

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

1981 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOLLOW UP TO VINEHALL HELD AT PADMALOKA

(VINEHALL 2)

(Side one)

Sangharakshita: So this is what has been officially described as a Question and Answer meeting but don't run away with the idea that it is going to be a small scale replica of the Question and Answer session that we had on Vinehall One. In the first place we haven't asked people to write down their questions for two reasons: one because there are so few people compared with the those that we had at Vinehall, and secondly because I thought it might be better if it wasn't a straightforward question and answer meeting so much as a question and answer cum perhaps discussion meeting. Because since there are relatively so few people it is possible or more possible to have that sort of thing anyway. So what I thought was that in the course of this last five days, this of course being the fifth day of the whole retreat or event, so that we're sort of half-way through, since you've been here now fully five days and since you've heard various talks, have had no doubt discussions amongst yourselves, have had time and space to reflect on things. You've also done communication exercises together it could be that various questions have quite naturally arisen in your minds.

It isn't on an occasion like this that one has to think up a question. If you don't have a question to ask, well, don't bother. Just sit back and listen to other people's questions. But it may be that some questions have quite naturally arisen. Questions connected with meditation or questions connected with one or another aspect of Buddhist teaching or questions arising in connection with communication. But whatsoever it is, whether questions arising in connection with this topic or that, the idea is that one should have an opportunity of putting that question and hopefully clarifying that particular issue or clarifying that particular area for oneself and possibly for others too.

So maybe you could just sort of think back over the previous five days and just ask yourself whether a question hasn't naturally arisen in connection with any of these areas, something maybe that you've been thinking about, something that you would welcome some clarification of and if possible let it be a genuine question, not just something coming straight off the top of one's head which one hasn't actually thought about. So take it that in terms of the Five Wisdoms that, all right, you've developed the first, now there's an opportunity to start developing the second.

_____ : Can you explain that?

S: I thought you'd been studying that hadn't you or is it some other study group perhaps? You haven't come across this before? No, the Three Wisdoms. The Three Prajnas or Pannas, the Suttamaya Panna, the Cintamayapanna and Bhavanamayapanna. That is to say, first of all the wisdom or understanding that comes simply by hearing as when you hear a lecture or read a book. Two: the wisdom or understanding that arises when you reflect upon something, turn it over in your mind, make it your own and even develop your own original ideas on the subject. And thirdly the

wisdom or understanding that comes by meditation when with your concentrated mind, or backed up by your concentrated, integrated mind you develop actual insight into the subject concerned, have an actual realisation of the truth of that particular subject. So you've heard a lot surely in the course of the last few days so it's time, perhaps that one started awakening one's own reflections, one's own thoughts. Perhaps that's already happened in which case you might have some questions on this or that topic.

_____ : Bhante, I came to Padmaloka with several concerns (?) questions, several concerns and reservations about sexism in the Friends. When we were listening to the video recording of yourself and doing the question and answer session at Vinehall these reservations crystallised into, I think a fairly painful realisation for me that you seem to be manifesting yourself as male chauvinist person. (Laughter) Let me just clarify that with reference with reference particular to the spiritual hierarchy - animal, woman, man - and you said that women occupied a lower position in the hierarchy because of their biological impulse. Now just taking that argument on its own grounds if possible it seems to me that the logic there is fallacious from the beginning because even if woman did because of her biological makeup have a more difficult spiritual path one should not place her at this moment in a lower position on the spiritual ladder but should place her in the same position but it simply means that she has a more difficult path to ascend.

S: But that's really the same thing in other terms.

_____ : Well, that's (?) but more importantly taking that argument on its own grounds, I think the grounds themselves are extremely dubious. Firstly because it seems to me that the mistakes or confusions at least on the grounds of biology or of social conditioning. As Subhuti did in some of the tapes(?) on the caveman. For example, the question of women coming to you with concerns about motherhood I think that those grounds have been examined in great detail, as you're probably aware, by the women's movement, to what extent is a concept of motherhood actually (?) as against the social conditioning (?). That wouldn't be so serious in itself - this is quite a long question....

S: There's about three questions already.

_____ : There's one question. These are just some of the elements to it. That is compounded both in the fact that you seem to use male and female in very traditional stereotype terms. Women as open and receptive, amiable - male, thrusting, aggressive. There are definite stereotypes that seem to be traditional ones and that the Friends seem to use (?). I think that all of this is compounded by not just by the what seems to me dubious logic and peculiar thinking but more so by the use of language which is very common in a patriarchy and I think this sort of standard sexual stereotype works out again in all sorts of writings, both in your own and in others in the Friends. An obvious example is the use of the male term, generic term. A classic example from the short puja. The Buddha was a man, that's false. He was androgynous. As we are men, that's false. People who say the puja are not men, they're women. I think there I'll leave it there.

S: I don't see that there's really any question that has emerged. I don't see that you really put forward any counter-argument. You've only expressed a general sort of dissatisfaction without making the grounds of that dissatisfaction really very clear. Let me just give an example. For instance you started off by using the word sexist. Now that is really quite an emotive term so in discussions of this sort subject what one finds is that people often use these emotive terms. I would say that these emotive terms should be avoided. For instance we've got all sorts of expressions of that sort now.

We've got racist, we've got sexist. There are various other ...

_____ : Can you suggest ...

S: Well, I'd need to understand first what one meant by that term. But what I'm actually saying is the term doesn't really mean very much. It's a sort of emotive term which expresses someone's reaction but doesn't have a really clear intellectual content. And one of the reasons why I object to the term is that as soon as that label is applied one is supposed to be very uncomfortable and want to deny that one is that at once. You see what I mean?

_____ : I see what you mean.

S: But I think therefore one can ask, well, what is it that one is getting at, what does one mean by sexist? Because I mean, it begs the argument. Well, let's put it say in very crude terms. Supposing the subject under discussion is men and women. All right, you're trying to establish, let's say that either man is superior to woman, or woman is superior to man. So if someone starts arguing that man is superior to woman, he is at once labelled sexist, right. The assumption being that it is agreed already that man is not superior to woman, but that is an assumption. That is what we're discussing. That is what we're trying to find out. Right, so the use of these sort of emotive terms really prejudices the issue. It assumes that the issue is settled and that certain things are agreed but they're not, that's the whole point.

So when one uses an expressions like "sexism" and "racism" then you're assuming or you're postulating that there are certain ideas upon which all decent people agree. If you don't accept these ideas you are not decent because sexist is a quite negative term in some circles at least (?) . So I think therefore that these terms which prejudice the issue must be avoided. So I'm not clear what you mean by the term "sexist". Perhaps you assume that the meaning is clear but ...

_____ : (?)

S: But actually no meaning attaches to it at all except it indicates someone's emotional reaction of dissatisfaction to something. It doesn't convey any clear idea to me.

_____ : Well, I haven't looked it up in a dictionary but in the way I was using it and I think the way it is normally used, although it involves emotional (?) is that irrational values are allocated to a particular topic on the basis of a sexual relation rather than on an analysis of the values of that topic.

S: Well, I would say that throughout my own life I've been quite interested in this particular subject and I've thought about it and I think I can say I've thought about it rationally, so if I've come to any conclusions it is on the basis of my own rational thought. It has not been as a result of anything purely irrational. So I think that in discussing these sort of issues one has as it were to accept the good faith of the other person. That the other person is trying to understand matters, is trying to understand in the light of his own experience and his own reflection, and not impute motives of irrationality which is again what this epithet does.

_____ : (?) stating rationality. Rationality is, I can say that you seem to be irrational to me ...

S: Ah, so then we must say in what the irrationality consists. Simply to describe someone as sexist

is not enough to convict them of irrationality. What you regard as sexism could be a quite rational position but a position you are irrationally unable to accept.

_____ : No. But what I described as sexism is by definition an irrational position. If you go back to my definition.

S: Well, in that case that use of sexism must be excluded from discussion because discussion is by definition rational. If you go imputing irrational motives to people in discussion you preclude the possibility of discussion.

_____ : No. With respect I was describing.... In fact I didn't call you sexist, I said I was concerned with the sexism of the Friends.

S: That amounts to the same thing.

_____ : I'm sure you wouldn't hold all the views of everybody that's ever been within the Friends.

S: No, but on this particular topic I accept that people's views are quite seriously influenced by what I have had to say on this particular topic. I don't deny that and I would wish their views to be influenced by mine in the sense that they give very serious rational consideration to those things which are propounded rationally even though they do go against much popular modern thought.

_____ : I don't (?) progress on this. Could you just comment on the comment of the use of the language within the puja.

S: Just repeat those examples.

_____ : Within the puja?

S: No, no, you mentioned two or three matters that you weren't satisfied with. (Pause) I think I remember. Right, man and human. I made it clear that in the course of my reply to those original questions that I was speaking about men and women in the lump and I don't think anybody would disagree that there are differences between men and women as male and female. Now I think it is a matter of common experience that broadly speaking, and I did say that there are many exceptions, broadly speaking, there are certain psychological characteristics which are linked with one's physical sex. I think this is a matter of common experience. Now I didn't mention the word gender in the course of my remarks but gender is something which can be distinguished again. For instance, the fact that in our society women usually do the washing up and that men don't doesn't mean that washing up is an essentially feminine activity. Men can do it just as well, they're just as equipped to do it but nonetheless, on the whole, there are certain psychological characteristics which are associated more with females than with males. And one of the most important factors in this connection is that women are so constructed as to be mothers and the fact of maternity does seem to occupy a much more important place in a woman's life, physically and mentally, than the fact or possibility of paternity occupies in the lives of men. But I think this is the result of everyday observation and ...

_____ : But that's conditioning though, it's not biological(?).

S: No. No. Well if one speaks in terms of social conditioning I did refer to the fact that I've had quite a bit of contact and experience of women of many different cultures and I've found some of these biologically linked, psychological characteristics persisting through a number of different cultures.

