally, but he was quite sure that he could do them but he was completely unsuccessful.

\_\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: Well this man had actually led courses. He'd actually taken them and led them. And he just couldn't communicate at all.

**Chintamani:** This raises quite an interesting point. I've found it's quite often the people who bounce around being communicative and into such things that are really terrified of being communicated to.

**Jinamata:** It relates to the point of just learning a technique, something that you mentioned earlier.

**S:** The professionalism, or pseudo-professionalism.

**Marichi:** And also with that sort of person, there's no way you can tell them because they feel they know it all. It's quite difficult to get through to them what they're doing.

**S:** Yes, in all the cases I can recollect, the person concerned left and didn't come back and I don't think we ever saw them again.

**Nagabodhi:** There is something actually I've observed; that Order Members who are doing the exercises, doing them with beginners, sometimes seem to feel a bit of a conflict as to what they should be doing. Whether they should be in a therapist's role, sort of helping a person get into their anger or whatever they see in them, which I often find a bit false. Yet there is also the fact that if an Order Member is just real, that is often too strong for a beginner to take. In a way I feel it may be that our view towards Order Members occasionally doing them, just to kind of get into the feel so that when they do them with a beginner they aren't faced with this kind of conflict, they're used to that particular situation.

**S:** It's quite open of course to, say, an Order Member taking a communication course, having an assistant and himself or herself sometimes having a go, as it were, with one or two beginners and sitting and doing the communication exercise with them.

**Nagabodhi:** This is what I mean, this is where the problem seems to arise - that the assistant feels in a kind of therapist rôle and...

**Jinamata:** I always find it very helpful when other Order Members . . . I remember a retreat when you were there, Padmaraja sitting and doing communication exercises and I was leading them, I found that very helpful, and other Order members were sitting there and doing the exercises.

**S:** Yes. Nagabodhi was thinking more how the actual beginners will feel. I think it depends partly on which Order Member it is. I think beginners might find certain Order Members a bit intimidating and not be very comfortable doing the communication exercise with them, but other Order Members they might find quite reassuring and helpful, so I think this would have to be borne in mind too.

**Jinamata:** This is the awareness of the beginners that we were talking about earlier, that one has to be aware of them

**S:** Yes, when you sit down in front of a beginner you are not going to be showing him how well you can communicate, how open you are and let him have it, as it were. You are communicating with that person.

**Jinamata:** I think there's no need to feel in the rôle of a therapist Why be in a rôle? One can help without being in a rôle or something.

**Nagabodhi:** Absolutely.

**S:** When I used to take them I used to find the communication exercises very enjoyable because one felt people's energy coming up all the time, and that was very positive. So I think probably it's a safer approach not to think that you're a therapist or anything like that but just that you're having fun, as it were. For you as the person leading it it's a bit of light relief and a bit of more mobile energy flying around than usually is the case in some other situations.

**Aryamitra:** I think Nagabodhi was saying in the case of retreats where maybe there's say five Order members on the retreat, one Order Member is taking the communication exercise, another four Order Members or three Order Members are sitting with beginners.

**S:** Ah, I see.

**Aryamitra:** And for those Order Members sitting with beginners they're doing communication exercises and sometimes they can feel like, or wonder whether they ought to be sort of in a rôle, bringing them out or just to communicate with them.

**S:** Just communicate I say. I think it's quite dangerous to, as it were, take upon oneself the responsibility of bringing people out. I think just communicate with them, just be with them and then the bringing out or coming out will happen spontaneously- not to think of yourself as the bringer out of other people.

**Lokamitra:** This situation happens when people aren't so open in fact.

**S:** Well you have to stay with them in their lack of openness.

**Lokamitra:** I mean the Order Members who see perhaps that they should be therapists tend to be the less open ones.

**S:** This may well be so.

**Chintamani:** Well that's what I was saying because they aren't like that really they think they'd like to be so they put an act on.

**S:** Anyway, I think that's enough on that, yes, as there are some other points so we'll see what comes next.

Yes we've been talking about communication. I've got a note here about something of which I say, "blunts the edge of communication." And it's this. As I sit up in Norfolk - not always sitting up, walking sometimes - as I sit up in Norfolk - not always sitting, walking sometimes - as I sit up in Norfolk in a manner of speaking, I hear quite a lot about what goes on obviously. I get sets of minutes from all over the place; I get letters; people come to see me and to talk; but there's one sort of mode of expression that I've been less and less happy with. Sometimes a report or account or descriptions reach me in the form of "a lot of Order Members think" or "a lot of Order Members are saying". In other words, something is generalised. Not that "somebody said such and such in a particular situation", but a very sweeping statement is made that a lot of Order Members are thinking this or a lot of Order Members are thinking that. And sometimes when I track it down it's in fact only the view of this particular person who is speaking to me, not in fact the view of other people, much less of a lot of other Order Members at all.

So I've been noticing this in certain situations. I think it's sometimes that people don't have the courage to take responsibility for what they themselves think and try to back it up by suggesting or saying that a lot of other people within the Order think in the same way and they are, as it were, the mouth piece or spokesman in fact. So if people feel there's a need to communicate with me in this sort of way then they should be quite specific who is in fact thinks and who in fact believes this, that or the other, or whether it is just themselves. You see what I'm getting at? Has anyone noticed this at all in any other situations or contexts?

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes.

\_\_\_\_\_: You have the reverse sometimes when someone will put forward a viewpoint and someone will maybe argue with you and they say, "Oh, Bhante thinks this". or "Bhante says this".

**S:** Yes. He may or he may not, but in a way it's irrelevant to the merits of the subject being discussed.

\_\_\_\_\_: Or sometimes, you know, it may be some (*unclear*) and the other person didn't know about that, but it does seem occasionally to be used as a kind of backup to one's own theory, and I know I've done it myself.

**S:** Well it's all right if you've actually got something by Bhante in writing. For instance Dhammadinna read out, so it's clear that I have said that, that is my considered opinion which I have written down; so there's no danger of misunderstanding. But if someone says, well, "Bhante thinks this" or "Bhante thinks that", but that it can't be sort of traced to anything I've specifically, clearly said, then that is even more dangerous. But I'm thinking here of attributing opinions to the Order in general or sections of the Order which in fact very often are just your own particular views. Has anybody else noticed anything like this?

**[End of Side One Side Two]**

**Marichi:** I've also noticed it in reverse. People have sometimes said, "A lot of Order members are saying this" and they just mean one or two.

**S:** Yes.

**Marichi:** It's as though it's them or (*unclear*) That one or two people was turned into a block.

**S:** Yes. Sometimes I've had the impression, though I didn't take it at face value, that maybe twenty or thirty people were feeling strongly in a particular way about something or other and it turned out to be just one or two people at the most. So I think, out of, in a way, respect for the Order and out of respect for other Order members, one should be very careful not to attribute to them what is in fact one's own view or the view of oneself and one or two friends.

**Ashvajit:** Especially the views concerning other Order members.

**S:** Especially, yes indeed, yes. I used to get something of this sort in Kalimpong - in fact I wrote about it once - there were some people in Kalimpong who were, as it

were, in sort of little social swim, the little set of a couple of dozen people and maybe one of them would come to see me and say, "The whole of Kalimpong is saying something about it", and I would say, "No, the whole of Kalimpong, well there's fifteen thousand people, the majority of them just have not even heard of this matter!", but they meant all the people in their little set, but they said, "The whole of Kalimpong is talking about it". In the same way in the old days people would say, "No one in London at all nowadays my dear, you know, is (*unclear*)ing". They mean just a few people of their particular set. "There's no one in London. Nobody stays in London in August". It's the same sort of thing.

**Chintamani:** Can I carry on from something (*unclear*) the question of using Bhante's name to make something you say more acceptable, I found sometimes that the only way to make something acceptable, which you are quite convinced is acceptable, but just the other person is not convinced is by saying, "Well, Bhante agrees", and immediately it changes. Everybody starts listening, whereas before they wouldn't listen. [*Laughter*] I've heard things that Order members say and people don't listen and maybe two months later you come down from Norfolk and say exactly the same thing and they all agree like mad.

**S:** Well this goes to show that, in a way, people don't have enough respect for one another and for themselves.

\_\_\_\_(*Woman*)\_\_: There's one particularly confusing thing that I found about all of this, is that someone maybe speaks to you about something which is very much personal to them and you say, "Well, stop meditating", so they go and say this to somebody else who's also been to you and you have said to them, "Well, really one should meditate eight hours a day" or something. And then those two people get together and one person says, "Look Bhante says you shouldn't meditate more than an hour a day", and the other says, "Look Bhante says you should meditate (*unclear*) times a day", and what has been said specifically to one person is taken in the general sense that that is what you feel about everybody. I've found occasionally lots of confusion happening in that sort of way.

**S:** Well one can well imagine that. [*pause*]

Any further comment on that, otherwise we'll pass onto another point. So if people do have occasion to write to me or speak to me, then it will be very good if when they're

expressing opinions and views, they are very clear as to whether it is what they think or whether it is in fact the view of a number of people. But even then I think well what is the point of telling me the view also of other people; just say what you think, and other people, no doubt, if they feel strongly enough about it will in due course tell me what they think.

\_\_\_\_(*Woman*)\_\_: That particular phrase is to me a sign. If I'm feeling a lot of Order members think (*unclear*) especially (*unclear*) a bit of feeling about it, I know that it's me being neurotic. It's one of the little pinpoints that points out to me something.

**S:** Another allied point which I've made a note about is "*Discussing things on their own merits*". I started thinking about this in connection with some of the discussions - this is quite a few months ago now - on whether certain people were ready to be ordained or not, and it came to my notice that in the course of one such discussion, the whole discussion was diverted into another discussion, that is to say a discussion about the motives of certain Order members for saying what they did say about the readiness or somebody or other for ordination; and I thought that most unfortunate. I thought that one should say what one has to say; express one's feeling about a particular person - whether you think they are ready or not - and leave it at that and others should leave it at that. The discussion shouldn't be turned into well why you or why that particular Order member felt in that way about someone who had asked for ordination. In this way the whole discussion can become sidetracked and become quite personal, sometimes in a rather unpleasant way. So the issues, especially issues of this sort, should be discussed very much on their own merits. If you do happen to feel quite genuinely and sincerely that someone has expressed an opinion which is not really objective, which is subjectively motivated, then you can always take that person aside afterwards or arrange to meet them and talk about it with them; but not turn that particular discussion - especially something so important as someone's readiness for ordination - into almost a dispute about the motives of somebody or other. Well say what they did say. You see the sort of thing I'm getting at? Otherwise you get completely off the track.

**Aryamitra:** It could almost be used as well in the discussion.

**Sagaramati:** How do you reach a sort of a decision in a situation like that; say when you might have twenty five percent of people who sincerely feel that someone is not ready for ordination?

**S:** Well you don't reach a common decision. There isn't one. Then that will have to be communicated to me, and I may feel well I'll let it rest there or I may myself arrange to see the particular person who's asked for ordination and just see how I feel personally. Or I may just discuss it in detail, either with those who are in favour or those who are not in favour, or both, and I may myself feel that there's a certain amount of subjective motivation. In some cases I may, but what I want to avoid is a discussion of someone's readiness for ordination becoming a discussion - and sometimes a not very positive discussion - of why people assess a particular person in the way that they do. It's just another aspect of this very important question of keeping to the point, and this is sometimes quite difficult for people to do. I think we can say that we generally do it better than most bodies do. In our Council meetings we keep much more to the point, as far as I can see or as far as I've heard, than such bodies usually do, but that's because of our whole overall attitude towards things. But no doubt there's room for improvement even so. No doubt we could stick to the point even more closely than we do at present. *[pause]*

Reports of Order Meetings. I think we have to be careful when we report Order Meetings, not to become too individual, not to say idiosyncratic. I've felt that one or two of the reports appearing in '*Shabda*' reflected the personality or at least the identity of the reporter a bit too much. I think reports of Order proceedings should as objective as possible, and as full as possible, especially where the topics discussed are of some general interest. Any comment on this?

**Lokamitra:** Can I also suggest that um.... we did suggest this about Orders Days, that they be shown to another person present at that time, because sometimes some reports of Order Meetings or events just haven't made sense, even to those people who have been totally involved in them.

**Jinamata:** Yes, I've certainly felt reports of Order Days or Order Meetings that I haven't been to sometimes just made no sense whatsoever. It was impossible for me to follow what had been said. I think it's a good idea to show it to somebody else.

**Lokamitra:** I think that really must happen. Because otherwise if you think about New Zealand, if we can't communicate among ourselves it's going to be very difficult to communicate to people who have no experience of us here.

**S:** Well in one particular instance - I forget the detail - but someone who had been present warned me not to take a report appearing in '*Shabda*' too seriously for it hadn't really all happened

like that at all. That the report was so misleading. So that's rather a pity because the report was sent to (*unclear*). So be very careful of any kind of selectivity or unconscious organizing of the material and all that kind of thing.

**Padmaraja:** It seems to be a bit of a chore. At the last minute somebody is asked to do the reports. I don't think the position is taken that seriously.

**S:** Well that may well be so too.

**Vimalamitra:** Maybe they should be taped like the lectures.

**S:** Well it wouldn't be difficult to tape but then to write up.

**Vimalamitra:** You could have a record and then if you really couldn't remember or you weren't quite sure about a point.

**Jinamata:** On the other hand I think it's really quite a good exercise to be there recording and to take down the facts, regardless of one's personal opinions on it. I think it's a good practice to do. Why go to the tape recorder? I think one could take it as that for the person who is recording.