_____ : But all cultures in which women are brought up to be mothers and housewives which is the single most important determining factor.

S: I think one is artificially distinguishing between things which happen naturally and things which are, as it were, instituted by society in an artificial way. I cannot believe that the fact that a woman becomes a mother and that means a very great deal to her is simply or largely even just a result of social conditioning.

_____ : I suppose I can speak from my own experience of bringing up my own daughter as much as from any theory and there is an awful lot of research into it, this particular topic, but from my own experience of bringing up my own daughter, if the male is able to be as involved in the bringing up of his children as the female is, which normally he isn't because he's at work, then the differences in commitment and the differences in emotional involvement in the male and the child and the female and the child are quite negligible.

S: Well, that's a quite different matter. I mean I could say on those grounds that I've observed the children of my friends. I remember one particular example in particular where the parents believed very much as you believed that there was no essential difference between male and female children should be brought up alike. So they lived in a quite isolated village and they very carefully kept their boy away from little boy's toys and their girl away from dolls and things but I was seeing these children regularly since they were babies and I noticed that the little girl quite differently from her mother was fascinated with jewellery and wanted to adorn and decorate herself with bracelets and necklaces and rings from the time that she was a baby and she also an absolute little flirt in a way that boys don't. You know, they don't behave like that.

_____ : Are you suggesting biological (?)

S: Just a minute. Then the little boy I noticed, though he was kept away from military toys and things, the first time he was ever taken into a toy shop he went straight for these things; guns and so on and he'd certainly not seen a television or anything of that sort. But anyway one instance doesn't prove anything but you mentioned one instance of yours. All right I counter that with another instance. So it counts to some extent one might say. But nonetheless one is talking about adult women in this case and I don't think it is a matter of social conditioning that women have this strong yen to have to have babies and that it is very important to them as I know. So within the context of the Friends there are women who are convinced that to have a child would not be in the interests of their, well, their spiritual development. Now at the same time they acknowledge that it is such a strong force, and they've worked through social conditionings and things like that. They're not listening to the voice of society. They're listening as it were to the voice of their own bodies. And this is the experience of most women throughout the world.

Now there are exceptions. I fully admit that because there are not just men and women. There are

all sorts of intermediate types. Some women, a minority, do not experience this so strongly, but the majority of women from all that I've been able to see and study and think, the majority of women quite independently of social conditioning are so constructed that if they do not have children or at least a child, feel incomplete and that along with that biological need to have a child there are so many associated psychological characteristics which a man does not have, at least not in that degree, and I don't see anything irrational in this attitude. One could even argue, yes, the logic is wrong, there aren't enough instances etc., etc., but there is nothing irrational in that point of view. In fact I would say the irrationality, if there is to be irrationality, is entirely in the west, in certain circles where even women have got out of touch with themselves, their own bodies and what they really feel. And one sees general evidence of alienation in those sort of cases quite independently.

All right, so what I'm basically saying is that it is quite unfair to people to dismiss a disagreement of this sort by the word "sexism" or by saying the other people are being simply irrational and they are simply influenced by social conditioning and so on. The same could be said on the other side too. That there is a different kind of social conditioning in the west and people's different attitudes are also due to social conditioning, not to reason and logic. If you invoke social conditioning in one case you can invoke it in the other so that get's one nowhere. One has to try to ...

_____ : The puja. Will you come to that?

S: I'll come to that if you like. Yes. Yes. So one gets really nowhere by attributing irrationality because it means that, as I said, discussion virtually comes to an end. To come to this question of man in the puja, this was discussed quite a bit at the time of puja was issued. Man here means human being. This is the ordinary accepted meaning.

_____ : But it's reinforcing the very values, the very use of language that relegates women to a ...

S: I just don't, I don't agree with that at all. If one looks in the dictionary the first definition of man, it says: "Man - human being". Secondly it means a male human being. So when you say 'The Buddha was a man as we are men', the Buddha is a human being or was a human being as we are human beings. I do not because it doesn't fit the metre.

_____ : So you use an expression, a male expression ...

S: It is not a male expression. I reject that sort of critique of language. I think it is an alienated critique, a purely artificial critique which cuts us off from the roots of our language, our literature.

_____ : I don't see why it's an alienating (?)

S: Well, when man means human being, what's the objection to using that particular term?

_____ : Well, the particular objection there is that male terms are used widely throughout our language ...

S: Well, the same then applies to woman. Wo-man. Well, what are you going ... Some women object to that. I would say that, I think ... I think one should not get so far away from living language on purely abstract ideological grounds. In any case I don't agree with those grounds. You see. I

think this whole movement of changing language utterly ridiculous and artificial - chair-person and so on.

_____ : Would you agree that language has a very important effect on the ...

S: This is why I object because in the same way I object to metrification for exactly the same reasons. We've got away from our inch and our yard which are embedded in our language, our literature, literary heritage, into purely artificial, abstract, scientific terms like metre. Yes.

_____ : (Voices) ... historically determined, it's a historically determined measure. The metre is a historically determined measure ...

S: Ah, but how was yard arrived at? - it was the length of a man's arm, you see. It is (?)

_____ : (?)

S: Exactly, exactly. So how is arrived at? Purely by the exercise of reason, you can imagine a yard. It means something to you - it's the length of your own arm.

_____ : (?)

S: But a metre means nothing at all.

_____ : (?)

S: No a metre means nothing at all. I always cite this as an example of what Blake would call Urizenic reasoning. It is reasoning, abstract reasoning out of touch with experience. It's the same with regard to these ideological questions, of substituting person which means persona means mask anyway. Person for man and objecting to the use of language, objecting to the use of man, objecting to the use of he and so on ...

_____ : ... grounded in experience (?) ...

S: No. I don't agree. I don't agree. It is men talking on behalf of women.

_____ : What is men talking on behalf on women?

S: Men sticking up for women's rights which again is a ridiculous situation. Let the women stick up for themselves if you really believe that they're independent individuals.

_____ : They do but ...

S: Well, that's fine. That's fine. I'm quite happy to talk with women about this matter. Well, you have to talk with men about it for that matter but I think one should beware as a man as standing up for women because that would be self-contradictory.

_____ : I don't normally do it. But if there are situations in which there are no women present I'll ...

S: The women in our own movement and outside have discussed this with me more and more but more and more of them are coming round to my point of view.

_____ : I think fewer and fewer women in.... I think it's very interesting that you twice on the video tape did not answer the question why there are fewer women in the movement than there are men. You ...

S: But I did, no the whole of, my whole answer answered that. They find it is more difficult for woman to evolve than for a man to evolve. That is why we get fewer of them along. Well, we don't get fewer of them along in every case in every centre. Some centres have more women than men but fewer women commit themselves and I know this because I've worked with women, I know these women individually. I know the difficulties that they have. I know the effort they have to make to overcome them. I try to help them overcome them. They appreciate that effort. They do find it very difficult. More difficult than a man finds it even though men find it difficult enough.

_____ : I wouldn't dispute that they probably find it difficult.

S: But it is not due to any social conditioning. Well, they themselves see that in many cases within the Friends. They themselves say that what they have to fight is within themselves and many of them say, those within the Friends, that they appreciate the atmosphere within the Friends in which they are treated as growing individuals and they don't encounter the sort of treatment that they encounter outside. They appreciate this and also one interesting feature is that in the FWBO now we are getting more and more women from the women's lib movement. They find so, they tell me, the fulfilment of their women's lib aspirations within the FWBO.

_____ : That's to be expected. The FWBO is the best movement in the country.

S: But not just because it's a movement, because it is a movement which helps them, especially as women, and it gives them respect and consideration as women which does not mean that we espouse this fashionable teaching of absolute equality of the sexes. I think, my frank opinion of much that is said under this heading is that it's just madness and a symptom of the deep alienation of our whole western society. So I get back to more traditional views which are more in accordance with real human nature, independent of social conditioning, and which do justice to the growing individual and in particular justice to the growing individual woman. This is the result of my experience, the results of my prolonged thought and reflection. I'm quite aware of the fact that I'm going directly, diametrically against many current assumptions - I think that they are more than assumptions for many people - and a lot of current jargon which is just flying around and it's unfortunate that one has to do this sometimes, but this is a result of reflection and to some extent forced upon me by circumstances and experiences. As in the case of our single sex communities and retreats.

When I came back to England, when I started up the FWBO, did I think in terms of having single sex retreats or single sex communities? No. I took it for granted that everything would be shared but as a result of our own experience after five years of everything mixed we found that it was better for men, at least sometimes, to have retreats separately and they, some of the men themselves started thinking that they would like to go on separate retreats, longer retreats, and live in separate communities. The women then started getting very upset, very upset and I went into this with quite a lot of them. There was quite an upheaval for a couple of years, when you perhaps weren't around

then.

It was discussed endlessly and what really emerged was this. That women depended on men more than men depended on women. That's certainly, as regards the people that we were in association with. So I had to point out that that sort of dependence, that sort of emotional dependence and feeling of insecurity, was incompatible with the development of the individual. And a lot of women admitted that they felt quite worthless unless they had a man, that they expected a man to give them worth. And if they, if the men say went away on retreats, this is what happened a few years ago, or if the men set up a men's community the women felt rejected and not wanted. So, yes, you could say is the result of cultural conditioning, social conditioning. This is not the result of their biological conditioning.

So therefore that kind of social conditioning we encourage them to overcome and to I said in particular, "You are independent. You don't have to depend upon a man. You don't have to depend upon a man to give your feeling of worth. You give it to yourself". And eventually quite a few of them did. So one must see the whole picture but nonetheless even with these women who've overcome these social conditionings, cultural conditionings, there is a residual biological and psychological conditioning which is a different matter altogether, which goes much deeper and really does differentiate men from women and makes it more difficult for even the sincere woman who gets into the FWBO, to evolve spiritually.