**S:** Certainly with regard, say, to the report of the last Convention itself, my feeling was that on the whole, though it wasn't perfect it was a quite acceptable and satisfactory account that would not as a whole mislead. It can be done. One can produce a faithful report which doesn't report every word - even every topic discussed - but which does give a pretty fair and adequate account of that particular event.

**Vimalamitra:** Yes but I must say the convention I think was probably better discussed than say quite a few Order Meetings.

**Vessantara:** There is quite a skill to recording. I think as Padmaraja said very often at Order Meetings we search around for somebody who's got a piece of paper and a pen to do it; whereas in fact it doesn't seem to be something which everybody or anybody can do satisfactorily.

**S:** Well I noticed reading through the reports of the Convention before they were finally edited and put together, some did seem markedly better than others. Some people clearly have a better gift for this and others don't. But it may so happen that at any given Order Meeting there isn't present anyone who has naturally a gift for that sort of thing, so a scrutiny by some other person who is present is more important.

**Chintamani:** Either that or you have two recorders at an Order Meeting and the report comes out of the two. You should get some objectivity (*unclear*)

**S:** The thing is we can't lay down rules too minutely but every Chapter of the Order should bear this in mind and be very careful and conscientious in making arrangements for these sort of reports.

**Devamitra:** I'd like to suggest that recorders attribute comments, particular comments, to the Order Members that made them. It sometimes happens, but it sometimes doesn't, and it's not clear who said what, and very often, say, a comment made by one particular Order Member might come across as being the position of that whole meeting.

**S:** I know that this has happened sometimes. It's a bit like what I was commenting on *apropos* Padmaraja's report '*it has been decided*'. If it's just one person who has decided or said something, well let the name of that person be actually mentioned so that we all know. It's more interesting that way anyhow.

**Lokamitra:** I'd like to add that the report of the New Zealand retreat was very very well done and a much higher standard than normally the reporting of our Order Days and events is.

**S:** That was done by Akshobya himself.

**\_\_(Woman)\_\_:** Is every Order Meeting recorded?

**S:** No. We haven't actually made a sort of rule that every Order Meeting should be recorded. The idea is simply to communicate and share with other Chapters of the Order, with other Order Members, what has happened in the meeting of your particular Chapter, especially if something of interest emerged or was discussed or was said by anybody. I don't think it's an invariable rule that every single meeting of

a Chapter of the Order should be recorded and a report sent to '*Shabda*'. I think if all the meetings were of interest, well fair enough but probably that isn't the case. So if any Chapter feels that a particular meeting has been interesting, then they can ask whoever is present to produce a report of that for '*Shabda*'. But they need not feel obliged to do that in the case of every meeting of each Chapter.

What is the general practise at the moment?

**Marichi:** I think the Order Days.

**S:** Order Days.

**Marichi:** Or if there's a particular Order Meeting which discusses the general running of the Centre (*unclear*).

**S:** So it's 'if you feel'. If you feel that what has been happening at your particular Chapter Meeting is of general interest, or something has been said in some kind of way which is of general interest, by all means prepare a report and send it along to '*Shabda*' for publication so that everybody can share in that. The same with regards to your Order Day, if your Chapter has an Order Day. [*pause*] And don't be too cryptic in your reporting. Realise that other people who are reading it were not present and you need to fill them in a little bit on the discussion which led up to a certain point being made. Otherwise with some reports you get the impression as though little koans and epigrams were popping out of the air. [*pause*]

We're getting through these points quite well. We'll probably have lunch well on time, if not a bit early. [*pause*]

Yes, something quite important. I've got a note here on the question of authority and authoritarianism. It sometimes happens that some people have felt that certain other people were being authoritarian in their attitude, so I was just giving some thought to this whole question of authoritarian and authoritarianism and what it really meant. What is authoritarianism? Anybody got any ideas about this?

**Ashvajit:** Authoritarianism is taking the position that you have authority which is something separate from your own authority.

**S:** Your own individual authority.

**Ashvajit:** Your own power, your own knowledge, your own whatever as an individual.

**S:** I think you've hit the nail right on the head. This is what I was going to say actually. This is exactly what I would say. Would you like to enlarge a bit more?

**Ashvajit:** Er.

**Aryamitra:** Give some examples maybe.

**Jinamata:** Why should one assume such a position?

**Ashvajit:** Why should one assume?

**S:** Well that's a different question.

**Marichi:** Well that may relate to why one does it.

**Ashvajit:** Well one assumes an authoritarian position as a compensation for one's weakness. Whereas if one is really strong one can take an inferior position and not feel unhappy.

**S:** Well you can't take an inferior position really. The question of inferior and superior doesn't arise. You just do what needs to be done.

**Dhammadinna:** Could you repeat your original definition?

**Ashvajit:** Authoritarianism is taking the attitude that one has power above or beyond one's own true position as an individual.

**S:** And that false power, or false authority or authoritarianism often derives from a position in the structure, which may not correspond to your real position as an individual. Or you may take your actual position in the structure into some other situation where it's irrelevant to bolster up your lack of authority as an individual. You see the sort of thing?

**Chintamani:** And if you do anything from that position of false power it will eventually go wrong. That's what I found.

**S:** Well we hope so. Otherwise it will be bad for you if things don't go wrong.

**Aryamitra:** We see this in politicians.

**S:** Well we probably do, but we're concerned more with ourselves at the moment. The point that I'm (*unclear*) to make - this is all sort of introductory - is that sometimes I feel the charge of authoritarianism is made when in fact there is no authoritarianism at all. That the person is just exercising his natural innate authority, as it were. He's just being himself in a rather forcible way, but people tend - I've noticed this in one or two cases - to as it were get back at him or her by saying that you are being authoritarian. Do you see what I mean?

**Jinamata:** I think generally out of the Friends as well there is a confusion between natural authority and authoritarianism, and I think as a result of reacting against authoritarianism one reacts against authority as well. (**S:** Right.) I think we have to distinguish that quite clearly.

**S:** I think it also needs a more positive word perhaps for that natural innate authority. It's more like your personal interest as an individual, irrespective of any position. But you feel with regard to certain people, certain people you encounter in the pages of history, if they hadn't been born on a throne or something like that they would have been totally insignificant, and not exerting any influence at all. But here they are, just because they are born to it as it were, exercising the power which goes along with that position. In other words that is authoritarian. The power and the influence of that doesn't spring naturally from what they are as individuals, but attaches to the position that they occupy.

**Chintamani:** I mean if you meet somebody who has that real power, you want to, in a sense, put yourself under them quite naturally. You want to be subservient to them.

**S:** Yes. I mean possibly within our own Movement the situation might arise where, for instance, a particular Order member might be a secretary - I'm not thinking of anyone in particular at the moment, I'm just giving this as an abstract example - someone might be a secretary of the Centre, of the Council, and therefore he has a

certain responsibility; you might say he has a certain power, but that is power within that particular context for that particular purpose. Now he shouldn't try, or she shouldn't try to carry that power over, as it were, into an Order Meeting, where he or she is present simply as an Order Member amongst other Order Members, and other Order Members should, as it were, forget the fact that he or she is secretary, treasurer, chairman - they may be outside the Order meeting manipulating millions, as it were - that's totally irrelevant within the Order Meeting, and that an Order Member who has no, as it were, organisational power or influence, who is in the Order Meeting, has just as much weight - other factors being equal - as Order Members with great organisational responsibilities etc.

So you shouldn't listen to an Order Member more, thinking "well he's the secretary, I've got to listen to him more". Not within the context of the Order Meeting. There it's irrelevant. This is quite important to maintain. You might, for instance, have theoretically an Order Member who happened to be Prime Minister, but when he attended an Order Meeting you completely ignore that. It would be completely irrelevant. He would speak just as an Order Member; you wouldn't have it at the back of your mind that he was the Prime Minister and therefore his words as an Order Member should be listened to all the more - No - it's quite irrelevant.

**Vangisa:** I find that very relevant, a very intriguing point. Is it possible (*unclear*) on the last Convention you mentioned this kind of situation - not precisely this one - is it possible for a person in..... er... Surely being Prime Minister or a politician or a Managing Director of a business or something like that.

**S:** I'm only giving a very extreme example. I'm not at this moment saying anything as to the possibility or impossibility of such a person as the Prime Minister being an Order Member.

**Aryamitra:** A politician.

**S:** I'm only giving an extreme example. I don't know. I wouldn't care to generalize upon it, but, you know, I just take it that if he was an Order Member then things would start moving. He might resign as a politician; he might become a better politician; anything might happen. I'm not prepared to prejudge the issue, as it were. It would be up to him to decide as a committed Order Member what he would do (*unclear*) [*Laughter*].

But you see what I'm getting at by making this sort of point? And in the same way with regard say to educational qualifications; certain Order Members may be much better speakers. They are able to put things across more, but within the Order Meeting that should be irrelevant, and the Order Member who has more of the gift of the gab shouldn't be listened to more. Even if there's some relatively inarticulate Order Member who can't put things across very well, listen to him just as carefully, and just as respectfully as you listen to the Order Member who is very glib and can put things in a very smooth and convincing manner. The inarticulate person may have something equally valid to say. This is very important; that you don't trade on your qualities.

**Uttara:** Is it the same taking classes then? Would you say this is the same with taking classes?

**S:** The same as what?

**Uttara:** The people with this... with more....

**Aryamitra:** The gift of the gab.

**Uttara:** Yeah, the gift of the gab than other people who haven't got the gift of the gab, but the people with the gift of the gab are better in a situation rather than the people.....

**S:** Not necessarily. People who have the gift of the gab we hope can use it, if they're Order Members, to communicate, but people who don't have the gift of the gab are not necessarily unable to communicate. I think it's very important to realise that. But you have to be a bit tuned in, a bit receptive, to get what they're saying, but they can make their point in their own ways; and if they're stumbling or fumbling for words you shouldn't assume that they've got nothing worthwhile to say, or that they're unable to communicate. That is not necessarily the case.

**Khema:** Sometimes one has a tendency to associate not being able to use words very well with that you don't understand them very well. (**S:** Yes, right.) Whereas it's not always synonymous.

**S:** No, and you may be very glib but you may not actually have understood the situation.



**Khema:** In taking the class, if you're not very good at speaking, it's quite simple if you know what you're doing, because you say "you sit like this" and there you are doing it and everybody can see that. (*Unclear*) how sitting was.

**Padmaraja:** But what about things like question and answer...

**S:** It applies to some extent even then. Sometimes it becomes obvious to everybody that a person who doesn't have the gift of the gab but has a certain amount of inner experience and strength, and they are really trying to communicate something to you. They have understood the point. They don't find it easy to use words but they do know within themselves and they do put it across in their own way, if you're receptive enough to take it in. So even with regard to questions. Sometimes you may get someone who's very intellectually agile answering your question but it's very easy to pull off confidence tricks in this sort of way and give the impression that the question has been answered but actually it hasn't been, because you've talked glibly and smoothly about it and you have the confidence; but you may not have answered anything at all. Because sometimes you may do that deliberately but you must know that you're doing it, and not yourself be under the impression that you've answered that question, because sometimes you haven't it seems.

So even a person who doesn't have the gift of the gab can very often handle quite satisfactorily even these sort of intellectual questions. Occasionally even handle them better, because he's not misled so easily as the person who is more used or more accustomed to handling concepts and words.

I've mentioned before that the woman from whom I learned the communication exercises was very much of this type. She really could communicate, but she was hopeless at explaining things. And she knew it but it didn't matter. She was quite well-educated and had been a nurse most of her life.

**Marichi:** This is where natural authority would come in. (**S:** Yes.) Somebody taking a class would have a degree of natural authority and confidence even if they were inarticulate or whatever.

**S:** Yes, but sometimes your pseudo-qualifications can hide your lack of natural authority. The fact that you've got a smart suit; you've got a confident perky sort of manner, a glib flow of words. It can hide your lack of basic authority. [*pause*]

**Manjuvajra:** Would Bhante like to expand on the comment you came out with just now in that you said that sometimes you may choose to answer something sort of intellectually knowing that you're not really answering the question. When would you use that?

**S:** For instance, somebody who is somewhat intellectual may ask a sort of pseudo-question; you give a sort of pseudo-answer which is apparently satisfactory, but you just don't see that if people were to go into that particular question which has been raised, if it is even a real question, in a really sincere and genuine way. Either that it would take you too far afield or because you feel that the person who is asking the question just didn't know what he was asking about. So, as it were, you play his little game. He doesn't know it's a game and he thinks it's all serious, that he's asked a question and got an answer, but you know it's simply a game. You know that you've also played that game, but you know that you've played it. [*pause*]

Yes, we haven't really finished with this question of authoritarianism. Sometimes a situation arises in which, perhaps, one Order Member genuinely thinks that another Order Member is not doing enough in one way or another. So that may be communicated. I think one should beware if someone tells you, "you're not doing enough and you ought to pull your socks up", you should beware of reacting to that and saying, "you're just being authoritarian". You understand the sort of situation I have in mind? Every Order Member has got the right, if not the duty, to speak his mind to every other Order Member. If one Order Member thinks another Order Member is slacking he's got a perfect right to say so. If he genuinely thinks and feels that and he communicates it in the proper manner at the proper time; and one should not, if one is spoken to in that way, react and try to cope with the accusation by saying, "well, you're just being authoritarian and trying to tell me what to do". But really ask yourself is there any truth in it, am I slacking? Because that possibility does exist. First of all the possibility that any individual Order Member may slack and may not be doing enough, may not be fulfilling their commitment. This is a possibility, no one's perfect yet. There's also the possibility that some other Order Member sees that. Thirdly, therefore, there's the possibility that some other Order Member tells you that you're slacking. So this is a quite objective and quite acceptable sort of situation. So one should not react by saying, or trying to say, "well you're just being authoritarian, that's just your trip, your hangup", and dismissing it in that way. That wouldn't be fair, wouldn't be fair to yourself. Of course the person concerned may be mistaken but then tell him so, make it clear, clear up the misunderstanding if there is one, but don't

feel resentful that you're being got at and someone is trying to order you around and tell you what to do.