_____ : Why is it that the woman having a child seems to be diametrically opposed to the spiritual advancement?

S: Well, here I have to go by what the women who've had children and who've wanted to live a spiritual life have told me. First of all, there's simply the question of time. The baby needs his mother and it would seem, as far as we know, that the mother is the best person in the early years of life to look after the baby, the natural mother, who has a sort of natural organic feeling for the baby. And so they find in practice that for two years the baby has to be their main consideration and I encourage them not to feel bad about that. They may want to meditate, they may want to go on retreats but they can't do it. It would be cruel to leave the baby, you know, at that particular age. So that's the first thing.

And the second thing is, that's probably the biggest thing, the fact that the baby needs them as a full time nurse and attendant for at least two years, after that they can start letting up. After two years they find they can leave the baby for a weekend and go away on a weekend retreat, but not longer than a weekend. By the time it's three or four they can perhaps, if they're lucky, they can leave the baby for a week. So that means that they're sort of out of action for a while. They can't even sit and meditate without the risk of being just called by the baby. So there is that practical difficulty and then, having had the baby their energies and feelings flow towards the baby. This is what they say. They're naturally preoccupied by the baby and it is not only a result of social or cultural conditioning.

So this is what makes it really difficult. At least for that period and women who have not had a child and are not sure whether they should have one, agonise in a way that most men have no conception of. Whether they should have a baby, whether they shouldn't, whether it will help them get over their emotional blockages or whether it will get in the way of their spiritual development. They really ponder these things very seriously and talk about them a lot on their retreats. It's a very big issue for a woman and I can't believe it's just a question of social and cultural conditioning. Some of

our women are quite developed enough to have got over cultural and social conditioning. But it's their residual, biological and emotional conditioning that is much more difficult to get over. It comes from a much deeper source.

So on the one hand I would say that, yes, in the terms that David has mentioned, yes, you could even say, yes, we're sexist OK. On the other hand we're much more radical than any of these so-called radical movements. We encourage within the FWBO that the women to be much more free and independent as an individual than I think she's ever encouraged anywhere else.

Robin Collett: Do you think there's any important part to be played by the father in the early years of a child's development and in such cases you postulated - single sex communities - the father would be rather absent from the ...

S: I think the father, the biological father in the early years of life has very little part to play. Any other man could play it just as well. Well, the baby doesn't know whether it's his biological father or what's called a cultural father. The baby doesn't know and, but it does seem that because the man is biologically less involved with the whole process of birth and so on than the mother is, he doesn't have that strong psychological emotional involvement in the baby that the mother has that seems to be necessary to the baby being brought up. I think the father's role, whether biological father or cultural becomes important later on and becomes increasingly important as the child grows older. But the first two years of life I think father can be dispensed with by the baby directly. The father may be important as giving support to mother but to baby directly the biological father is I think of very little importance.

Robin Collett: So you don't actually see that, a sort of, a constant presence of a male or, whether it be cultural father or biological father, as being important in the context of the home?

S: No. It does seem that the very small child, the infant, doesn't distinguish between the sexes. Apart from the fact it has got this almost instinctual tie with the mother that the father doesn't have. I don't know if you know about the experiments that have been done on rabbits. (?) to extend them any further but they took a litter of baby rabbits away from the mother and they wired the mother up in various ways to register its reactions and heartbeats and all that sort of thing and they then killed the baby rabbits at a distance of several miles at different times, timing them. And they found that reactions, recorded reactions in the mother rabbit corresponded to the exact time, the exact minute, even seconds of the deaths of the little rabbits. So this is quite suggestive and presumably this is continuing on higher levels. I mean, mothers do say that if there's anything wrong with the baby say in the room upstairs, they feel it and they go upstairs. They don't need to hear it crying. They know that it's not happy, that there's something wrong. They just go up. They feel it. However ...

_____ : ... wonder what research that is because it contradicts most of the research that I know of. Children can't even distinguish their mother from other adults until ...

S: No, I'd have to look this up.

Subhuti: ... the child couldn't distinguish its mother but the point was that the mother could ...

S: There is this rapport between mother and baby that you don't get between father and baby.

Because after all the mother has actually carried that child within her for nine months and she really feels it's part of herself in a way that the father doesn't and can't. He might reflect that it is part of himself but he doesn't feel it in that organic way that the woman does. So therefore the woman has got this strong feeling for the child that the father doesn't have and there is a bond between mother and child that there isn't between father and child. I feel it really extraordinary that this is ever doubted but it is doubted nowadays and I consider this some evidence of alienation, that we've got away, in many cases in the west, from our sort of biological and psychological roots.

So therefore this is why I'm saying all this, therefore the mother is more important to the baby in the early years of life and father becomes more important as he has an increasing cultural role to play and as the child becomes more aware of separate people. We're told I believe that the baby in any case, even when there are both parents present doesn't really distinguish them as two people but ...

_____ : ... (?)

S: Well, this is what I've read about child psychology but this is not essential to my argument. One of our Order Members, Jinamata, has made a study of these things. She teaches child psychology, this is one of the things that she has to say. But that even if it was not so, that would not affect my argument.

Robin Collett: Do you see there being any case then for the father and the mother living together during those initial years so that the father can support the mother ...

S: No. Not particularly. No, the mother requires support. This is quite clear, that when the mother is having to look after a small child, a baby, she needs support. She can't do it on her own. And I think the nuclear family is the worst sort of way of doing that. In any case father's out most of the day earning. In the east, especially in India there's the extended family so that the woman has around her other women and also older men who are, sort of retired from work. So there there's not really so much, you know, strain in this respect. I think that women certainly need a supportive group, not even just a small supportive family, a supportive group. But the father need not, the biological father need not be part of that at all.

Robin Collett: You don't think there's any kind of emotional attachment which might be a healthy one between mother and father ...

S: I think that it is important that the child is brought up within an atmosphere, first of all with a positive relation with the mother obviously. I think even this is sometimes questioned now. Some people have even put forward the view that a birth the baby could be taken away from the mother and brought up by any woman. I rather doubt this because it does seem that the baby really needs strong emotional organic support. The mother is really the only person who can feel that to the deep extent that is necessary. So I would say that first of all, yes the baby needs the affectionate support of the mother, it's more than affectionate, it's much, much deeper than that, and that both of them need to feel around them and the baby especially as it gets older a supportive social environment, let's say. But that need not be provided by the blood father and siblings. If a woman, for instance, is living in a community, even a women's community, or perhaps most of all a woman's community, that could be provided.

Robin Collett: But it rather begs the questions as to why would she have the child in the first place

and why she chose the particular man to be the father?

S: Well, usually in the west she doesn't, she doesn't choose at all. It just happens. You see what I mean? Unless one thinks in terms of quite conventional marriage where people fall in love, they get married. Usually, well, they intend to have children some time or other but they may not have intended to have them exactly when they come along. Among younger people nowadays the tendency does seem for these things just to happen rather than for the single woman say to plan or decide that she wants to have a baby and decide then who she is going to have it by. I do know that sometimes, of course, single women do want to have babies and don't want to have a husband, don't want to be married and they try to get themselves pregnant by a man who they think would be biologically speaking a suitable father for their child.

Robin Collett: But that sort of presupposes people are rather careless about contraception at one time or another ...

S: They are I'm afraid. Yes.

Robin Collett: Quite a lot, well, I know that is quite a significant factor in you know, sort of,

S: They're rather uninstructed.

Robin Collett: But I mean there are quite a sizeable proportion of quite responsible people who don't have children and are taking the whole thing quite seriously.

[End of side one side two]

S: Also of course it must be remembered I think that one of least of our Friends has had cause to remember this recently, that even the most mindfully taken precautions are not infallible. One must bear that in mind too. But anyway how did the question arise?

Robin: Well, it's just, sort of, wondering what sort of effect it has on a mother who, say, purposely decides that she wants to have a child by a particular man, but based on some sort of, well, obviously some sort of feeling of mutual affection between them and then you seem to be suggesting that subsequent to the act of conception that the father has very little to play in events until about the age of four and I can't quite see that having some sort of detrimental effect on a woman ...

S: I think this arises out of my critique of the nuclear family. I think the nuclear family, that is to say, usually of husband and wife, with one or two or perhaps more children is almost the most psychologically unhealthy set up that one could imagine and a comparatively recent development even in the west at that. So therefore I think in terms of communities as a more positive alternative. And then one finds that if one considers the whole thing within the context of spiritual development, both men and women do find, and this has certainly been people's experience within the Friends, do find that the single sex community, the single sex living and possibly working, situation is more conducive to individual development for both. You see what I mean? So, that as it were, sets the terms of the situation. That one has as the most positive living situation for the individual the single sex community and that goes for the woman as well as for the man.

I have even gone so far as to say that I think, based on my experience of these things in the Friends

that the women get even more out of living in women's communities than men get out of living in men's communities. Judging by what people tell me from both sides, that is definitely the impression I've formed. So therefore excepting for instance that the single sex community is a much better situation than the nuclear family situation, especially for those who want to develop let's say spiritually or just develop as human beings, but also given that the woman's biological urge is very strong and she still decides to have a child, then you have the situation of a woman or women with very small children living in women's communities and mutually supporting one another. Maybe with some women present as members of the community who do not themselves have babies for one reason or another, either because they had them years ago and they've grown up or because they, well, in their case, they don't particularly want them. So the mother and the baby, they get their support in that particular way.

And then, when the children, especially perhaps the boys start needing, psychologically, contact with a 'father-figure', let's say - it doesn't have to be the biological father - well then arrangements have to be made for that. We haven't got to that stage in practice yet because we don't have people of that sort. But we have had the older boys coming into communities, in some cases at the suggestion of their parents. I think as far as I can see - it remains to be tested in practice - that this would be a much more healthy set-up. And (?) in any case one does find that in many parts of the world including among so-called primitive people, in some respects seem more healthy we are. You see what I'm getting at?

Robin: Yes, I do.

S: So one has to see the sort of overall set-up. I mean, what is the best sort of set-up on the whole? I don't like to use the words inferior and superior, I mean, these are very loaded words. I think, as a result of my own experience and reflection I have to recognise that women biologically and psychologically are somewhat handicapped in spiritual terms by the mere fact that they are women, which doesn't mean that they cannot evolve but that the difficulties are somewhat greater usually in their case and therefore one makes provision for that. Not that one is trying to put women down or anything of that sort, but one has to help everybody from where they actually are. Recognising any particular difficulties that they do have. And I think sorting out and separating those things which definitely are the result of social and cultural conditioning and those things which are in fact more deeply rooted, though still conditionings, which are biological and psychological. So does it seem more reasonable to you now and if not why not? (Laughter)

_____ : (?) I don't think there's any point in going through it?

_____ : Well, there might no point (?)

_____ : I think I understand a little bit of what you say but what seemed to me false views ...

S: That's fair enough but I think I must say that I do rather strongly object when people attribute to one just sheer, as it were, masculine prejudice when one has in fact really tried to understand the whole situation and the facts of the situation and to make the best provision that one can for men and women both so that both equally can evolve and develop. So I think this is the initial point really that I was making. I think by the very use of one's terms or by the very terms that you use one should not call into question the other person's good faith. That it is possible for people to differ or even to hold wildly, as it were, old fashioned ideas in quite good faith and on well what to them at

least appear as quite reasonable grounds.

Robin: Surely there are going to be quite considerable difficulties just fitting in the whole thing into the sort of structure of the society which has been built up. I mean for instance, I mean if you compare just a sort of geographical location of the way houses are distributed whether ...

S: Yes, the number of rooms they have ...

Robin: Yes, the sort of, all the legalities ...

S: I agree. Well I think the two things are one. I don't aim just at fitting in. I think that we must actually create alternative structures in every sense and the other aim. On the other hand one can find a way round a lot of things. For instance, even some years ago a group of young businessmen found that they could get a sort of, well I don't know what it's called in law, but let's call it a collective mortgage on a property that they were inhabiting together and sharing and living as we would say, well at least as a commune. There are usually ways around if one consults a good enough lawyer. I think we found that a little bit haven't we, that we can sometimes make the law work to our advantage and in accordance with our ideals. We did that with the co-op structure. We function within the existing legal co-op structure framework. We had a bit of difficulty just framing our aims and objects or whatever we called them, but we did it. We satisfied the legal requirements of those who had to be satisfied and we also did full justice to our own philosophical position.

So I think very often you can find a way round if you really want to and I think this will increasingly be the case. I mean, for instance, even just simple things like social recognition of the unmarried mother. In my lifetime there's been a revolutionary change here. When I was a boy, when I was a teenager, to be an unmarried mother was an utter disgrace. No-one bothers about it now. So many respectable middle-class parents have had their daughters announcing that they're going to have babies and that they're not married and they're not going to get married and they're going to have the baby. That's that. So many middle-class parents have had to accept that situation. Working-class parents have always had to accept it and keep things as quiet as they could. (Laughter)

So I don't despair of the possibility of change. I don't think society, even our society, is really so rigid as it sometimes appears. It can be made to bend quite a bit. And where it can't be made to bend, we just have to create our own alternative structures. But I must say that my critique of the nuclear family which I've never actually spelled out is I think quite devastating. I really regard, for all that I hear, from people who come to me for advice of one sort or another, from all that I hear the nuclear family's is a thoroughly undesirable set-up.

Robin: Are you considering spelling that out then at some point in the future?

S: I think I should. If I have time I think I should. I'd be doing a public service. (Laughter) It's been spelled out by other people too to some extent, but I think I could do it better, just because we have a different sort of spiritual context. (Pause)

I mean is this a sort of question that agitates most people? I mean the apparent (Laughter) sexism, male chauvinist piggery of the FWBO.

Robin: I think it does actually to be quite honest. Maybe it's because it's a question which actually I

feel quite.... it's one of the problems I've been having, but I have noticed that on retreats and various other occasions there have been a number of people involved in the Friends who find this quite a difficult area.

S: I just wonder what the actual difficulty is? Is it an ideological difficulty or is it a practical difficulty?

_____ : I think it's the actual subtlety, the actual wider perspective. It's actually kind of (?) different way of looking at it. But when you kind of break through that, you actually perceive it and it seems real.

S: But a different way of looking at things, whether right or wrong - one isn't discussing that at the moment - but a different way of looking at things is in any case difficult to adjust to.

_____ : I think the trouble with this different way of looking at things is it looks a hell of a lot like the old way of looking at things.

_____ : I think that's where the subtlety is.

_____ : Yes I know that's what you think!

S: I think this is why it's interesting and perhaps significant that we are now attracting so many women's libbers. I mean, I don't mean hundreds but proportionally among the women - you probably don't notice, you don't have the intimate contact with them that I have - but there's a surprisingly high number of women who've been involved with the women's lib movement and to some extent are still involved with it and see the FWBO as carrying the whole process a stage further. They feel even more liberated with us and they're really pleased ... at first sight, yes, they were a bit put off by single-sex retreats, communities and maybe they had that suspicion that we were just a bit old-fashioned and male chauvinistic in that sort of way but the women themselves have had the sense to see that in fact that is not the case and that in the FWBO they get a better deal than they get anywhere else, in every respect. (Pause)

And, I mean, from what I hear from some of these women, I think that we're going to get more and more of these sort of women. They're encouraging their friends to come along. Sometimes odd things happen. I'll just give you one example, you might not have heard about it. Well, you've no way of hearing about it unless you hear about it from me. (Laughter) Women themselves don't usually talk about these things except to me. At one of the women's retreats they had a whole bunch of women's libbers who were rather raw to the FWBO. But anyway one of the ex-women's libbers who was in the FWBO had persuaded four or five of these sisters to go on a women's retreat. So, Sanghadevi or whoever it was, was instructing in the *Mettā Bhāvanā*. One of the women refused to do it because she said, "I'm not going to develop *mettā* towards men. I want to hate men!" So there were little difficulties like that but eventually she saw the point that even men, even men have to be loved. (Laughter) It didn't necessarily mean that she had to agree with them but you can feel *mettā* towards someone even while continuing to disagree.

But anyway, those really negative aspects of women's lib, and there really are some very negative aspects, these sort of women, are seen as negative aspects and not as essential to a genuinely liberated attitude on the part of women. I think a woman in the FWBO can be more liberated than

anywhere else. Especially liberated to such an extent it scares her. That's why we don't get so many women really. They don't want to be liberated to that extent. (Pause)

And, again, you know to come back to the points that you were making, this is one of the reasons I do stress that when a woman within the FWBO, whether she's a Friend or a mitra or an Order Member, anyone who's in contact with us, if she has a baby she's got a right to consider that she should get moral support from the whole movement, certainly from all those with whom she is in immediate contact. She needs that especially if there's no father around.

Robin: What about the financial support (?) since she has the right ...

S: Well, fortunately the state looks after that. But I would say in principle if there was any difficulty, well, surely her friends would chip in and help her.

Robin: What about the father (?) ...

S: I would say no special responsibility. I mean maybe there's something here also I should mention that I don't think the father has got any special responsibility for the child unless he wants to have it. I don't think he should be forced to have it out of a sense of abstract duty. But if he's also a mitra or if he's also an Order Member, well, yes, he knows that woman, yes, he also has a share in the responsibility. But there's no need to consider that he has a special share just because he's happened to be the father. (Pause) I mean just let's fantasise a little bit, let us just get you out of your rut of your ordinary way of thinking. You know (Laughter) there are ... I must say despite initial resistance on the part of the women in many respects they're very open to these ideas and arrangements provided that the basic requirements are safeguarded they don't mind any set up; whether it's monogamy, polygamy, they don't mind, they just want to know where they stand and to be able to fulfil themselves in the way that is natural and proper to them, both as women and as individuals. If they can be sure of that, they don't mind what you do. They're much more open in that respect, very often, than men are and are not so bound up with, or hampered by, ideology.

But anyway what I was going to say was this: there are some primitive communities known to anthropologists in which the father of the child is never known. It's as though they pretend that men have got nothing to do with the process of becoming pregnant. They don't make the connection between sexual intercourse and pregnancy. Actually they know it quite well but officially they don't make any connection. But in these sort of communities, in this sort of societies they've got a totem, a totem, a sacred animal or what not and the children, the babies, are attributed to the totem. All the babies are the offspring of that particular totem who is supposed, in some esoteric manner, to have cohabitated with the women. So there's no sort of individual biological father though at a certain stage in the child's life someone sort of takes over or is appointed as the cultural father, especially in the case of boys, to initiate into the traditions of the tribe and so on and so forth. So the women go along with this system quite happily. It really means that the tribe collectively assumes responsibility for the children as well as for the mother and there's no such thing as individual paternity.

So I suggested, this was years ago semi-jokingly, that all the women in the movement who have babies should regard them as offspring of the Windhorse. (Laughter) Some of them rather liked this idea, so much so that one of the women had a dream in which she was giving birth to thousands upon thousands of tiny baby windhorses. [Laughter] You see, so, I mean, we mustn't take it that our present structure, especially nuclear family structure as it has developed in recent, I was going to say

centuries but it's really hardly that, is sort of something absolutely innate and given and universal, something that has always existed everywhere. No, there are all sorts of social arrangements known to people and I'm quite sure that we could have an alternative social arrangement - roughly the sort I've outlined - which is more conducive to the individual development of both men and women, what to speak of children. I've seen for instance in India how the extended families are a much more positive situation than our own nuclear family. They're a sort of half-way house, you could say, the extended family, where you've got fourteen, fifteen, twenty people living more or less under the same roof and all feeling responsible for one another. If one is sick, well, the others look after him or her and the children are sort of passed from hand to hand. Everyone, anybody can take them.