**Uttara:** Who makes the standards then? Who is the dictator of who does what?  
[Laughter]

**S:** Nobody.

**Uttara:** By the accusation coming across there must be some standard already that has been set for the accusations to....

**S:** The standard is that all your time and all your energy are required! [Laughter] But obviously you have to consider where the individual Order Member is and whether they are able to implement that. But it's understood that everyone accepts that as the principle, yeh, but obviously it's also understood that not everybody is able to implement that. It may take years or it will take years to implement it, put it into practise. So the point of the criticism is that you're not putting that generally accepted ideal into practise, to the extent that you actually could, and the shirking and the slacking consists in that. Which doesn't meant that you ought to be doing what I'm doing; if I'm raising funds, so should you be; if I'm meditating you ought to be meditating too - if not you're a slacker - no not that, because different people do different things. But that energy must be going into your own life, into your own spiritual life, from you into the Movement, directly or indirectly, or at least into your own spiritual development. And if another Order Member sees, knowing the overall ideal and knowing you and where you are, if he or she thinks that you're not doing enough, well he or she has the right to say that, and it shouldn't be resented. Though they may be wrong, but it's up to you then to clear that up, and say, "well look, you've overlooked such and such a thing, I'm doing this and I'm doing that, I'm not slacking". All right, the situation may arise in which you feel, "well yes, it's true. I have been slacking. Thank you for pointing it out", but don't be defensive about it. The possibility does exist of course of someone actually being authoritarian, but don't be too much in a hurry to assume that. It may be just another Order Member out of goodwill pointing out something that he or she sees. Don't feel you're being sort of got at. Well perhaps you are but it's in a good healthy way which is good for you and good for everybody else. I'm sure each and every Order Member can stand up to a little bit of being got at. You're not so weak and feeble that you're sort of blown over or knocked over as soon as someone starts knocking at you and telling you you're not

doing enough. If you are doing enough then say so boldly. Say that they're mistaken, but don't sort of go away feeling all hurt - "he doesn't understand me", or "he's bossing me or bullying me". How can one Order Member bully another. It's impossible! [Laughter]

**Nagabodhi:** (*Unclear*) it raises or has raised quite big issues, and very fundamental issues. Something that might be worth saying is a definition I read in a book when I was doing sociology, that power is the attribute of an individual; authority is the relationship between individuals within a system, and (*unclear*) all of us to an extent have power, whether that's confidence, charisma, the various attributes, but what I wonder is whether anyone has authority, because I wonder whether we actually have a system. Certainly there are Councillors with Council officers, but it's not as if there is a system of command. In a way the system is really in a way an interchange of power, in the sense of interchange of commitment and confidence .....

**S:** Right, yes. We can say there is a power structure in a positive sense but not an authority structure, an authoritarian structure. No. Quite definitely.

**Ananda:** I think what happens is very often that we lend authority to some figure or some person by virtue of our own lack of confidence.

**Ashvajit:** It also sometimes happens that you feel lack of confidence with somebody else so you say, "I refuse to place my confidence in you". In that case you've not got any possibility or real communication with that person.

**S:** And you accuse them of being authoritarian when they merely have power as something quite natural and spontaneous.

**Chintamani:** So by what you are saying Nagabodhi, the Order is quite unique, in that it is a structure whereby the power of various individuals can be expressed.

**Nagabodhi:** Yes. But power in the positive sense of commitment and the confidence arising out of commitment..

**Chintamani:** Actually it's not in fact the power of the individual, it's simply the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

**S:** Well this is why I said one Order Member couldn't possibly bully another. How can you?

**Vangisa:** One arm of Avalokiteshvara bullying another arm! *[Laughter]* What exactly did you mean by 'interchange' there? I didn't follow that.

**Nagabodhi:** In the sense of discussing among each other. Like you say to somebody, "I don't think you're doing as much as you could", and by doing that the ensuing discussion or discussions usually leads to a rubbing off of one person's understanding and feeling of commitment onto another, and hopefully sharing more than just an opinion, but sharing a vision.

**Vangisa:** I thought actually that you meant something else, and that mightn't be irrelevant either, by 'interchange', and that is there is an interchange of responsibilities, a system operates on the assumption that you start off from a certain position and work your way up, whereas the exercise of certain functions within the FWBO is something that is done now by one person and another time later on by somebody else. *[pause]*

**Marichi:** That's just organisation. That's organisation. That's something else.

**Vangisa:** Sorry, I don't follow.

**Marichi:** Well, that's not really an exchange of power, that's organisation. It's just one power changing places with another. It's not an exchange.

**Ashvajit:** But that is authoritarianism, and if you occupy a certain position in a structure which has been brought about by a series of circumstances, you hold a certain power. That power is not necessarily your own.

**Marichi:** No, it's a power of your particular *(unclear)* at that time.

**Vangisa:** Within our Movement the power you exercise should correspond to the power that you possess at that time. When you cease to possess that particular power you go and you do something else. It may be from the point of view of social mobility that *(unclear)* doesn't necessarily have to be done, but there is an interchange. One

year it's you; another year it's Nagabodhi. *(Unclear)* happens to correspond with that particular position and that is your own actual power.

**Padmapani:** It seems sometimes that people who are in a position of power....

**S:** When you say 'position of power' are you meaning in an external sense or their own power and influence.

**Padmapani:** I mean in an external sense and this leads on into what I'm going to say. If they leave that particular position sometimes their sort of energy just flags, they haven't got any sort of incentive to do anything.

**S:** Well clearly they've been using the power, as it were, pertaining to their volition. They don't have much power of their own to fall back on.

**Jinamata:** I'm sorry. I got confused now with the use of the word 'power'.

**S:** That's why I asked Padmapani in what sense he was using it.

**Jinamata:** Is there power inherent in a particular job?

**S:** Yes there is. There is a Prime Minister's power of patronage.

**Jinamata:** No I meant now in the Order.....

**[End of Tape Ten Tape Eleven]**

..... say somebody is secretary or whatever I mean is there power inherent in anything like that? I'm getting confused now.

**Padmapani:** OK. Can I just say something a bit more? I would say that you can build up confidence in yourself by being in a position of, you know, you're put into a position and you can build up certain confidence and it's *(unclear)* it's a certain charisma which a lot of people might be attracted by that, but if you left that particular position and some other Order Member took that over, your energy might just completely flag, you know. You wouldn't have any incentive to do anything. You

wouldn't be able to get into anything. Its almost as if your energy would run out. Do you see what I mean?

**Nagabodhi:** Well it might (*unclear*).

**Aryamitra:** You mean there are some people who are dependant on the position.

**Nagabodhi:** But in a way the way we relate to work within the Movement is as a practice, and that you may walk out of the shrine room and completely blow what you've gained in meditation.

**Padmapani:** But has this actually happened? Has anyone ever experienced that?

**Sagaramati:** I think you mentioned once about the working lamas in Tibet. They came out of Tibet quite a few of them (*unclear*)

**S:** It's strange that I was just thinking of them. Yes, I mean lots of Lamas - I'm using the word 'Lama' now in the technical sense of 'Guru' - some of them perhaps were hereditary gurus or they were discovered when they were small children etcetera. Quite a lot of lamas came out of Tibet. It is very noticeable that some completely collapsed, and, as it were, lost their authority with the collapse of the system which clearly had been propping them up. But others despite all difficulties just remained the same. They had that natural authority and continued to carry on, attracted more disciples and, you know, constructed new monasteries and so on. Whereas some were in a really pathetic condition, just couldn't do anything, because they no longer had the support of the system. This was very noticeable.

**Aryamitra:** I think this is what Padmapani is saying.

**Vessantara:** There are two reasons why if one left the position, say of some kind of administrative position in the Movement, there are two reasons why your energy might flag: one is a relatively unhealthy one, usually using that authority of that position to prop you up so when that prop's no longer there, you feel dead. But the other is that in order to really be in touch with one's energy, one needs a situation in which it can be fully be expressed; and a lot of people in working very directly in the Movement get inspired and fired by that position and.....

**S:** Yes. So even when they leave that position that is a permanent gain for them. But Padmapani is referring to the person who is so much propped up by the position that when the position goes, the support of the position goes, well they're just back where they were before, maybe in an even worse position.

**Lokamitra:** As a chairman or branch representative or something one is a focus of energies, as it were, and if one's own energies don't match up to this or sort of aren't in control of a situation, then it seems that the question of external authority comes in, unnatural authority. And then the situation comes about if one leaves that that then one's energies flag or the Lamas in that same situation. So let's be quite careful that someone who does take on those roles is able to cope in that way.

**Ashvajit:** But are you taking on a role in any sense in that case?

**Subhuti:** (*unclear*) that position (*unclear*)

**S:** I am more and more unhappy, by the way, with the use of this word 'Role'. It seems to be a sort of fashionable usage. Someone performing the 'role' of this and the 'role' of that when they're just doing the job. This came up the other day when we spoke about the 'role' of the worker, as it were. When you work, you're not taking on the 'role' of the worker - you're just working! So if you're doing the treasurer's job, you're not taking on the *role* of treasurer; you're just 'treasuring'. [*Laughter*]

**Dharmapala:** I think often that person in that focal point can be given authority by the group which they don't really have. You impose it on them, that they've got all this authority.

**S:** Well they do have a certain representative power as it were. For instance you authorise the treasurer to spend money; so it's the money that belongs to the group, as it were, all of you, but you authorised him to spend it, so he exercises your power, spends your money, as it were, on your behalf.

**Chintamani:** But that's because he's got it in the first place. This has all been beginning to remind me actually of a sadhana, of a visualisation practise where the power, if you like, comes in through the top of your head. It's not yours. And so long as you do the practice, you have the power.

**S:** And also realise it's not your power that you're exercising. It's power which is lent to you, as it were.

**Vangisa:** Can I say that I think we've been concentrating too much on certain kinds of work. Or perhaps that's the wrong word. Certain kinds of activities, like having a certain position in the Centre. A person taking a class is exercising power in the same kind of way. And in another way, a person who is painting a thangka or whatever else it may be, or on retreat, can be said to be exercising or be in touch with power and .....

**S:** I think you're using the word 'power' rather ambiguously now. It's not (*unclear*) the sort of power you're referring to.

**Vangisa:** What I really mean is that activity should correspond to our whole actual... well we have been using the word 'power' and it seemed appropriate.....

**S:** To our being

**Vangisa:** To our being, exactly, ..... So is there an interchange between the two. Each one may activate the other, of course, but initially there is a correspondence which is in fact.... at any given time we are doing what we should naturally be doing.

**S:** Your power should be the function of your being.

**Vangisa:** Exactly. You took the words out of my mouth! [*Laughter*] [*pause*]

**Uttara:** See being the chairman in a council and of a Centre does that automatically make you the leader of that Centre?

**S:** Well, what do you mean by leader?

**Uttara:** He seems to be taking on.... at least I had the impression that if you are chairman of the council and of that Centre then you are more responsible for the Centre than the rest of the (*unclear*).

**S:** Well, this raises the question of how and why do you become Chairman. You're elected as Chairman by the other members of the that council; or rather by the other

members of that Centre. And the question arises as to why you have been elected as Chairman. Normally I would say you are elected as Chairman because the other members of the Order involved feel that you are the most experienced person. At least this is the ideal situation. Sometimes, of course, the most experienced person is not available for certain quite practical objective reasons. Maybe he's got outside commitments and so on. But anyway the Chairman is the most experienced and capable person available. So that's already been recognised in the very fact of his being elected as Chairman. So after that his, as it were, general function is not so much to lead in the sense of telling you to follow him when he goes off in whatever direction he thinks fit; but just to co-ordinate and give a sort of overall direction to the activities of that particular Centre, but all the time in full consultation with all the other Order Members involved especially with the other members of that particular council, who, having elected him, and having recognised him in that way as more experienced and capable than themselves, will be quite willing to give him that sort of trust. But don't give him sort of dictatorial powers by any means. Usually we do certain things by consensus as you know. But a certain initiative rests with the Chairman to see that all the activities are coordinated and that there is some provision for the future, that the whole thing is properly orientated.

**Uttara:** Can I just say I was wondering..... you know the thought came in because as I'd seen yesterday in the Council meeting that Sona was the Chairman of Norfolk, I don't know whether there's a new Norfolk Centre, but I was just wondering why if Devamitra was taking on the responsibility of finding a Centre, he seemed to be the focal point of it. I was wondering why he wasn't Chairman in this case.

**S:** Devamitra, as far as I know, is doing most of the, as it were, detailed work, quite definitely, but the idea is that the Chairman should have more sort of general oversight; should be able to see things more as a whole, and think and plan for the future. Which often means that he perhaps shouldn't be so much involved with the organisational day to day side of things. That is more, as it were, the Secretary's responsibility. This is how I've seen it. It may well differ of course from Centre to Centre, depending on who is available also.