In this country a man usually takes up a baby gingerly very often, especially if it isn't his own. Sometimes even if it is his own. He doesn't know really what to do with it. He's a bit awkward and you're not allowed to touch babies very often, you're shooed away and even small children aren't allowed to carry around babies but in India you see it all the time. A man will handle a child just as naturally as a woman, a small child of say four will be lugging a baby about on their hip, perfectly able to look after it, you see.

So that is more natural, and I think that extending from the extended family to the community would be better still from a spiritual point of view. On the other hand I'm not envisaging necessarily a monolithic system but a wide range of possibilities. At present you've only got one which is the monogamous nuclear family. That's the only choice. I think there should be a wider amount of choices. You can't prevent people from setting up nuclear families, you can't prevent it by law, it's been strongly advised against but you can't stop people doing it especially if they're in that abnormal state called being in love. [Laughter] There really should be these alternative possibilities like let there be mixed communities, let there be men's communities, let there be women's communities. Now here in Norfolk I've been trying to get together a mixed community for three years. Can I do it? No. There's strong resistance from all concerned. Now they'll go into men's communities alright, the men. They'll go into women's communities, the women. But will they go into a mixed community? No. There's strong resistance to that. Because people really really feel quite genuinely that a single sex community is better and mixed communities are really very difficult situations. They are usually made up of couples or they come to be made up of couples and the couples tend to go off on their own, psychologically if not literally.

And children - I've talked about this with women - it's very difficult for even women living together with children of different mothers to bring them all up together because they've got such different ideas about bringing up their children. So even that sort of community is difficult to get together but we've got one at least in Auckland there's a community of women and babies, three women and two very small children.

But I want that there should be a much wider range of options open. I mean for those who are serious about their spiritual development certainly at this stage in our present society, the single sex community is really very helpful. I mean some women originally, about four years ago when we started, people started setting up men's communities, reacted as though men had apparently been banished from their lives, that the men were going to permanently disappear. There was real panic among the women, it was quite extraordinary to see. This really did highlight their emotional dependence upon men which is quite unhealthy. I mean, this I could agree with was the result of social and cultural conditioning because I don't think any real human being needs to be emotionally dependent on another in that sort of way, that sort of almost neurotic way. So they have been

brought up to be, they can't get along without a man. That just isn't true and now most of them know that within the FWBO. They know from their own experience that they can get along without men. I don't say all the time and in every respect but broadly speaking they can live their lives without constantly looking over their shoulder to see whether there's a man around which is what women do outside.

Some men do it with women - they can't do anything unless there's a woman around supporting them. That's really terrible. So we try to replace that sort of neurotic dependence especially of men on women and women on men by kalyana mitrata which is a much more positive conception. You know, spiritual friendship as we call it.

(Pause)

So it is not a bad thing that these questions are ventilated, even if there is some disagreement because there are questions that have concerned and continue to concern people quite deeply. But I think some men have been surprised to find the extent to which they could get on without women and without being really neurotically dependent on them. (Pause) Was someone looking in your direction a little while ago?

_____ : Yes, (?) general question (?)

S: You are agreeing then or disagreeing?

_____ : I was agreeing (?)

S: You didn't find it ...?

_____ : (?)

S: I think very young people, those who are coming along now, say teenagers, especially very young teenagers are quite open to the possibility of what we may call 'alternative' arrangements. Well, even fifteen years ago, or even ten years ago, we couldn't think in these terms. I hadn't started thinking in those terms just because the movement as a whole hadn't reached that particular level of development. The question hadn't arisen. But I was given food for thought from time to time, I will say that. I'll give you a few little pictures - maybe you might like to hear a few items from my own experience, a few little pictures.

I remember on occasion on retreat, this was one of our Keffolds retreats, two or three of you might have heard this story before but never mind that. A Keffolds retreat, years and years ago, it must have been eight, nine years ago. It was a mixed retreat of course, they all were in those days and I had on that retreat a friend of mine who was an older woman. So this older woman had in her room with her four or five quite young women who were at that time going along to the FWBO. They weren't Friends or mitras because we didn't have mitras in those days, they were just people coming along plus a handful of Order Members. Anyway this older woman friend of mine who was quite new to the FWBO said to me the next day, "Do you know", she said, "it was really extraordinary what happened in my room last night", she said. So I said, "What was that?". So she said, "Well, you know I've got these younger women." So she said, "Early in the night half of them disappeared". She said, "I didn't see them again, they spent the night somewhere else". And she said, "The other women were weeping bitterly that they had nowhere to go and nobody wanted them, they were

rejected". She said, "What is this?" (Laughter)

This set me thinking. [Laughter] And when I was in the States. I'll agree with you this is all cultural conditioning. (Laughter) So when I was in the States I was invited to give a talk, I think it was on Buddhism and Ecology or something like that at a weekend, it wasn't a seminar, a sort of gathering and it was organised by a black clergyman whom I knew. I gave my talk and there was a sort of large room or small hall where the students from the university who were attending that weekend had been sort of camping. It was quite much bigger than this whole sort of complex, there were about sixty, and they were definitely arranged in couples. They'd been sleeping in this big hall during the night. So there was a double sleeping bag here and a double sleeping bag there, and a double sleeping, there were about thirty, thirty five double sleeping bags and on each sleeping bag there was a man and a woman seated, a male and a female student listening to what I had to say. There was one exception, there was one young woman who had a single sleeping bag and was sitting on it all by herself. She didn't appear to mind very much.

But anyway what I noticed was this. Americans going in for informality and all that sort of thing they were just listening to my talk and they were just sprawled out on these sleeping bags on the floor. Then I noticed that after I'd been speaking for a few minutes everyone seemed quite interested, the men especially seemed very interested in what I was saying. Each woman, sort of, lovingly took hold of the head of the man and pulled it round and was sort of kissing and hugging him and cuddling him and, of course, diverting his attention from the talk. So in each case he sort of submitted to this for a minute and then he gently freed himself and set down to listen to my talk again. After a few minutes the performance was repeated. So this happened the whole way through and so clearly you could see what was happening. Each woman did not want that the attention of her partner should stray for more than a few minutes onto something else, something other than herself. This again set me thinking, but though I must also make the point that in the discussion that followed the person who seemed to be the most interested, who asked the best questions was the woman who was sitting by herself. She was either a lesbian or a female liberationist or something of that sort, but anyway she was in a different category.

But as I said, this also set me thinking and there are a number of little incidents like this over the years which made me sort of question the whole sort of socio-sexual status quo. And with developments like men's retreats, women's retreats, men's communities, women's communities, we've gradually worked out a sort of modus vivendi of our own which I think gives fulfilment and happiness to people on the ordinary human level but also helps them to develop as individuals, develop spiritually. We've not yet finished by any means. This is just a start and no doubt there'll be more experiments to come. There might be even changes. But I think the broad pattern has been established even though it isn't really complete. (Pause)

I also find that people come with so much unhappiness, so much misery arising out of people's relationships, especially of the so-called romantic type and the married type - it's really quite pitiful sometimes. I mean sometimes I sort of say to myself, well, it's as though, I mean, I suppose (?) in some people's eyes, that sex and sexual relations and relationships are supposed to be pleasant things so I'd always thought. But no, for most people these are all bound up with terrible traumas and (Laughter) (?) sufferings, and horrid life experiences. So I start to wonder maybe they've got it all wrong and they're approaching it wrong or the set-up is wrong. It's as though people should be saved from these things, they really do suffer so much. Pangs of unrequited love that's nothing! it's far, far worse than that. They really do get into what Laing calls these knots. It's very difficult to

disentangle. I think that the nuclear family is a great culprit.

And you know people, who are so-called liberated people are no better off I think than any others. They don't succeed in making any less of a mess of their lives. Liberated women sometimes complain that if they try and have a meeting with a correspondingly liberated man it's always they that have to go and make the coffee. Well, we don't have that, I hope, in the FWBO. A simple thing like that, some of the women grumble about quite a bit.

So I think going off on a slight tangent since this subject has been raised. I think that the whole unisex trend is quite undesirable. I see this as ignoring differences, or pretending not to see differences which, on their own level, are very genuine differences. I think by ignoring or minimising those differences you just make things more difficult for yourself. Yes, there are certain things that women can do just as well as men and men can do just as well as women but apart from that, I mean, there are, I believe, or I've come to a conclusion that there are, some basic biological and psychological differences between men and women. I don't think that's a discovery. But it's as though some people convince themselves to the contrary.

I mean, there are some people who are sort of slightly hermaphroditic but I think they are the exceptions. I don't think they are the norm much less still the ideal. Spiritual androgyny is another thing altogether. (Laughter) Were you talking about this? (Laughter)

_____ : John just insinuated that (?) (Laughter)

S: That was only, one, two or three questions but we've practically used up our time. Never mind, if this was on people's minds. Anybody rather bored with this whole discussion or with this whole topic? (Laughter)

Robin: Can I try another question on a totally different tact. It's about co-ops. You don't mind if I read it out?

"Would you support the idea of a profit sharing structured co-op where the members were individually responsible for the proportion and destination of their dana in their share as an alternative to the presently structured FWBO co-op system where the level of dana contribution and its destination are decided often by a body of Order Members outside the enterprise itself?"

S: Well, I would say that if it is in fact decided by a body of Order Members outside the co-op itself, this is not in accordance with the ideal that we do have for co-ops because the co-op is a producer's co-op and essentially all our units should be autonomous. So whatever is given should be given freely. But I do know that some co-ops at least are not able, for one reason or another to function in this way at present. But this is the way they should function.

_____ : In other words moving towards that as quickly as you can. In the case of the Pure Land Co-op that each business the people, the team in that business would decide how much of their profit they want to give to the Centre or to other projects.