**Ashvajit:** The situation at Brighton is quite particular as well. I think that one has to study each case on its merits. Vessantara is Chairman for a number of reasons. I'm secretary. He has certain abilities, certain interests, certain things that he likes to do. He likes to do things in a certain way and I like to do things in my own way.

[Laughter] It doesn't mean to say that I (*unclear*) is above me or below me. We work together.

**Aryamitra:** Like Jack Sprats! [Laughter]

**Lokamitra:** I think it is very important to remember that the person who does most shouldn't necessarily be Chairman. That may have happened in one or instances, but certainly shouldn't be the normal pattern.

**S:** The Chairman should have time to think about policy and to plan, which the Secretary may not always have time to do. [pause]

**Uttara:** Yes, but if I think of..... (*unclear*) feeling that if the person is Chairman then automatically you give them the responsibility of the Centre instead of taking it.

**S:** That's quite wrong. You shouldn't do that. It's not thereafter the Chairman who becomes responsible for running the Centre - you are all responsible. The Chairman will be the head, but what use is a head without a body? [Laughter] [pause] [Laughter] What is it? Am I more witty than I realised?! [Laughter]

Right any further comments on any of these points? I think that'll be enough actually as far as I am concerned.

**Dharmapala:** Would you say in the case of bullying which came up, that in the case of bullying what really happens is the person bullies themselves having sort of projected this..(*unclear*) ... then bludgeon themselves. Sort of projecting that onto someone else.

**S:** You mean someone is himself really not doing all that he should and he projects that onto somebody else and then tells him off for not doing all that he should? Is that what you are thinking of?

**Ananda:** No. I think you mean the opposite of that don't you?

**Khema:** Can you speak up a bit?

**Dharmapala:** I think if you reach any instance where you can feel you're being pushed and you react to that and you point out this person's pushing. If you accept their point of view, what seems to me can happen is that you start battering yourself. And, you know, I was just putting that forward. Do you think that is a correct sort of view?

**S:** Well why should you batter yourself, you know, even if you recognise that what someone else has said about your not doing all that could reasonably be expected of you. Even if you've accepted that that is bad. Why should you bully yourself? You just go about it quite objectively and, as it were, kindly. You decide after thinking it over to try to do more, but you decide yourself how you will try to do more and in what way. That's up to you.

**Dharmapala:** I agree, but if you accept the point sometimes that you can't feel happy by doing it. I've experienced that sort of thing.

**S:** Well if for any reason you think that that criticism is not completely justified or valid, then you must stand up and say so. And say, '*well I appreciate your having said it but I can't agree for this and this and this reason. I thank you for telling me; but I don't accept what you say*'. It may be that you're wrong, and you've just been unable to see it, but you have the right to be wrong, as it were. You may be wrong or you may be right. Perhaps that person hasn't fully understood, so you then have the right to make it clear that you are doing all that you can reasonably be expected to do. And sometimes there may be a genuine difference of opinion as to what is reasonable. That would just have to be accepted sometimes.

**Aryamitra:** Maybe there is genuine bullying though as well.

**S:** There's that possibility too. And then it's very genuine to stand up and say '*Look you are in fact bullying me*'. Surely you can stand up to that sort of thing. Don't let anybody bully you.

**Padmapani:** It seems to me that a lot of this, you know, bullying, might take place when in actual fact the person is, say, mentally or physically not very well. And although that other person could say, well, you're just rationalising here yourself, in actual fact some people do seem to take a lot from other people and they experience it as bullying. But in actual fact they just brought a lot into themselves. They haven't

got any energy to repay or to stand up for what they believe, because, you know, they're just not well.

**S:** Well then, it has to be the concern of other Order Members and if necessary, other Order Members have to intervene and tell the person who seems to be doing some bullying, *'well look, you just shouldn't do that. That person isn't slacking, they are just tired or they just are in some emotional difficulty, so just leave it for the time being'*. Other Order Members may have to intervene.

**Padmapani:** But do you see what I mean in relationship with what you were saying? That you can take bullying and if you've got a lot of energy, you can repel anything in a sense. If you're feeling very good you can take all that and you can sort of say that. But if you're just not well or you're just sort of under the weather or whatever....

**S:** But then you can often say, *'well look I'm not feeling too well now. We'll talk about it some other time, we'll talk about it next week'*, and sincerely mean it. (*Unclear*) right to say so. I doubt whether any Order Member will then sort of, you know, carry on bullying you, even if he is actually bullying you to begin with.

**Padmapani:** Well he should, but yeah. I see what you mean.

**Jinamata:** It seems to me that this question of authoritarianism relates to some unbalanced energies in one's (*unclear*) like weaknesses that may be strengths that aren't really strengths. And that one sees oneself as superior or inferior to others and also refuses to accept responsibility for oneself. I think it relates to these sort of things. Independent of somebody having a particular office. I mean, it doesn't have to be an office holder who one sees as authoritarian.

**S:** Yes. You can be authoritarian through some accidental qualities that you possess, even some genuine qualities that you possess. You can use them sometimes in a slightly authoritarian way. That's why more gifted people have to be more careful of this sort of thing. Those who are not good speakers, who aren't good organisers, not particularly good at anything, well, they don't have to bother about being authoritarian. But the people who are capable, and good speakers and lots of energy, they have to be a bit careful about it.

**Chintamani:** So you begin to identify with your gift.

**S:** Well like you identify with your money. I don't know if anyone has associated much with very monied people. I mean, really really rich people. They are a different class of being because they are accustomed to exercising such authority.

**Chintamani:** It's quite good to reflect sometimes. For instance, if somebody is extremely wealthy, supposing I lost my wallet, how would I feel. [*pause*]

**Ashvajit:** Money does give a kind of confidence. [*Laughter*] It's very difficult to differentiate from (*unclear*)

**S:** This is one of the reasons why it's very good to be without money, and of course in the early days bhikkhus were completely without money. They just received food from sympathetic people. And I know from my own experience what a tremendous difference it makes not to have money. You feel completely sort of helpless and naked, and vulnerable, which you are. You are quite literally at the mercy of other people; you are quite helpless. You can't even go and buy a cup of tea; you don't even have that power. You are dependent upon someone asking you if you would like a cup of tea, otherwise you don't get one, you can't get one, and they may forget. You are completely at the mercy of other people. You have no power, no authority. And I noticed - I spent about three years in this state - and I noticed when I started handling money, it seemed a very strange sort of thing. I took this coin and went into a shop and I gave the coin, and they gave me something in exchange. It seemed a very sort of artificial kind of transaction. Something that you actually definitely did or didn't do. And I could see very clearly when I went back to handling money again, even though in very small quantities, that it made a tremendous difference psychologically. So this is an artificial thing really (*unclear due to nose blowing!*) money. So, we don't, I think, realise the extent to which we identify with our money, with our decent clothes, with the sort of place we live in etc, etc. I'm sure some of you have had the experience of some of your friends from your, as it were, previous life, maybe your well to do friends, coming to visit you at your squat in Archway. But they look at you differently a bit from the way in which they would look at you if they came to see you at some beautiful house you had in Hampstead, or something like that. And you feel a bit differently about yourself, at least to a small extent.

**Ananda:** I'd say this brings what for me is quite an interesting topic which maybe we could discuss at more length sometime else. But the whole question of money and

possessions with respect to the Order and the future and if we establish a country Order Centre most of the money and possessions (*unclear*).

**S:** I think we'd better not discuss it now but no doubt we do have to think about it.

**Manjuvajra:** There is (*unclear*) to what you were saying just now, that when my general level of confidence and (*unclear*) is warning, I look around and I see people who are living, let's say, a respectable life in the conventional sense, and I see the confidence that they get just from that, and I often feel that as a temptation. You know, I think if I had a real house and a real job and.....

**S:** A real car.

**Manjuvajra** ..... a real car [*Laughter*] and all those other sort of things, then my own personal confidence would rise.

**Vangisa:** Oh I don't think that these things give people confidence.

**Manjuvajra:** Oh I do.

**Jinamata:** They give people worries.

**S:** I think I agree that they give a lot of people confidence, but if you take away those things and just leave them naked in their individuality, I think a lot of people would feel very uncomfortable, very weak, very vulnerable.

**Vangisa:** I think that the average person has these things and is quite lacking in confidence, even with them.

**Marichi:** But the average person who hasn't got them is lacking even more confidence! [*Loud laughter*]

**Vangisa:** I don't think there is that much difference.

**S:** What about the tramps that you see. They don't have a house. They don't have anywhere to stay. They don't have any decent clothes, I mean the majority of them are in a far worse than the average person with those things.

**Vangisa:** (*unclear*) such complete feelings of insecurity that they are all the time afraid of losing them. They're suffering from anxiety (*unclear*) very energetic protection against their own feelings of insecurity and anxiety.

**S:** Anyway the whole discussion is meant to underline just one simple fact - that within the Order you're just an individual and nothing more. You're not the owner of a motor car, or the owner of a house or the president of a big company or anything like that. You're just an individual without possessions, without even qualifications, even without qualities, if you like, in a more external sense, without clothes, if you like, nothing at all, just you, just an individual relating to other individuals. Not bringing in anything else from outside to protect yourself or camouflage yourself or bolster yourself up. Just an individual relating to other individuals. So that if you are loved, you're loved for exactly what you are, warts and all! [*Laughter*]. Not because you've got money, not because you're beautiful, not because you've got a prominent position outside or any (*unclear*). Just for what you are. Now what a comforting thought that is! [*Laughter*]. There is a situation in which you can be known and accepted and liked, if not loved, for what you are. Even your family very often doesn't give you that, not unless you're quite lucky.

Anyway lets close on that note and have lunch, and then reassemble.

*[Arrangements for the rest of the day and the end of the Convention discussed - not transcribed]*

**Lokamitra:** When you were talking earlier on, it reminded me that some people are told that they are going to be ordained and that the Order meeting has agreed that they will be ordained.....

**S:** Told by whom?

**Lokamitra:** By someone. I don't know who, and maybe that's not the case or maybe it is, but certainly that information has been quite disruptive, quite unfortunate.

**S:** Let me make one point here. I've always understood that I myself inform the person concerned, that no one should inform them before I've done that. I always write because usually I'm not in personal contact. If I'm in personal contact I speak, but otherwise I write to that person saying that the question of your being ordained has



been discussed and that it has been agreed, or that the unanimous feeling is that you should be ordained, and that we shall be happy to welcome you into the fellowship of the Order. This is what I usually write. So people should wait for me to do that. I may not always do it very quickly but people should wait for me to do that and not speak to the person beforehand and say "*Well it's been agreed that you should be ordained*". Unless in any rare case I might ask someone to do that. Otherwise I myself inform the person in one way or another that they are to be ordained. But don't even drop little hints. Naturally the person wanting to be ordained really wants to know whether they are going to be ordained or not. But you really must say, "*You will hear from Bhante in due course.*" Because even if they're not going to be ordained, I'll be in touch with them to explain why, and what they need to do to make themselves ready. So just say "*well, it's been discussed and you will hear from Bhante in due course*".

**Vangisa:** No decision has been reached until you have confirmed it.

**S:** Right, exactly, yes.

All right, let's adjourn then, stretch our legs.

**[End of Session]**

**S:** Plenary Session Eight.

This is our last session of this Convention and I want to say just a few words on this question of the place of vows in the spiritual development of the Upasaka and Upasika; and then I think we have to conclude by disposing of just one or two practical matters. We'll come to those in due course. Now with regards to this question of the place of vows in the spiritual development of the Upasaka or Upasika. At present my thought in this particular matter is, as it were, in the making. To some extent I'm thinking aloud. I'm not presenting you with, as it were, cut and dried conclusions. I think there's still quite a bit to be worked out and then applied. But what I'm thinking is this. One has in the first place one's basic and original commitment to the Three Jewels, to the process of one's own spiritual development, one's own evolution, both on one's own and in association with other people. One has that. And then one gives expression to that initially in terms of the observance of the ten precepts, the ten sikshas of the Upasaka and/or Upasika. That is in a way the sort of basic structure. As regards the commitment, the Going for Refuge to the Three

Jewels, this is quite clear, this is quite straightforward, this is quite uncomplicated. One should simply deepen one's original commitment as much as one possibly can, more more and more. But the deepening comes about on account of, and also finds expression in, various activities, even various disciplines. So eventually one finds that in a sense it's not enough to observe just those ten precepts. They are still quite general, they are more like principles. You need something even more specific. And different people need different things, and you yourself need different things at different times. You don't always need the same thing. So this is where the vow comes in, and I think we should emphasise the vow in this sense much more than we have hitherto done. The vow should be regarded as something adapted to a particular requirement, if necessary just for a particular period of time. Let me just give you one or two examples to show the sort of thing I mean.

You might come to the conclusion that you're very greedy as regards food and eating in general. And you might come to the conclusion therefore, that in order to correct this you should observe certain restrictions, not just from a health point of view, but also from a disciplinary point of view, to curb your greed. So you decide that, say, on the first Monday of every month, you have a fast. Or you decide that you will give up for three months or a year, certain foods of which you are particularly fond. That would be your vow and you would take that vow to cover that particular matter for that particular period. And one can no doubt think of a number of other kinds of vows which one could take or should take. In fact the possibilities are infinite. So I think we should be thinking much more in terms of translating the ten precepts, translating these ten principles, from time to time into something much more concrete and specific. In other words these vows. And also recognise that different people observe, or need to observe, different vows. Someone might take a vow of silence because they're so talkative, but somebody else might have to make a vow to speak a bit more! *[Laughter]*. Maybe not very many of us. *[Laughter]* So you see the way in which I'm thinking. And not only that the vows differ from person to person so that there should be grateful and mutual tolerance and acceptance, and not think that someone isn't doing anything just because he isn't observing the same vows that you are observing. But also you, yourself, need different disciplines at different times, according to the stage or the phase that you are passing through and according to your nature, temperament, and so on. Your vows may change. Therefore no vow should be forever.