S: There is another sort of point to be made here that originally it did seem as though a co-op in the full sense, that is the sense which we understand the term, a co-op was a sort of embodiment or

exemplification of team-based Right Livelihood, was a comparatively easy thing, but experience has shown that to work in a co-op in the sort of way that we are trying to work requires a very high level of commitment. In fact it would seem that really to work in a co-op you need to be committed in the sense of being an Order Member because there you are, you're working really hard, you're working long hours very often. Sometimes you're doing things which are not in themselves particularly pleasant or inspiring so you need a very strong motivating ideal. You are also being encouraged to use the working situation as a means of individual growth. That means you have an ideal of individual growth. You're also being encouraged to give quite a high percentage of profit as dana and take very little for yourself. This again implies tremendous commitment to an ideal. I don't think you can really expect this of people who are not Order Members or very near to being Order Members.

So therefore I think, as far as I've understood the discussions that have been going on among co-op people, the tendency is as you upgrade the co-ops, so the actual co-op members are normally Order Members too because that is the level of commitment that is required. Others can be taken on who don't want to rise to that level of commitment can just be involved as non co-op member workers, if you see what I mean?

_____ : On a long term basis, they've got six months or so in involved any of the decision-making which is conducive to feeling involved which is part ...

S: I, well, I think there are two possibilities here. Though again I would must emphasise the whole area is currently being developed and explored. I think there are two possibilities here. One is that one does join quite definitely for a short period to give a helping hand without being really committed to the project. That means of course it would not be appropriate for you to become a full co-op member. The other is where you join on a sort of probationary period with the idea of joining, that is to say, actually being able to accept that level of commitment and you are working up towards that. But during the probationary period you wouldn't have an actual say. But obviously those who are co-op members should be open to any suggestion that at least that you have to make.

Robin: I've got another question. Can you see a provision being made within the co-ops for the longer term benefits of their members in such areas as travel, health insurance and in the case of older people provision for pensions and other family commitments especially in light of the generally accepted mode of FWBO practice where if any member needs money for some such reason he has to procure the necessary funds outside the Right Livelihood project.

S: Yes. This whole question of need is a quite tricky one. So long as your needs are basic it's pretty simple. You need food, you need clothing, you need shelter. So you don't need much to cover those sort of needs, especially if you live in a community and the community lives cheaply because it buys everything in bulk, it shares certain facilities and so. But supposing you say you need a violin. You need in the interests of your individual development perhaps some expensive books. Or you need a holiday, you need to go to Florence, you need to go to Greece etc. It could be argued and it could be generally so in some cases that those are genuine needs.

But on the other hand one has to see to the overall objectives of the co-ops as we've set them up. One of those three aims and objects is certainly yes, to give people all their needs, all their genuine non-neurotic needs. Second to provide a working situation which will be conducive to their development as individuals, a medium of communication and so on. And thirdly to provide dana for

our centres and Buddhist activities because we have taken it as a principle that we do not want to depend on the general public for donations. We want to be self-supporting and our way of being self-supporting is largely through the co-ops. So the co-ops are to be seen in that light. Now there will naturally be a clash sometimes between these three objectives. Sometimes for instance you may be getting all your personal needs, that is to say, enough money to live on and buy the things you want. Also there's enough dana being made to give to the centre, but the working situation isn't really conducive to your spiritual development. It may be the nature of the work, it may be that you have to work on your own very often. So you have to try and strike a balance. You see what I mean?

There's also, with regard to meeting people's needs at present, the point has to be borne in mind that all the co-op projects are under-capitalised. Everyone knows what that means, I think. So where is the capital to come from? The capital actually comes from the workers. You see what I mean? Instead of giving more to the workers you give less. Out of what you don't give them you capitalise to some extent the co-op itself. If you were not giving the workers less, the co-op could not function at all because there's no capital to finance it. You see the point? But in principle yes, certainly it is accepted that all people's needs must be met. It may be that only a certain type of co-op business could actually do that. Well, there may be some businesses which are not sufficiently profitable. Always there is going to be this question, and even difference of opinion as to what constitutes a need. And also whose needs? If not everybody's needs can be satisfied, all right who should, as it were, be given priority? Does he needs his violin more than he needs to go on a holiday say to Italy?

So this requires great sensitivity and a lot of kalyana mitrata, a lot of sense of spiritual fellowship so that the whole thing doesn't degenerate into a wrangle as to who get what.

[End of tape one tape two]

So at present, since we can't afford, the co-ops can't afford to give people very much we cannot take into the co-ops those people with heavy commitments which would need a lot of financing by us. You see what I mean? Because it would mean the co-op then couldn't function if we have to pay that level of, inverted commas, 'wages'.

So, supposing a man comes along with a very big family. Well, we have to pay him, for the sake of argument ten times what we paid any other worker. Well, it would mean the co-op would collapse in some cases. So we cannot take on at the present this sort of person. The person with those sort of financial commitments. If someone wants to join the co-op, but wants to keep up his mortgage payments and his HP payments on the car and his alimony for two wives and his support for four children, we can't do it! We'd love to, yes, in principle, we can't just because for the co-op to be viable at all only a certain percentage of its income can be paid out in wages, so to speak, to the co-op members and workers. And the field of co-ops is a very complex one. I've only sort of 'peeked' into it. I don't fully understand all the workings and ramifications but I have the impression that we have to do a lot more exploration and experimentation with different sorts of co-ops, different sorts of businesses. What are more conducive to Right Livelihood? What are more profitable? The ideal is a business, a co-op business which is very profitable, provides an excellent working situation and of course gives everybody their needs of life to an unprecedented degree. [Laughter] But that's not easy.

Another thing, since we're on the topic and then I think we'll start thinking of closing - another little example. It's very difficult to motivate people to work hard in co-ops if there isn't this strong commitment to an ideal, unless there is a profit motive. We eschew the profit motive don't we in co-

ops for the individual producer members. If they work harder they don't get more, necessarily. You can get people to work really hard by paying them more wages sometimes. But we are not in a position to pay people more and in fact we do not want to motivate people by just offering them more money. So that leaves only one way of motivating people, that is through the ideal. That's why you've got to have committed people in a co-op otherwise the co-op will not be a success. It will not be a business success because the profit motive is absent for the individual worker. Even if he may be working on a managerial level he doesn't get more just because of that fact. He may work harder and get less in fact than somebody else. So the only thing that is left is the ideal. Therefore you need really committed people to work in co-ops because working in co-ops from all that I've gathered is really tough sometimes.

Robin: You can't envisage a situation where you have maybe a sort of co-op where the more conventional situation where maybe you have people who are sort of, I mean obviously not fully committed to the ideal in perhaps the sense that you would ideally like them to be, but they use the profit incentive so to speak to set up a situation in which they grow and ...

S: Well, some of our, some of our Friends are tempted to do this. I personally, I mean I haven't made my mind up finally about it, I'm very doubtful. For instance I look at say the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. I don't want to go into politics. That is an endless subject anyway and I'll probably have even more disagreements than we have had already, but the Russian economy, say, is not a profitable one. The Polish one is not profitable. The section of their economy which is most profitable in terms of the amount of time, energy and labour, and even money put into it is the private businesses that people set up and run in their spare time, quite illegally sometimes. It's very difficult to get people to work for something abstract like the common good or the state. I've really come to the conclusion that you've either, you can motivate them by offering them more money. Well, by carrot. Of course you can in a way motivate them with stick. But that also doesn't really work. You can't keep driving them all the time and you can't compel them to work well. You can compel them to work but you can't compel them to work well. So that only leaves the ideal. So we have to fall back upon that.

And therefore I say that the co-ops as we understand them need committed people. I don't see any other way. You could perhaps find, as it were, ordinary people not spiritually committed who could work in a co-op in a reasonable sort of way but they'd need to be pretty well motivated by something at least a bit more than just the profit motive. We'd have to have an ideal of the co-op. I think it would be very difficult to justify that ideal unless one brought in the ideal in the more specifically spiritual sense sooner or later.

Robin: The only motivation I can see perhaps would be one which is the fact that you'd be working in a small business orientation which gives you owner responsibilities which counts for quite a bit and also the fact that people might want to link that in with some sort of community relationship but not necessarily motivated by a great spiritual commitment.

S: Right, I think that probably the first place where we'll be able to try an experiment like this is India. I think there what we'll probably do is to set up a housing co-operative, build with money which I think we can get from the government a housing colony, with co-operative industries, light industries just next door as it were and organise the whole thing along Buddhistic lines. I think that is with the ex-untouchable Buddhists. I think we may be able to arrange something like that. Because there are a lot of people in this community who consider themselves Buddhists and have a

strong sense of identity with Buddhism but who aren't exactly spiritually committed individually, in our sense. So you could very likely get them working in these co-ops, get whole families working in these co-ops, I mean extended families, working and supporting themselves and having a good working situation and perhaps contributing something to the local centre. I think we probably could work out something along these lines in India.

Here it might be a bit more difficult because in this country being industrially more developed and perhaps anything on a large scale needing quite a large amount of capital. (Pause)

So the questions and the discussion this evening has been, it seems pretty basic haven't they. I mean, male and female, sex, communities, which just means where you live, it's one way of arranging your individual and collective life, and co-ops, how you work. In a way you couldn't get more basic than that unless you discussed, of course, physical training and food (Laughter) and things like that.

But I think we have to accept..... I think also I must say this with regard to the overall attitude of things within the FWBO in some of these more controversial areas. I think some of us who function almost exclusively within the FWBO sometimes might forget how unfamiliar some of these ideas and let's say 'folk-ways' of ours are to people outside or people coming from outside and I think maybe we mustn't be surprised if they have an a sort of initial shock. But I think they must also be prepared to look at us quite objectively and just see whether we are actually a more positive and happier and in human terms, more genuinely successful crowd of people. However weird our ideas might be in some respects, well they do seem to work, don't they, in terms of general human happiness and welfare. But this is only a beginning. There's lots of things we have to do yet. So give the FWBO the benefit of the doubt until you've tried it for a couple of years and lived in a community, a men's community, worked in a co-op and been involved with a centre regularly, practised meditation regularly, communicated regularly and so on.