Speaking very very generally, in Buddhism, even with regard to becoming a Bhikkhu, you don't take the vows - if you call them vows in this case - for ever and ever. You

are free to leave at any time. You may remember in the case, say, of Christianity, in the case of, say, Catholicism, they say that the priesthood is indelible. Once a priest always a priest. You can't cease to be a priest. You may cease to perform the functions of a priest, but you're still a priest. You can never leave the priesthood. It's not like that in Buddhism. You can stop being a monk any time you please and you're not a monk any longer. It's not indelible. So the same with these vows. There's no point in taking them for ever and ever. You observe them for so long as they need to be observed, and so long as they help you. And then, all right, you give them up. Or you extend them if you think this is proper, or you change them, you observe some other kind of vow suited to the stage in which you are now. So I think if we take up and if we emphasise this question of vows, then it gives a greater concreteness to our endeavour, and it doesn't remain just vague general principle or vague general aspiration. You see the sort of thing I'm getting at? So anybody got any comment on this before we go any further? Any comment on what I've said about vows so far? Anybody ever engaged in any of these vows? I think a few have in certain respects.

**Aryamitra:** I took a vow last November to abstain from nicotine for a year and I found it worked very easily. It's as if the vow - I did it at an Order meeting and offered flowers and incense - it's as if the vow was much stronger than my craving, and although I still had craving, it just seemed impossible to break it.

**Manjuvajra:** I took the same vow at the beginning of this year and I found that the giving up of cigarettes was completely incidental, that wasn't the important bit at all. What I realised was the discipline that it involved, you know, continually having to stop myself getting out the tobacco, having a cigarette or refusing a cigarette from somebody else. It made my awareness arise considerably and gave an awful lot more energy so that now I'm looking around for various other things! *[Laughter]*

**S:** Have you found anything yet?

**Manjuvajra:** No! *[Laughter]*.

**Aryamitra:** There is something Bhante that you said to me concerning somebody, about if they don't give it up soon, in this case, it would be too late. And it gave me quite a shock, thinking about it. It's like these habits if we continue them for some time, it's almost like it becomes harder rather than easier.

**S:** Oh yes, very definitely. In all respects. I mean the longer you continue it, the more of a habit a habit becomes, until it becomes almost a sort of part of you and it's very very difficult to give it up. So nip your habits in the bud while they're still young and tender, before they get really sort of hard and concrete like that, you just can't budge them. This is why it is so much more difficult for older people. They've a lifetime of habit (*unclear*). So young people in a way, in this respect are in a very fortunate situation. Many of their habits are just not formed. They are still in the process of getting habits, still choosing which habits you're going to form and which you're not going to form. But if you come into Buddhism or come into the spiritual path when you're 40, 50, 60 it's so much more difficult. You're really immured in your habits. So while you're still young, take serious thought. It's interesting what you said about the power of the vow, because someone put it to me like this. Once you've decided, once you've vowed and you've say done it in front of the shrine etc., etc, then it's as though there's no conflict. There's no 'shall I or shall I not'. You know you can't. The possibility is completely abolished, so there's no mental conflict and it's that which takes so much of your energy, shall I or shall I not? Shall I have another cigarette or shall I wait another half an hour? etc., etc. And with regard to so many other things as well. The vow relieves you of responsibility in a sense, in a very positive sense because you yourself have relieved yourself of the responsibility. You've cleared the way, you feel very free. Well you know you're not going to do that, that that is finished with, it's no longer a problem because you're not going to do it. It's done with.

Of course before taking a vow you estimate your own strength and capacity and you enter upon it very solemnly. And if one wishes one can make offerings at the shrine. Maybe at an Order Meeting, maybe if you feel the need, call upon other Order Members to witness you as well as the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and say, "*if you see my hand stray near a cigarette [Laughter] could you slap it and snatch away the cigarette and remind me of my vow if I do become so forgetful and neglectful*". So, a vow properly and mindfully entered upon can be a very great support. *[pause]* Anybody else got any experience of vows?

**Ananda:** Bhante, could you say something briefly about the duration of a vow, and whether one should take on something very very difficult. Think of the most difficult thing you've ever taken up, or take something not quite so difficult that you think you can keep a bit easier.

**S:** I think it's very difficult to lay down general rules. I think with regard to the length of time, well theoretically it can be any length of time, they can be a day, a week, a month, a year, two or three years even. I think people probably shouldn't think further ahead than two or three years with regard to any vow. Although, if you give up something like nicotine for a year, probably that's that. It's settled the question once and for all. You don't even need to renew the vow as a vow because you know you're just not going to take nicotine any more. But, when you decide to take a vow, think very carefully about the length of time. It shouldn't be a length of time that is not going to stretch you at all. I mean there's not much point in taking a vow to give up food for two hours! [*Laughter*]. Say if it's a question of fasting, well a day's fast every month I would say would be a very reasonable thing to do. Say take a vow that for one year, you will fast one day per month, so that's twelve fast days. That would seem to me to be very reasonable. If you were to take a vow to fast for a whole week every month for a year, probably that would be a bit unreasonable and expecting too much of yourself or trying to do too much, speaking very broadly and generally. But if it was a vow say to give up smoking, well I think a week wouldn't be enough; a year seems a very reasonable period. So just think carefully depending on the nature of it. Don't take a vow to give up something which is really in a sense, impossible for you to give up.

#### [End of Side One Side Two]

Though I don't mean to underestimate the power of the vow. You can get strength from the vow but be very careful because if by any chance you do break your vow, you'll feel very very bad about it afterwards. So be very careful about what vows you do take. Because once you have taken them, you must observe them.

**Vangisa:** You used the word solemn, how solemn should this be?

**S:** I'm not sure what you mean by solemn. Do you mean solemn in the sense of non-joyful? When you take a vow you should be really pleased, because you're getting rid of a big load of trouble.

**Vangisa:** I follow that. You used the word. I've forgotten the precise phrase.

**S:** I meant sort of ceremonial.

**Vangisa:** Exactly. I look at solemn in that way (*unclear*). If you do something on your own for instance, its not likely to have quite the same effect as if you did it (*unclear*). On the other hand (*unclear*) it's rather difficult to confine them to say an Order meeting.

**S:** Well it might be a good idea just to invite two or three Order Members, or even one Order Member whom you've got a definite feeling of respect for, just to be the witness or witnesses of your vow, and to be present at the little Puja or ceremony which you perform on that occasion. You may tell them what the vow is if you so wish. Or you may not; it's up to you. If it's something which you'd rather not tell them, well don't. But I think normally one probably would. A vow that I know some people take for a definite limited period is the vow of celibacy, and I think this is particularly helpful because if there's a question of giving up sex all together, that might be a big thing for anybody to contemplate. But people feel that they can handle a vow of celibacy for a limited period and then get to know what it's like to live in that sort of state, whether for a month, or six months, or three months, or a year or whatever it may be.

So in a way a vow represents a middle way. You're not saying you're never going to do something again, but you certainly do not indulge in that particular thing for a certain limited period. So you get used to doing without it, but you don't frighten yourself, as it were, with the thought that you're never going to be able to enjoy it ever again in your life. But actually by observing the vow, even for a limited period, you find actually you can get on without that particular thing very well and that gives you confidence.

**Mangala:** A positive side of vows is undertaking to do something more.

**S:** This is very important too, yes. For instance, I have mentioned sometimes that in India some people have a vow that they will never eat alone on any day; that they will not eat without having given food to some other person or at least some other being first. So before sitting down for their own lunch they will actually go out in the street and try and find a beggar and call him in and feed him before feeding themselves. Or you can make a vow to give something every day, even if it's only putting a few coins in some box that you keep for the purpose. Or giving some food to the birds. But you'll give something to somebody in some form every day. That is the vow. Or you can make a vow to keep up a certain kind of meditation regularly every morning for

so many days or weeks or months. That is another kind of vow. Or to recite your mantra so many times each day for a certain number of days or weeks and so on. [pause]

**Ashvajit:** I tend to find that a vow is something that develops, a sort of gradually strengthening intention to do something or other. You find yourself falling back a bit, so you make an even further resolve and then finally realise that you've really made up your mind.

**S:** Actually, perhaps the vow is helpful in this way, that very often we find it difficult to make up our minds. There are so many things pulling us in different directions at the same time, we try to keep all our options open all the time. To, as it were, preserve our so-called freedom of action, but actually it isn't real freedom.

**Chintamani:** It seems to me that one could broaden this whole question of vows and say that a vow state of mind is a state of mind which you have all the time about whatever one decides to do. Every action is a vowed action.

**S:** Very much so.

**Chintamani:** Deliberate.

**S:** Sp this is why I said in the context of the Bodhisattva Ideal, that his whole life is the living out of his vows. When he becomes a Bodhisattva or at some stage of his Bodhisattva career, he makes vows. There are different lists of vows of different Bodhisattvas given in the scriptures. And they then proceed to live out their vows for their whole life, even for millions of years according to the texts. It's a living out of those vows. It is a vow-directed and vow-guided and a vow-motivated life, the *Pranidhana*. And this is very very important. Instead of just sort of weakly and meekly meandering along, you are going ahead, you are forging ahead by the power of your vows. But vows need to be specific. The Bodhisattva vows are very specific. They are very specific forms of the Bodhicitta.

**Aryamitra:** Could you give an example of that?

**S:** For instance, there was one vow I read about that somebody vowed that he would establish a connection with those who had no connection with the Buddha-nature.

Vows are sometimes quite abstruse. But even those who had no hope of becoming Buddhas, he would establish a connection with them and see that they became Buddhas. But of course you're dealing with Bodhisattva vows here, not with say ordinary, as it were ethical and spiritual vows. And also Buddhists have always believed, rightly or wrongly, that vows have a sort of cosmic power, a sort of cosmic energy, that by making a vow you help to bring things into existence. That once you've made the vow it's a sort of power or force let loose in the universe which is working and which will help bring about the desired result. A bit like you said when you made that vow to give up nicotine for a year as though it's a sort of force or power.

**Vangisa:** Would you like to define a vow?

**S:** I hadn't thought of so doing. No, I think I'd rather not. I think I'd rather think aloud about it and also think to myself a bit more before I got around to defining it. I said at the beginning I'm still just thinking aloud, as it were, and this is the direction in which my thoughts are moving. That we should attach more and more importance to vows as I've described them. Maybe there are other aspects of vows which I've not yet thought of, and which should be taken into consideration when one gets around to defining vows.

**Sagaramati:** There seems to be almost an integrating factor as well in the sense that you have to call upon more of yourself in order to find (*unclear*)

**S:** Energy. You unify your energy.

**Dhammadinna:** Is a vow a vow only if it's made in the presence of some other people? There's a difference between that and personal intention to do or not to do something?

**S:** My feeling is that you could make the vow by yourself. But if you call others to witness it gives you additional support. You think, "*well how could I possibly break it, they know about it*". What would they think of you. You invoke your *Hiri*, your sense of shame in a positive sense.

**\_\_(Woman)\_\_:** Wouldn't that describe what you described in the lecture on karma as a vow - it's a strong willed positive action.

**S:** Yes. But a vow is again very specific, not that "well, I will be kind", but the kindness should take certain forms, or a certain form.

\_\_\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_\_\_: And that deliberately willed action as the result of (*unclear*)

**S:** Yes.

**Ananda:** Bhante, you said a vow should be specific. Could one take upon oneself the vow to observe one of the precepts particularly?

**S:** One could do that certainly.

**Ananda:** Or even the perfections like generosity.

**S:** One could do that, yes. I mean there is a quite well known practice - I think I've mentioned this before - of taking for instance the *Paramitas*, the Perfections, the six *Paramitas*, and concentrating on Monday, or let's say Sunday, the first day of the week, on Sunday you concentrate on *Dana*; On Monday you concentrate on *Sila* and so on. Not that you neglect the others totally. And then on to the last day of the week, on the Saturday, you concentrate on observing all of them fully, or as fully as you can. That's a particular vow with regard to the practise of the *paramitas*.

**Uttara:** Could you see the Sevenfold Puja in terms of vows?

**S:** Well if you made a vow that you'd say it, for instance, three times every day, morning, afternoon and evening Sevenfold Puja, that would be a vow.

**Uttara:** No, the actual sentences themselves, could you see them in terms of vows?

**S:** I think for the most part they're too general. They're not sufficiently specific, though they could be the principles of more specific vows. You say, I offer flowers and lamps and so on to the Buddha, well you can make a vow, as some of the Tibetans do, that once a year, every year you will offer one thousand lamps on a certain occasion. Or that once a week you will offer 108 lamps. That would be more specific and therefore a vow.

**Uttara:** So that's more definite.

**S:** More definite, more specific.

\_\_\_\_(**Man**)\_\_\_\_: What form would taking these vows be? Is that still up to the individual?

**S:** I think it's up to the individual, but as someone did indicate, that within the context of a little Puja make your offering and presumably with the presence of a few, or at least one, other Order Member. That would seem quite sufficient. I don't think its necessary to lay down any sort of rules about it. It's what one finds most effective. It's a very individual thing.