The things that we're doing and the way that we're structured, these things have been hammered out with a lot of thought and as a result of a lot of reflection, and if we have to go against the existing modes of thought and existing social arrangements, well in some ways that's too bad because it means more hard work on our part. But if we really find that certain ideas and certain arrangements help us, well, we've no alternative but to follow them. (Pause)

Anyway, it's nearly puja time. That was a very different meeting from the one we had on Vinehall One wasn't it. (Laughter) Good.

End of session

Next session

S: All right then who's got the first question?

Suvajra: Can I ask something we spoke about at the table the other day. Communication exercises? Can you tell us something about the history and how we've come to have them in the form that they are?

S: Ah right. There isn't really very much to tell. I'll first of all relate how it was that I came in touch

with them and learnt them myself. I learnt them myself in Bombay. I think it must have been in the late fifties and what happened was this. I had a friend in Bombay who was a quite interesting character. He was Polish and he was Jewish, but had become a Roman Catholic and had been a Jesuit priest, then had given it all up and become a follower of Krishnamurti. And I used to see him whenever I went to Bombay. I originally met him in Gangtok when he was visiting another friend there, but that's another quite long story. Anyway his name was Maurice and one day when I was in Bombay he introduced me to a friend of his, a woman called Muriel Payne. Now Muriel was a quite interesting character. Muriel had been a nurse and she was then about sixty-five, I think. She'd been a nurse and she'd come to India. She'd done all sorts of interesting things. Among other things she'd nursed Krishnamurti through a six months nervous breakdown that isn't mentioned in the official accounts of his career. (Laughter) But anyway she nursed him through this somewhere up in the Himalayas so had got to know him quite well. She was a rather illiterate sort of woman, as she herself confessed. She couldn't read or write really very well and wasn't very articulate. She managed to put things though across very, very well. She was a very positive, down to earth woman. She'd also been a teacher, that's right. This is all coming back to me as I talk so therefore it's not all sort of very connected. She'd also been a teacher and though she was totally devoid of educational qualifications, she could not spell or anything like that, she'd been a principal of a girls' school, or a school of some kind in South India.

So one of the things that she had noticed in the course of her work as an educationalist let's say, to put it rather grandly, was that teachers and pupils seemed, what we would now call, out of communication. And this was why pupils weren't learning properly in schools. So she came to the conclusion after studying why pupils were doing so badly in schools, in South India, she came to the conclusion it was largely due to the fact that the teachers were out of communication with the children and therefore the children out of communication with the teachers. She came to the conclusion that true learning could take place only within a context of genuine communication. So she decided that something had to be done about this, so she devised a system which she called 'creative education' and she actually managed to write a book on the subject which was published in England and subsequently in India. A book called "Creative Education".

So in the course of devising this sort of scheme of Creative Education she decided that some exercises were necessary. She'd had contact with another person who had been in China for sometime and apparently lived on the border of China where there were Tibetan lamas and she said that she'd learnt these exercises from him. And as far as I could make out from what she told me about the exercises as she learned from him, he must have seen Tibetan lamas doing some sort of debate as they called it. You know, the stylised debate which is very vigorous and energetic and a lot of energy going back and forth, as Geshe Rabten in fact describes it in his autobiography which some of you might have seen. This is called (Takse?)

I remember once, again this is at a bit of a tangent, I remember when I was in Kalimpong discussing the value of (Takse?) in the strict form with one of my Tibetan incarnate lama friends. I happened to remark that I didn't think it really had any more spiritual value than football. A remark which very much shocked him, but then in view of the way in which football has been recently been upgraded within the movement perhaps the comparison was more apt than he thought or maybe be more apt than I thought then.

Anyway the rudiments of this, the rudiments of these communication exercises she learned from this person, and she said she'd modified them in accordance with her own ideas and also in accordance

with some of the things that she'd learned from Krishnamurti and she devised a system of exercises. So I found all this very interesting. I found the whole approach to creative education interesting so I got to know her quite well. We met several times in Bombay and I persuaded her to hold a communications course in Bombay which I organised. And I got together about two dozen of my friends, including several Buddhists, and persuaded them to take part in this course. It covered much more, or quite a bit more than just our present day communication exercises. I think quite a bit of theory, Muriel gave several talks, and, though she wasn't really very articulate, and had a very poor command of language and a very poor vocabulary she managed to put things across actually very well. She had a sort of empathy which really helped her communication and in many ways she was a very admirable woman.

Anyway we met every evening for a week for two or three hours for this course and I had personal experience of these communication exercises and I was very pleased with them and I really felt that they did help people in their communication exercises. I remember that the person who had the greatest difficulty with the communication exercises was a friend of mine, a very staunch Buddhist, an ex-untouchable actually, who taught Pali in a Bombay college. He was always stopping to argue about the exercises and Miss Payne would say, "Well you have got to do them" she said, "Professor Shiwari. You've got to do the exercises". Well he said, "I can't do them unless I've understood them thoroughly. What do you mean by such-and-such?". I mean, he said, "Well, what do you mean by communication?" and he'd cross-examine this poor woman about what she meant by communication and she'd say "Well, look, you just do them, just do the exercises I've explained and then you'll know". But he'd say, "Well, how will I know that I've understood rightly unless I understood first what it is I am supposed to be looking for, I'm supposed to be experiencing?" etc., etc. In the end she almost hit him over the head with a file I think, something like that. (Laughter) Even he benefitted but I think most people benefitted quite substantially.

So I was left with a feeling very much in favour of these exercises and never did them again in India. I forgot all about them in fact. But what happened was this. On one of our very early retreats, I can't remember now whether it was at Keffolds or at Quartermaine, these being the two places where we then held our Easter and Summer retreats, our two retreats of the year, but at one or another of these places, on one or another of our retreats, I felt that people were quite blocked, quite blocked in their communication with one another. There was a very blocked sort of atmosphere. And I thought, well, we've got to do something about this. I mean more lectures aren't the solution, more meditation isn't the solution. What could we do? And then suddenly I remembered these communication exercises. I had to think quite hard to remember how they were actually done. So I sort of gradually recalled them to mind and I introduced them in a simplified form. I can't remember now after, well over twenty years, what the original form in which I learnt them was, but I do remember that I simplified them, quite drastically, and also I introduced a bit of theory in the sense that I explained beforehand what communication was. Why it was important and how it fitted into the Buddhist spiritual path, the Buddhist spiritual life and then we did them. And everybody benefitted immensely, almost instantaneously, and the atmosphere at the retreat cleared up like anything.

So afterwards I felt that it was worth making communication exercises an integral part of our public retreats. By public retreats I mean retreats which were open to members of the general public which weren't just confined to Friends, we didn't even have mitras in those days; very, very few Order Members in fact, and in that way they became a regular part of our retreat programme. Sometimes people did ask, "Well, are these Buddhist?" I mean, "In which scripture are they described?" Well, they aren't described in any scripture. I mean the Buddha and his disciples didn't need those

communication exercises. They communicated quite well without them. But in this country the situation is rather different. But what I felt was that the question, "Well, where are these exercises to be found in the Buddhist scriptures?" really begged the question because we do say, "Well, whatever does help us to develop" and these exercises certainly do in their own modest way, it is part and parcel of the Dharma. The Buddha himself has said that, whatever is conducive to our spiritual growth as individuals. That is the regular path of the Dharma.

So I don't feel any great need to have to track these exercises down to a Buddhist sutra or even personally to trace them back to the debates the (Takse?) of the Tibetan Gelugpa monks, though one can do that if one wishes. I mean they do help us and therefore they're part of the Dharma in principle even if they're not part of it historically.

I remember just a little incident, Miss Payne telling us about her experiences with communication exercises in schools and subsequently with different groups of people. Mostly Indians because she was working in India, and she told us one incident in particular where one of her teachers, a male teacher, had attended one of her courses and had learnt these communication exercises, especially the first one. And apparently what had happened he afterwards told her was this, that being rather keen to practise the exercises he thought he'd try Exercise One, 'Just Looking', out on his wife. Relations between Indian husbands and wives are sometimes, I won't say strained, but they're a little impersonal if you see what I mean. So he related that when he woke up in the morning the first thing he did was just to turn to his wife, look her straight in the eye, so to speak, and give her a nice smile. He said her reaction was, she shrieked, jumped out of bed and hid in the corner. (Laughter) She hadn't apparently been used to that sort of treatment. Apparently in due course she came round and was reconciled to the idea of communication. He reported that relations between them were much happier than they had been. So she said that communication exercises were useful in all situations. But she was especially concerned with communication in schools and she especially emphasised for small children something that we don't incorporate into any exercises but which is really useful - being right here. She'd ask the children, "Where are you? Are you here?" And they'd have to say, "Well, yes, we are here". They'd have to respond. And she also developed her own variant of the mettā bhāvanā. She did it in a quite interesting way. She did, she didn't because she realised she couldn't get children to do mettā bhāvanā. I don't know if she actually heard of mettā bhāvanā. She might have done from this friend of hers, but she had a sort of exercise in which the teacher asked the children to say hello to different people in different parts of the world. I mean she'd ask them all to shout hello to their parents at home, hello to their brothers and sisters at home, hello to their friends in such-and-such town, hello to people in some other country. So clearly it's a sort of, in a way, quite crude but maybe quite effective practice of the mettā bhāvanā, developing positive emotions towards people all around in widening circles and feeling in touch and communication with them.

So this is where, to cut a long story short and to sum up, this is where in principle the communication exercises came from. As I said I've sort of edited them, I've sort of simplified them so we do practise a simplified version. (Pause) Has anyone heard this account before? You had perhaps, yes. Have you found that people often ask?