**Aryamitra:** Yeah, the main point about it I think it that it is an individual thing, that it's not just like we all take precepts, but it's something that you specifically know that it's maybe a weak area of yours or something that you want to cultivate. Very specific perceived to be reinforced.

**Manjuvajra:** I was just wondering about the particular form in which you take a vow. After the third stage of the Puja, after the precepts, or at the end.

**S:** I must say I hadn't thought about that. I think I'd rather leave it to the discretion of the individual.

**Ratnapani:** Yes, I think you'd find that if you had a vow time that would tend to reduce the power of it. If you've not only planned the vow and how you intend to observe it, but you've also planned any ceremony you'd like to do, there's all that power which is yours too. The whole thing is drawing on you.

**S:** The initiative is with you.

**Aryamitra:** Is there anything you see generally within the Order um....a general vow, that's what I'm trying to say, something you see that's specific? Do you feel that, say, Order Members generally need to take a vow of celibacy say, as an example or....?

**S:** I think the very nature of the vow is such that it is an individual thing. Though I can well imagine that there are quite a number of areas which quite a number of Order Members need to attend to, so perhaps they should ideally make vows in all these different fields, but they make them in different ways and maybe at different stages of their career. I mean different vows for different lengths of time. Say this whole

question of *dana* for instance. For instance the 'Work a Month', is a sort of vow isn't it, really? You make a vow that whatever I earn in that particular month, or a certain percentage of it will go for such and such purpose. That is a vow. So if someone wished they could well solemnise that by just taking the vow in the course of their morning Puja, or something of that sort.

**Vessantara:** It's important to have an intellectual understanding of it but I've sort of got an intellectual difficulty getting my brain 'round it. People take vows about things in situations where they're in conflict with themselves, different parts of themselves warring against one another, and a vow is a method of stopping that conflict. If you look at say some of the Christian Fathers who took vows of celibacy which admittedly were ongoing with them, it seems very often that their vows were basically ways of just repressing things and they therefore suffered a lot of consequences from that. I can see situations - I have seen situations - with Order Members where they haven't actually taken vows, but have talked a lot about giving up, or say becoming celibate; and it was clear that those people were very often the ones who had least understanding of what was the actual nature of the conflict, why they, say, got into unskilful sexual situations. And I'm wondering, in a sense, if there's not a danger of taking a vow and artificially, in a sense, repressing one side of the conflict without having any understanding of what you're doing and therefore, it reoccurring in some other way.

**S:** I'm sure there is that danger, but I also think that if the vow is for a certain specific period, in a sense it doesn't matter because you've learnt during that period, you've seen what was happening. You might even see in fact you had just thrust down some side or some aspect of yourself. And also there's the point that if you did observe the vow, even originally with some wrong motivation or lack of understanding, that would be clarified and purified in the course of the actual observance itself. And in any case the vow terminates and then you can reconsider and take stock of the whole situation as well. And also you've got your spiritual friends because if you tell them that you're going to observe a vow of a particular nature, they may advise you "*well don't take the vow for such a long period.*" I've done this myself with certain people. One or two people were contemplating vows of celibacy for life. I suggested they didn't take them, that they limited them to a much shorter period and then reconsidered, and perhaps extend it for another period. So it's the duty also of the spiritual friend or just your friends within the Order, just to advise you in this respect if necessary. Perhaps in some cases they know you better than you know yourself.

**Aryamitra:** I think that it is worth considering that in the sense that, say with myself giving up nicotine I know it wasn't the nicotine I was giving up, if you like, that's just the form it was taking, and so you've got to say well what's the point in making vows? And it's obviously in a way to find out what happens. So when you're in that state of renunciation, what happens is you're discovering what it is, why you usually do that - whatever it is, whether it's smoking, whether it's sex - you find out, you're going deeper, if you like (**S:** That's a very good point) into the root.

**S:** Like a laboratory situation. You're excluding a certain area just so that you can see what happens without it. Perhaps one should look at it much more in those terms rather than in ethical and disciplinary terms, as part of your self-study. You understand the workings of your mind better, or workings of your whole mental and emotional apparatus or even your physical apparatus.

**Padmaraja:** Sometimes the vow can be a natural expression of the resolution of an inner conflict. I found this anyway. I consciously took it in that way.

**S:** If it's a natural expression it's not a vow quite in this sense. For instance if you have no sexual temptations then obviously the vow of celibacy has got no meaning - you are naturally celibate. The vow suggests an effort to strengthen a more positive side of yourself. And, as it were, deprive the more negative side of yourself of the energy to continue. [*pause*]

I must say there's another extension of this that I was thinking of very seriously. This gets us a bit off the track, but only to some extent, and onto another very important track. This is also still concerning my thinking aloud. You know that we did at the last Convention talk about other degrees of ordination. Do you remember that was mentioned? The Maha Upasaka Ordination and so on. There's one aspect of this that I've not been at all happy about or at least I've been very careful about, and that is that I want at all costs - I think I said this before - to safeguard the uniqueness of the original Going for Refuge. I think everybody understands this. That this is your once and for all commitment which may deepen and deepen - deepen, yes sure, but there is no, as it were, higher or further ordination, in the sense of a second commitment or anything like that. It's the original commitment that is deepening. So you commit yourself once and for all and you are ordained once and for all. So you shouldn't really think and speak in terms of another ordination or another commitment. So I'm not quite happy - I'm not at all happy - about thinking in terms of a further ordination and

then grades of people in the sense of people having different degrees of ordination. In a sense as Order Members all are equally committed and all are equally ordained, if you see what I mean. I hope I've made it clear enough. Do you see this? So even if we do have say a Maha Upasaka ordination and so on and so forth, it mustn't detract from the seriousness and, in a way, the ultimacy of that original Upasaka ordination or just ordination, of commitment, but be an extension of it. So vows comes in in this way, it seems to me, that we should think of any other ordination more as a vow and not as an ordination. You see the connection now?

**Vimalamitra:** Or taking on further precepts in a way?

**S:** In a way taking on further precepts, yes. So I think we should perhaps stop speaking of it as another ordination. Maybe use other terms. Maybe you have to find a completely different set of terms. But you've got your original commitment, your Going for Refuge and taking upon yourself of further precepts, and then you've got also even more specifically vows, which could include a vow to accept a certain kind of responsibility and that is of course what amounts to what we have been calling another or a higher ordination.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: So your original Going for Refuge is like being born and the rest of your life follows (*unclear*) and there's only one life.

**S:** Yes, right. Otherwise if a further or 'higher' ordination, as it were, as we call it, is considered, as it were, more important because it's higher, you cannot but detract from that original Going for Refuge. And this is why in the Eastern Buddhist countries, Going for Refuge has lost its significance for the majority of people, Becoming a monk is the important thing, yeah? Which is just a question of lifestyle, not a question of commitment or Going for Refuge.

**Khema:** But in a way we have that at the moment, because there are some people who are known to be very good Kalyana Mitras and others who (*unclear*) somewhere else.

**S:** So you know, when we did hold the two Maha Upasaka and Maha Upasika ordinations that we've had so far there are four extra precepts or vows. So it was a taking upon oneself of extra vows more specifically, especially in relation to other people and responsibility for other people. It wasn't another ordination in the sense of another Going for Refuge. That remains the same but deepened Going for Refuge and

commitment. So I think our nomenclature needs a little revising, and what we have been calling the other levels of ordination, is the taking upon oneself of extra vows. But there remains one level within the Order, as it were. We all are equally committed, all have equally Gone for Refuge. There are no, as it were, ranks in the more worldly sense within the Order at all. Do you see what I mean? There are differences in respect of vows but there are no different grades or ranks. Maybe there is a deeper commitment on the part of some people but it's very difficult to embody that in a sort of series of grades. Any comment on all this? Feel free to disagree or to make other suggestions because this is still my thinking aloud.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: I think it's something very very complicated.

\_\_(**Man**)\_\_: It's just a classification (*unclear*).

**Padmapani:** Bhante, do you think that with the Mitra system being upgraded, do you feel it's all right for Mitras maybe to take vows?

**S:** I think it is, with regard to personal things. Things like food, and sex and *dana*. Yes, I think it would be quite suitable for Mitras to take vows in consultation with their Kalyana Mitras if they have them. Or with any trusted member of the Order.

**Khema:** Anyone could use that technique. Even if you had a friend who wanted to give up smoking who wasn't a Buddhist, you could say that if you do this it might be easier.

**S:** Yes, right. Though of course it would help if he was a Buddhist and therefore could take his vow in front of a shrine or something like that. It would be still more effective. But even so, if he took it with you simply as his friend, as witness, it could very well help, yes.

\_\_(**Woman**)\_\_: What would be the necessity of higher ordinations if people are taking vows anyway. I mean why not just keep the one ordination?

**S:** Well this is really, in a sense, what I'm thinking. And what we've been calling the higher ordination is the taking upon oneself of extra vows and therefore extra responsibilities. The existing four extra Maha Upasaka vows or Maha Upasika vows are extracted from the Bodhisattva vows and they draw a greater responsibility and

care for other people. So you become, as it were, not a teacher, but you have a sort of ministerial responsibility. We don't really have a proper term here. You vow to take on that responsibility. But it shouldn't be considered as a higher grade, where you've gone one up in the hierarchy, in the worldly sense. Other people might take vows relating to a solitary meditative life in the country.

**Khema:** So that we just cut out the other ordinations, so we just keep the one kesa or are you still thinking of having different kesas?

**S:** I must say this is something that I've not thought about in great detail. We may keep different kesas, we may not. *[pause]* But there is one commitment, one basic commitment.

**Aryamitra:** I think it's important to make the distinction that a vow isn't to punish yourself. I know lots of people who do that. They sort of renounce things because they feel guilty about it, or they somehow need to punish themselves. I think it's worthwhile keeping in mind that the vow is something that comes from an understanding of a dependence that you have, that you want to rid yourself of or something like this.

**S:** I found a very interesting saying in the writings of one of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century very radical reformers in England at the time of the Puritan revolution. He wrote "*thou shalt never be free from a sin 'til thou hast performed that sin*". Do you see what he was getting at?

**Vimalamitra:** Can you say that again?

**S:** What he said was, to put it into contemporary English, you're never free from a sin until you've committed that sin - at least once presumably.

**Aryamitra:** So it has to be something real that you want to give up?

**S:** Not just an abstention out of feelings of guilt. You must give it up in innocence, as it were, not in or out of guilt.

**Khema:** I suppose, as we go on, there will be people who are recognised, say by you, as being capable of being given a particular mantra. Even that would not necessarily have to be a vow or ordination.

**S:** Not necessarily, no. Though I am obviously thinking about these things, but it isn't very easy to work everything into a harmonious system and at the same time do justice to individual concrete acts of people. One likes to be rather open-ended about it at the same time. The other day I reminded people about my feeling free to break my own rules.

Now this question of vows ties up with something else but here again my thinking is very exploratory and you may also have some comments to make. And that is with regards to the question of, for want of a better term, 'marriage'. I think in the case of marriage too, and I'm thinking more within the context of the Order, that should also be regarded as a particular kind of vow. A form of the vow of celibacy if you like. Do you see what I mean? Because you're restricting yourself, you're restricting your sexuality; you're restricting it to one particular person, perhaps for a specific length of time, yeah? So that could be regarded as a vow. In other words you're not giving a very special or important place to marriage. It's one particular kind of vow which certain people decide to take.

**Khema:** Well, say someone had a child, they could care for that child until it was fifteen or something.

**S:** I think if you had a child that would follow automatically.

**Khema:** Not necessarily. Some people.....

**S:** I think it ought to frankly. *[Laughter]* I don't think you should have a child unless you intend to care for it until it's old enough to fend for itself.

**Vangisa:** You could take a vow not to care for it after it's old enough. *[Laughter]*

\_\_\_\_\_: *(unclear)*

**S:** That would be very good!



\_\_\_\_\_ : (*unclear*)

**S:** That's why..... I was reading somewhere - I tried to find the reference but I couldn't the other day - that in certain Bengali communities in India there is a ceremony at which the mother gives up the son when he's sixteen. Has anyone seen this or read it?

**Khema:** I've read about it in other communities, and it struck me as a very good idea.

**S:** Yes, there was an actual ceremony and the mother says, "*I have given birth to this child, I have brought him up. I now give him to the world. I give him to the universe, he is not my son; I have no hold over him; there is no tie, he is free, he is an individual.*" and this seems very very good. When he's sixteen.

**Khema:** Because it cuts out any possibility that the boy was feeling he was kicked out or the girl feels she was (*unclear*) or the mother feels "*Oh no I can't let them go*". The ritual is there for that.

**S:** I also feel that the same thing, if there is any divorce between two people, that it should be brought into the open and, as it were, a divorce ceremony and they should be free to say "*Well, we were together; please do not consider us together any longer. We are going our separate ways and we go with good will towards each other. We are friends, but we are no longer together in that way*". And there's a little sort of party [*Laughter*] and everybody goes their separate ways. So it's all free and happy. Otherwise, you see, you don't know whether they are together, you don't know whether they're not together, or whether they're speaking or not speaking. [*Laughter*] Whether you ought to ask both of them or whether you ought to ask them separately. Sometimes you don't know what's happening for years on end. Not within the Friends I mean but outside. So why not have it clear and clean and it clears the air and resolves any possible resentment.

**Jinamata:** How about if it was just taken for one year and have the clearing up party at the end of the year?

**S:** Well it would depend upon what sort of a mess you'd got into in the course of that year! [*Laughter*]. Well you could come together for a renewal of contract. [*Laughter*] But I'm not laying anything down, I'm only making suggestions but why not think of marriage more in the form of a sort of vow of this kind, just like any other vow, rather

than as something sort of separate and special by itself, which it is in some ways, separate and special, But other things too are separate and special in their way.

**Khema:** I must admit that's really rather how I look at it in any case. I feel very much (*unclear*) It provides a means of doing something without all these negative situations arising or feelings of .....

**S:** It's ritualised, therefore objectified, therefore you can be free from it.

**Khema:** You say that would apply within the Order. How do you see it applying with maybe Friends who want to have some form of ceremony?

**S:** I think it could definitely be extended, yes indeed.

**Lokamitra:** They have to agree with the principles underlying it.

**S:** Indeed. I think Khema was thinking of Friends with a capital "F". But if others wish to avail themselves of that system because they share in a very general way these principles, well fair enough. Anyway, I repeat, this is my thinking aloud. I don't have any very definite conclusions, but this is what I'm thinking and have been thinking in connection with this whole topic of vows.

**Ashvajit:** Do you think a vow of marriage, of restricting oneself to one partner should be a joyous occasion? [*Laughter*] I was reading recently in Cambodia that the Buddhist marriage ceremony which was previously very joyous, a very festive occasion was now reduced to a cold handshake.

**S:** (*unclear*) I wouldn't like to see a cold handshake.

**Chintamani:** There's no reason why you shouldn't take a vow to restrict yourself to five. [*Laughter*]

**S:** This is quite true. I mean Buddhism is not confined to monogamy. I think we must recognise that even if we don't act upon it always. [*Laughter*] I mean act upon it, not being confined to monogamy obviously. I wasn't making that particular joke that you thought I was! [*Laughter*]. And also Buddhism is not confined to polygamy as opposed to polyandry. I mean polyandry also is recognised by Buddhism. In other

words its not confined to any particular system of marriage or relations. If you wish you can be celibate, if you wish you can have one wife; if you wish you can have one husband or two wives, or three wives, or four wives or husbands as the case may be. It's just according to social circumstances, individual temperament, needs and so on. I have known personally cases of a friend with two wives officially and socially accepted and living together happily. I don't see why not; this is quite possible. I know some do find it difficult enough to manage with one. *[Laughter]* It's sometimes easier with two, strange as it may sound. But we talked about our English conditioning earlier on in the Convention. So in this respect also just don't take certain things for granted. Even though polygamy may not be practicable in this country, it is an option for Buddhists. It's not against Buddhism. It's one particular kind of sexual arrangement.

**Gotami:** Even if I could live in this way, its a bit like the second stage of the Mindfulness of Breathing *[Laughter]* *(unclear)* *[Laughter]*. It's not very often quite so obvious when you do it with the breathing but in the first stage you count the breath after you breathe; in the second stage you count the breath before you breathe. In other words you say I am now going to make a breath and then you do it. Whereas normally you are trying to be aware but the best you can do is to notice the thing after you have done it *(unclear)*. I have done this, and you notice what you've already done. That's where awareness comes in most *(unclear)*. If you can be aware in this kind of way - yeah, I am going to and then do it, that's kind of moving your whole life up into the second stage. Do you see what I mean?

**S:** That's a very neat analogy. I hope it's gone down in notes. *[Laughter]*

**Gotami:** I think that *(unclear)*

**S:** I hope you will. Maybe write a little article about it.

**Gotami:** It's something I've thought for a long time.

**S:** I must say it's something that hadn't occurred to me, but it is as you say. Or at least a little item for 'Shabda'.

Anyway you can see now the way in which this whole topic of vows can be extended in so many ways. It takes in all the different aspects of one's spiritual life, it takes in

even this question of what we were referring to as higher or other ordination. One could even think of marriage in terms of a particular kind of vow. So the scope of the vow is *(unclear)*.

**Ashvajit:** I think it would more easy to relate to what Gotami has been talking about to the Metta Bhavana. *[Laughter]*

**S:** Please do.

**Vangisa:** Which stage?

**S:** Well you think about it and write your article. *[pause]*

Right, anything on this whole question of vows that anyone would like to say or to add?

**Vimalamitra:** Yes, I wonder about.... I keep on having kind of feelings of wanting to renew my basic commitment and feeling that my basic commitment which has fallen off, or is falling. I wondered what I could do about this.

**S:** I think in the course of the last few years more than one person has mentioned this, though it's never actually sort of come to a head. But perhaps we should think about it. Some people have, for instance, said that they felt that when they were actually ordained, when they made their commitment, they didn't have, obviously, the understanding of it that they have now. In some cases they think there is a very great difference, not to say discrepancy between their understanding then and their understanding now. They feel as though they'd like, as it were, to do it over again. Or they may feel that they have rather fallen by the wayside, and that they'd like to renew it. So perhaps we have to consider that sort of possibility and devise something. I would say that it would be very simple that on the occasion of an Order meeting of whatsoever kind you simply stated that I would like to renew my commitment and the Going for Refuge and the precepts and so please permit me to do this. And the seniormost Upasaka present can recite the Refuges and Precepts, and you recite after that seniormost Upasaka. And that would be taken as your renewal. If you like, beforehand, you offer flowers; you offer candles; you offer incense. If I'm around it can be done then but it need not wait for me to be around. It can be done in the presence of a meeting of the Chapter with the seniormost Upasaka presiding.

\_\_\_(Woman)\_: It could also be done when one's old kesa wears out.

**S:** That's a very good point, yes. You could even get a new kesa on that occasion and feel very clean and new and renewed. Yes indeed.

**Sona:** You could almost do it as a birthday celebration.

**S:** You could, yes.

**Gotami:** It's certainly a way of celebrating Order Day.

**S:** You could celebrate your fifth anniversary of ordination and pledge yourself anew with all the increased understanding and energy that you have accumulated during the previous five years. Rededicate yourself. Yes, I think this must be left very much to the individual. I mean do it in this sort of way when you feel like it, when you want to, at any point.

**Vimalamitra:** I mentioned it mainly because, apart from kind of a real reason for thinking that, there's also kind of vague fears and vague anxieties and having them out in a definite ceremony then separates the real wants.

**S:** It is very interesting that in the case of Bhikkhus, the Buddha made provision for re-ordination, He permitted re-ordination with full ceremony etc., in the case of a Bhikkhus up to seven times. Yes. So it shows that he did have some understanding of this sort of need. So you can be ordained and then leave and then be re-ordained and leave and be re-ordained up to seven times. Then you've either finally made it or they've lost you.

\_\_\_(Man)\_\_: Has that anything to do with seven (*unclear*)?

**S:** I don't know. But seven is a recurrent figure. It does occur to me also to suggest that you may feel the need of a special Confession of Faults before your renewal. Far from being conscious of the five glorious years, you may feel a bit conscious of quite a bit of backsliding. So you can have a special Confession of Faults. You could, for instance, write on a paper whatever you feel you've done amiss or neglected to do.....

[End of Tape Eleven    Tape Twelve]

**S:** ..... and that could be ceremonially burned, that piece of paper; and you take it that is all now behind you and then you renew your Going for Refuge and your vows, your precepts. I think at the end of the last - I'm not sure if it was the last in fact - Order retreat, this sort of ceremony was held, wasn't it? Yeah.

**Woman:** It was very good.

**S:** Right. Yes. So this sort of.....

**Woman:** People wanted to pile more wood on the fire.

**S:** Well maybe they had a lot of sins to burn! But let's avoid the word 'sins'.

**Vangisa:** (*unclear*) importance of having a special re-dedication ceremony are known (*unclear*) Personally I've always felt at an Order Meeting I think it's best we affirm (*unclear*)

**S:** I think you're very right.

**Vangisa:** (*unclear*) renew (*unclear*) commitment.

**S:** Yes. Right.

**Gotami:** Every time you take the precepts. Every time you take part in the Puja.

**Vangisa:** Well every morning when you chant the Refuges and Precepts you can take that as a form of.....

**S:** You may also feel the need of re-dedicating yourself more solemnly and, as it were, more publicly with the, as it were, witness of your fellow Order Members.

**Lokamitra:** This thing of confession of faults. The other day I was thinking in a way it would be more appropriate if it came before Going for Refuge as a sort of (*unclear*). Clearing the way as it were. I felt this quite strongly the other day.

**Gotami:** I think, in the way I work anyway, after the Going for Refuge you get the strength and understand how to go further forward. You know what I mean?

**Lokamitra:** I do know what you mean, yes.

**Gotami:** The first thing you come up against is your faults. OK, you get rid of those and you go on to listen.

**S:** The faults represent that side of yourself that doesn't want to respond to the commitment, that resists the commitment; which you then have to deal with. Even though you're committed you're not perfect, so you make your commitment and then you come up against the gravitational pull within yourself.

**Gotami:** Taking on the faults is really you're taking Refuge in that, and that gives you the (*unclear*) that you need.

**Lokamitra:** I appreciate that but I've just been thinking a bit more in terms of Vimalamitra - the way that he was saying things. You want to make it clear from the start, therefore you want to clear the ground.....

**S:** In that case it would be burning all the old faults and then renewing, Going for Refuge, and then the subsequent fault could be dealt with as and when it arises.

**Vangisa:** Get rid of my old biography. Burn it in the shrine room! [*Laughter*]

**S:** Certain chapters anyway, yes.

**Ashvajit:** I think there's one danger perhaps of this idea of (*unclear*) oneself and Going for Refuge constantly all the time is that you may go then with the attitude of acquiring something, instead of wanting to give, wanting to open yourself. [*pause*]

**Devamitra:** I've found that being present at other ordinations (*murmurs of agreement*) has very often brought up a spontaneous sort of rededication of my own commitment. I think that's very useful.

**Dharmapala:** Perhaps using the word taking Refuge rather than Going for Refuge would be useful.

**S:** In Pali and Sanskrit it is 'going'. *Gacchami*, 'I go'. Not taking. That's just the English idiom that's sometimes used and it isn't really correct. I do know that

sometimes people have said to me that when they were actually ordained they felt quite confused and not completely aware of what was happening but when they participated in somebody else's ordination; when they were just sort of sitting there and very happily going through it all and feeling it all, in some respects even more than when they were ordained themselves. At least experiencing it in a more balanced and aware sort of way.

Anything more on vows. If not we'll go onto the remainder.

**Gotami:** One thing in terms of vows generally. One of the things I often think of is food, for myself. Basically it's something in the past that I had quite a few battles with, and I have sort of fasted, if not on a regular thing like you suggested but... and I've experienced sort of (*unclear*) inside me rather than being able to go and eat something. But then I found that afterwards, I think just about on every occasion my eating got more worse. I've sort of immediately gone on a binge afterwards and I wonder.... that immediately comes to mind when I think of sort of taking a vow and (*unclear*).

**S:** Well perhaps you just need to take it for a considerably longer period. [*Laughter*] And use it to study the nature of the urge that makes you indulge in that particular thing. You don't mention whether it's cream buns or bars of chocolate or whatever it is. It might be all sorts of strange things. Even raw carrots or.... But if you take a vow of abstaining for a very lengthy period, then you can really study the nature of the urge because you can feel the need or the craving to indulge in that particular thing, and then you can ask yourself, "well why, what is it?" Of course there is always the possibility in the case of food that you are deficient in a certain element that you need. There's always that possibility. It's not necessarily, in all cases, completely neurotic, but one should consider that possibility too. You might find if you take a few tablets of this, that and the other, a few vitamins, and that craving may go. You might discover that.

**Vangisa:** On about the third day of fasting the gnawing hunger lessens. [*Laughter*] (*unclear*) unconscious craving for food and if you really keep it up....

**S:** There are two things in connection with fasting. One is total abstinence from all food and the other is selective fasting, that is giving up certain things. You might need

to experiment more with giving up particular things for particular periods rather than with the total fast.

**Gotami:** It doesn't work for me. I find it quite easy when I say I'm just not going to eat anything. You just don't enter that area at all and you don't go in the kitchen for anything. Do you know what I mean? Rather than just say well I won't eat this particular thing which is.....

**S:** Well maybe you ought to take a vow to sort of feed yourself really well three times a day for at least three months. Some people might. Some people don't look after themselves well enough. It's not always a self-indulgent pampering. Some people don't look after themselves well enough. They need to look after themselves better, to be kinder to themselves, and feed themselves and rest themselves and exercise themselves, and generally nurture themselves. I think we should not forget that side too. Take a vow to be nice to yourself, yes! *[Laughter]* In specific ways.

**Chintamani:** You could take up a vow to abstain from fourth helpings. And then after you've done that successfully, third helpings.

**Mangala:** (*unclear*) craving, then afterwards I'm absolutely starving! *[Loud laughter]* I have actually (*unclear*) several times (*unclear*) really hungry! *[Loud laughter]* *[pause]*

**S:** I think we'd better start sort of winding up. First of all I'm going to absent myself for a minute or two and then we'll wind up the proceedings. *[Pause whilst Bhante is absent]*

Have any of the recorders of previous days got my April 'Shabda'. Please check up, otherwise my set won't be complete. *[pause]*

All right, just a couple of matters to settle, and then I think we can bring this final session of the Convention to a close. I'm thinking first of all about arrangements for the bringing out of the Convention report. Has anyone considered this at all?

**Khema:** Yes (*unclear*)

**S:** OK. Can you tell us what's going to happen.

**Khema:** Well if you want to see it first..... will you want to see the reports before they're sent out?

**S:** Preferably yes indeed.

**Khema:** Well in that case I'll gather the reports together and send them out to you. Jinamata is going to type them (*unclear*)

**S:** When you say reports, what do you mean?

**Khema:** The finished reports from the recorders.

**S:** So what will the recorders be doing?

**Khema:** They write out a report of what they recorded as fully as possible.

**S:** In consultation with the tapes perhaps?

**Khema:** I don't think they did last time.

**S:** I think that lots of material hasn't actually been put down. For instance at some stages there were some very good comments - quite practical, concrete things made by Order Members that weren't actually recorded. I think that they shouldn't be overlooked.

**Khema:** There's one of the things which Padmaraja's asked me to transcribe.

**S:** Which one was that then?

**Khema:** Session Five.

**Padmaraja:** The qualifications for ordination.....

**S:** Ah yes. Several Order Members made some good points and they pertain to everybody.

**Khema:** That's been transcribed.

**S:** So if all those transcribed and edited reports could be sent to me to go through, and each individual recorder and reporter should be very careful to ascertain that they do give a faithful picture, faithful account of each day's proceedings. Or the day, rather, or the session that they are responsible for. So there are eight sessions. Presumably we have eight different recorders?

**Khema:** Seven.

**S:** Seven. *[pause]* Is there anything left over from the last Convention (**Lokamitra:** Yes) that comes under this particular field?

**Lokamitra:** The last tape.

**S:** Yes that's the sort of questions and answers, was it?

**Lokamitra:** Yes, the Dharma questions.

**S:** So what's the position with regard to that?

**Khema:** I started transcribing it and Srimala continued but didn't actually finish it.

**Woman::** I *(unclear)* continue with that.

**S:** So could someone take actual responsibility for it? Perhaps it could be included in 'Shabda' fairly soon, and of course again let me have it for final checking. Because, as far as I recollect it would be quite a useful thing to publish.

**Woman:** I don't think I could do that. *(Unclear)*

**Sagaramati:** You're going to do the last day of the last Convention?

**Woman:** Yes.

**S:** The Dharma questions and answers.

**Khema:** We've done some but haven't had time to finish it.

**S:** So let me have the transcripts or edited transcripts and I'll go through them. So after they've all been seen by me what's the next step?

**Khema:** Then Jinamata will type them onto stencils and we'll Gestetner them *(unclear)*

**S:** Right, so we hope that this can be done quite promptly, yes.

**Khema:** The transcribing will take quite a bit longer than...

**S:** As promptly as we can.

**Woman:** Not transcribing the tapes but just working with the tapes.

**Woman:** Yes, could the person making the report be listening to the tape to see if there's *(unclear)*

**S:** I think that's quite important.

**Mahavira:** Can I suggest that if the individual recorder would like copies of their particular morning or afternoon to let me know in writing whether they've got a tape recorder or a cassette recorder and I'll get the copies to them as soon as possible.

**S:** You won't be supplied with the original recording. That will remain with Mahavira, and he will do the copy.

**Gotami:** So *(unclear)* we write the reports, (**S:** Consulting the tapes) consulting the tapes, not actually transcribing them.

**S:** You may find you fill in your reports from the tapes, certain points you missed or you get the exact wording of what somebody had actually been saying. But, no doubt, there will be quite a bit of summary as part of the work of producing the report. Is there any overall, as it were, collator of the whole thing?

**Khema:** Well, once it's been printed I will collate it at 'Pundarika'.

\_\_\_\_\_: Jinamata *(unclear)*

**S:** No, I mean last time Vessantara wrote an introduction to provide continuity. You will do that. Fine OK. So it'll only be as far as one can tell half the length of the last Convention because we only had four days. Can I take it that this includes the special session on organisation?

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes.

**S:** Any other point with regard to the production of that material?

**Khema:** Do you want that to be part of the report - the special session last night?

**S:** Yes, but I think it should be clearly indicated that that is a report of that particular session and that there were only those particular people present and I don't know whether any sort of formal resolutions or decisions were taken. It should be clear though that they are the conclusions or suggestions of that particular body, not of the Order as a whole in plenary session, as it were. Just of the special session.

**Jinamata:** Could we say that we could have the reports in within two weeks for collating. I think that should be possible. I think there is only one session (*unclear*). It makes is more definite. So bear it in mind.

**Vangisa:** Make a vow! [*Laughter*]

**Jinamata:** Make a vow, yes. Two weeks.

**Dhammadinna:** I think it ought to be three, because I'm away for a week (*unclear*)

**Jinamata:** Ok, well three weeks. Try for two weeks anyway.

**S:** Right any other matter of this sort; or practical matter with regard to the tidying up of the Convention itself. I can't think of anything myself (*unclear*).

All right then. The other main matter I had to talk about. It looks as though we're going to finish early today, so we can then discuss the arrangements for the evening if necessary. The next Convention will be in a year's time. In future we're going to have the Conventions roughly at Easter time. And also next year, roughly at the same time, we'll be celebrating the tenth anniversary of the FWBO. Was everybody aware

of that? Yes. So I suggest that, as from now, all Order Members, especially those who are connected with Centres, think in terms of what they are going to do to celebrate our tenth anniversary. I know publications department already has started thinking. Maybe other departments too. No doubt 'Sukhavati' will be open, maybe even in connection with that occasion. So we celebrate our tenth anniversary, or tenth anniversary of the Friends with a real - yes, even a bang. So obviously it requires a lot of preliminary thought, so a year is not too much. We may find by the time we do meet in Convention again, that quite a lot has happened. I feel quite a lot has happened since we met at our first Convention. There were twenty seven of us, I think it was, at 'Aryatara'. Quite a lot has happened since then, and I'm sure a lot is going to happen in the forthcoming year. And as for our second decade of existence, heaven only knows what's going to happen! [*Laughter*]

**Aryamitra:** Maybe you ought have smaller ones. In six months instead of a year. How many months since the previous one?

**Khema:** Seven.

**Aryamitra:** Seven months.

**Gotami:** Well eight (*unclear*)

**S:** No, I'm thinking not, because I wanted to keep the late Summer and the Autumn period clear for study retreats. That would be ideal, and I think we can't have everything at that particular time of year.

**Vangisa:** In any case I think having the Conventions too often lessens the value and the importance.

**S:** And of course as the number of Order Members increases we may have to change the structure of Conventions. We seem to be pretty over the limit of doing things this way. We may at future Conventions - probably not the next one - have to break up into special sessions that discuss certain topics. You just go to the session you're especially interested in, for instance, and then the chairman of that session reports back to the plenary session. But the sort of thrashing out is done in the special sessions. But it's still direct participation. I want to avoid a system whereby we send representatives and

delegates and they decide in the meeting. As far as possible it should be by direct participation.

**Ratnapani:** In fact we don't take many decisions, do we.

**S:** No, we arrive at a sort of feeling of consensus.

**Ratnapani:** The actual decisions we could probably take care of in a day.

**S:** I don't know. Sometimes it takes a long time for people to arrive at actual decisions.

**Ratnapani:** But there are so few of them. I mean mostly it's airing things, suggesting things, passing things around.

**S:** Well we try to keep the Convention very much on matters of general principle, rather than particular measures. Those are left to particular Chapters of the Order or even to particular Centres, or even individuals. *[pause]*

Any other point that anyone would like to raise that they feel they haven't had an opportunity of raising or airing? Anything concerning the Order as a whole or Movement as a whole? There are lots of things we couldn't touch on in the course of this Convention just because we were limited to four days. As I mentioned at the beginning the theme has really been different aspects of growth of the Order. But we have got a bit of time still left if there is anything that anyone feels is of importance and needs to be brought up and be talked about now, then we could give some time to that.

**Devamitra:** I've got one point, and that is some time ago we discussed the possibility of extending the monthly Order Day over to a weekend, and I just wondered how people might feel about that. I personally would much more appreciate coming down for a whole weekend say from Norfolk to a meeting in London. The Order Day always seems far too short for me and I feel that I'd like it to go on much longer. I don't know how practical this would be for the London Chapters but I'd like to at least make it known how I feel. *[pause]*

Also one of the points that arose out of the meeting last night that Lokamitra raised, about different... just the contact between those of us who are on Councils of different Centres, maybe this is going to become more and more important as there are more and more different Centres....

**S:** There's another point that I mentioned. I'll mention it just now briefly. It may be that certain special sessions can meet in the course of the year and prepare their report at their own convenience and then read the report or explain the report at the time of the Convention. You could possibly have, say, a meeting of this sort in the course of the year and prepare a report which is circulated, either in '*Shabda*' or presented to me at the end of the Convention. For instance Kalyana Mitras could get together in the same sort of way. So in a sense you spread part of the work of the Convention throughout the year. You don't do the, sort of, all the detailed work on the actual Convention floor, but it's all presented there.

**Khema:** We could also have a meeting of people from different areas.

**Lokamitra:** On Devamitra's idea, if you come down you can arrange to see other Order members on that weekend. I would personally be against having the Order Day extended over the whole weekend. It's quite a relief that it's only a day, and that if I want to see individual Order members I can see them at my leisure over the rest of the weekend. But I think formal proceedings with large numbers of people - we had that for one day - and a more informal basis for rest of the weekend if one wants to.

**Uttara:** Can it not be arranged that we have another retreat weekend?

**Subhuti:** It certainly could. You could arrange it. *[Laughter]*

**Sona:** One of the points of being with a large number of Order members is that you can then meditate and have a Puja together which gives you the opportunity of doing it more than once or twice if it's over a weekend.

**S:** Or if you are someone in a relatively small Centre, you can actually have the experience of somebody else leading it all and you just take part as an ordinary member of the Order. That might be quite a relief for some people who are running Centres.



**Aryamitra:** I don't see why it can't be done. It depends if we have them at weekends. I don't know if it's going to be a sort of regular thing that our Order Day becomes an Order Weekend but I'm sure we can extend it, especially at 'Aryatara'.

**S:** You could have it every three months.

**Nagabodhi:** The way it works is that those who want to just stay on overnight on Saturday and maybe Sunday. No one gets thrown out!

**Aryamitra:** No, it does make a difference, obviously, if you've stated that it's a weekend and that people are welcome to stay over, and maybe there's the programme to fit in and so forth. I mean we might want.....

**Sona:** If it's done every three months that is. If it's going to be every month it's impractical.

**Gotami:** What is the general state (*unclear*) next year on Order retreats and so on. Are there going to be any or.....

**Khema:** There should be one.

**Lokamitra:** Something that we discussed at the Order Retreat at Christmas was that from now on if members of a certain Chapter felt they really wanted to hold an Order Retreat or they really wanted an Order Retreat, they could organise one and invite... make it open to all members of the Order. This seems to me quite a good way of doing things at this time.

**Khema:** I think also up to now all the Order Retreats have been organised by 'Pundarika'. It would be good if other Centres took responsibility for that.

**S:** It would be quite easy, for instance, to arrange an Order Retreat in Norfolk; having it at Broomhouse Farm and the Norfolk Order members organise it and then send out word to others. Say that there will be say six spaces after ourselves attending, and any Order Member is welcome. Up to that number.

**Khema:** I think in a way, in a sense, if it is to be an Order Retreat well that's presuming that it's going to be organised by the same people each.... you know coming from somewhere, instead of taking a retreat each time.

**Vimalamitra:** The thing is is there going to be a large Order Retreat?

\_\_\_\_\_ : Well if it was a large one then (*unclear*)

**S:** We would have a large place.

**Lokamitra:** I think things have to be done to some extent in consultation with the Convenor obviously.

**Khema:** With the size of the Order Retreat at Christmas that was about as far as you could go with (*unclear*).

**Lokamitra:** And doing study groups.

**S:** If there's study then it needs to be kept fairly small.

**Ananda:** How many people were there?

**Nagabodhi:** (*unclear*) fourteen and then eighteen (*unclear*)

**S:** Of course if there is about twenty you could always split up into two study groups.

\_\_\_\_\_ : I thought it was about twelve.

**Nagabodhi:** Twelve to fourteen which is a bit more.....

**S:** There will, of course I hope - in fact I'm pretty certain - there will be in the late Summer and Autumn, study retreats, and also I hope to get some visualisation retreats in. There will be that too.

**Sona:** Perhaps as Order Convenor I could write to various Centres suggesting they hold a retreat at certain intervals.

**S:** Right. That’s up to you. *[pause]*

All right, what’s the evening programme now? We’re quite early. No doubt we can have a cup a tea. It’s nearly quarter past three, so what time should we be up at ‘*Pundarika*’ by?

**Lokamitra:** The meditation will start at six.

**S:** Meditation and Puja at six.

**Lokamitra:** And then at seven thirty or when we finish the puja (*unclear*)

**S:** Does that means people will have now time for a walk or whatever if they please before going over there?

**Subhuti:** It would be much more convenient from many points of view, because we haven’t got that much transport and the van has to come back, if people went over now; had some tea at ‘*Pundarika*’ and (*unclear*)

\_\_\_\_\_: (*unclear*) all arranged!

**[End of tape, end of Session and end of Convention!]**

*Transcribed by Dharmachari Silabhadra and members of the Brighton Buddhist Centre Sangha including: Michael Mandeville, Graham at Evolution, Lynette Sullivan, Sally Bridgeman, Juliet Cox, Rupert Hensser, Gwen McCaulay, Nick Diggins and Jo.*

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