Suvajra: They often ask.

S: I think the simplest answer is that Bhante learnt them from a friend in Bombay who devised them herself partly in accordance with what she had learned from a friend who had lived for sometime, for

some years in fact, on the Tibet/China border.

Suvajra: It's especially something that people ask who are other Buddhists.

S: Yes, yes. Well, they need also be reminded that whatever helps us to evolve is the Dharma.

_____ : Are you aware that the Scientologists use the exact same communication?

S: I have talked with Scientologists who say that, yes, they do communication exercises too. They may have had some such connection as I had but as far as I've seen they tend to live in a quite mechanical sort of way. I don't know exactly what they do. We had a Scientologist come along to one of our retreats and he tried to do the communication exercises. He told me that they did something similar but not exactly the same but he couldn't get on with our exercises at all. He did say that he had learnt the Scientology communication exercises and was able to do them well and was teaching them but in our terms he was absolutely out of communication and he became quite uncomfortable after doing the exercises with us for ten minutes and he just walked out and he left the retreat in fact. He couldn't stand it. He did seem a really alienated person. I think perhaps people like this are attracted by the idea of exercises and techniques and they think you can sort of operate these without any basic change of attitude. But I mean, we can see this even with our own friends very often, you can see people just mechanically doing the exercises and think well, they're doing alright if they do the exercises technically correctly, but they remain out of communication. You can see people almost putting on an act of doing the communication exercises really well but they're out of communication. They use the exercises themselves as a sort of screen, as a sort of barrier. At least they used to.

It's a long time since I actually took any groups of people doing these exercises. But they seem to have undergone a sort of revival within the Movement recently. Do you get that impression? That's the impression I get. They seem to have dropped out of use for some time but now they seem to be coming back. People seem to be rediscovering them in some cases. I think there have been quite a number of retreats over the last few years where communication exercises have not been used at all. But they do seem to be coming back. I think they're used at the LBC regularly, aren't they, for open nights or whatever we call it.

Robin: Do you think they operate on a completely different level other than one of conceptual thought and because of that it might be quite good for people who know each other really quite well to continue to do them?

S: I think that is good though it has been noticed that very often you get extremely good results with doing the exercises with someone that you'd never met before, never seen before, never talked to before. It's as though you're sort of really confronted with your communication barriers. You can't fall back upon your superficial friendship. You're just compelled to communicate with that person. It's good I think for people who know one another to do the exercises because you can assume that you know each other quite well whereas in fact you don't. I mean the case of husband and wife is a case in point. Sometimes we've had parents and children doing them together, that is grown up children, and we've had, well, people who are quite close friends doing them, because you mustn't assume that you really know the other person or that you really are in contact and communication with the other person just because you've got an ordinary friendship going with them or an ordinary good working relationship. But it can all be just a big bluff. The communication exercises if

properly handled really do tend to break through all that. (Pause)

You've been having quite a dose of them I gather on this event. Well we used to have all sorts of interesting experiences in the early days with people absolutely shouting their heads off. (Laughter) And sometimes the impression started prevailing that the purpose of the exercises was to enable you to let off steam. So some people used to just want to take the opportunity of letting off steam. But that's not the purpose of the exercise. The purpose of the exercise is to help you to communicate and in the course of communication, yes, you may be letting off steam but you mustn't ever forget that you're trying to communicate with that person opposite. Not just to let off steam in a self-indulgent way, just really ignoring the person opposite you.

Robin: Are you actually trying to communicate anything in particular or is it just trying to communicate just sort of your general state of being (?)

S: Probably that is the best way of putting it. You're not trying to communicate any particular conceptual content. That's why the phrases are sort of nonsensical. I mean they have a meaning but they're sort of irrelevant. There's a glorious irrelevancy you could say. Some of these phrases I remembered from Muriel Payne's exercises but others as far as I remember I made up myself. I didn't take them from the scriptures. (Laughter) And they seem to have stuck. They've become traditional. You still do have 'do 'birds fly' and 'the sky is blue today' which sounds really hilarious in this climate. [Laughter]

Suvajra: Sometimes we have 'grass is green'.

S: And 'water is wet'. Well, that's an innovation. That's not one of mine. 'Grass is green!' (Laughter) We've used these exercises in India on retreats, apparently with excellent effect. I've not actually seen them being used but I know Lokamitra uses them and apparently are being found very useful and I believe some of the Indian Order Members and mitras like to say the sentences in English even when they don't know English but others prefer to have them translated into their own language so Lokamitra lets them take their choice. (Pause)

_____ : What's the difference between an event and a retreat?

S: I think, I mean these terms in a way are all quite inadequate and provisional. We've often discussed, at least in the past, changing them. As far as I remember originally when we started holding these retreats we did discuss what sort of term to give them because we had to advertise obviously. And some of our Friends then felt that 'retreat' was the best term. Retreat implying that you went away, you went away especially from the city. You went somewhere quiet and you reflected or you meditated or you thought about things, something of that sort. So 'retreat' seems to be the sort of term in current use for this sort of activity though we discovered that there was a Christian Retreat movement which was a bit different. Retreat there meant that you spent time in a retreat centre with services and periods of what they called 'recollection' which often involve pondering your sins in a rather solemn atmosphere. We didn't really think of our retreats in those terms but we took up with this term 'retreat' and it stuck.

I think an 'event', the term event was used to denote something perhaps more large scale and more exceptional but retreats we were having all the time but an event was something which we didn't have so often or so regularly, though now I think we probably do and it was also a bit special and

with not a very strong orientation to meditation. I think retreats, at least in the old days, that is to say, five, six, seven, eight years ago, tended to have a strong emphasis on meditation, that is FWBO retreats, whereas in the case of the event it was usually understood maybe talks and discussion and even study were the main thing. At least there will be an emphasis on those and a sort of more celebratory atmosphere. But sometimes perhaps there's not all that much of a difference between a retreat and an event. (Pause)

It also depends very much who's leading. I mean some Order Members are known to lead, as it were, stricter retreats and others more free and easy retreats. Some Order Members are known to place more emphasis on meditation, others less. So different Order Members have that particular reputation so if you want to go on a retreat where there's going to be more meditation, well, you sort of look out for a retreat led by Upasaka so-and-so because you know that he's going to give you more meditation. (Pause) In India they had some difficulty discovering an equivalent for retreat so they picked in the end (Shibir?) which is really an Urdu term, a Persian term. I don't really know what it means but it means something of that sort presumably. So we have (Shibirs) in India. It's not a Pali or Sanskrit word. It seems to be a Persian word. I'll have to track down the original meaning of it sometime. (Pause)

Well, this draws attention to the general question of nomenclature because we cannot but borrow terms in current English. Just as the Buddha had to borrow the psychological, religious, philosophical terms that were current in his day and sort of give them a twist of his own. So this is in fact what we have to do. A lot of the terms that we use in the FWBO, though they are sort of standard English terms, we use them in a somewhat different way and I think people coming newly into the FWBO maybe a bit puzzled by this until they catch on to the meaning in which we use these particular terms.

This was one of the things that people found a bit disconcerting, I mean Order Members especially, when they went along to the first Festival of Mind and Body which they took part in. They found all the good old terms being used. Everybody there, regardless of what sort of stall or organisation they belonged to were talking in terms of Enlightenment and in terms of meditation and they were using the word 'transcendental' quite a lot and integration and wholeness and individuality. Oh, yes, they used all these terms but the Order Members going along there came to the conclusion that though we also used these terms we used them in a very different sense and that could lead to some misunderstanding. But there isn't really a very satisfactory position but it's difficult to see any alternative apart from sort of coining our own nomenclature, creating artificial terminology in much the same way Teilhard de Chardin did, some of you may know. He talked of things like the noosphere. You have to get into the noosphere you know. At present you're only wandering around in the biosphere. (Pause)

_____ : The Friends always seem to be fairly critical of Christianity generally. Do you think that ...

S: No, they're not. I must claim the entire responsibility myself! (Laughter)

_____ : But it seems to have been fairly widely accepted that ...

S: Well, they all have their own experience of Christianity. What's the question?

_____ : I just wondered, well, whether you didn't feel that some Christian ideas like Teilhard de Chardin's are maybe much more worthwhile.

S: Well, you see, well, you mentioned Teilhard de Chardin and I was really quite interested in his ideas some years ago. I read most of his books. I still am interested but it's simply that I've not had time to go much into this aspect of things recently. But it's significant that his books were all suppressed by the Catholic Church and could not be published until after his death so it is rather a moot point to what extent they can be regarded as genuinely Christian ideas. I mean, I can't say that there aren't some ideas, here and there, in Christianity that we can't accept and find useful. But on the whole I must say my personal opinion is that Christianity, historical Christianity, not some imaginary ideal version of Christianity that has never actually existed but the real historical Christianity such as we encounter it in history, has on the whole probably been an unfortunate influence in the West. I think things really would have been much better if, well, what to speak of Buddhism, maybe if Islam had spread in the West. During the medieval period Islam seems to have been much more civilised and cultured and tolerant than Christianity. But anyway to go into that thoroughly would require quite a lot of time. One really ought to really to write something quite exhaustive about it.

But I'm not at all happy with Christianity. Really, the more I think about it, the more I see and hear of them the more I'm appalled. You know, the present pseudo-tolerance because it's just like the man who loses all his teeth and he becomes a vegetarian when he's got no option. (Laughter) So the secular power has been taken away from them so they don't persecute anybody but their ideas are the same as they always were. They haven't repudiated any of their ideas. So I take a very poor, a very dim view of Christianity indeed. I didn't bother much about it in the East, in India. I only bothered about it to the extent that it was represented by the missionaries who didn't give me a very happy picture of Christianity at all. The way that they used to convert people within my personal knowledge, literally bribing them to become Christians and blackmailing them to become Christians. I know personally various instances, but I wouldn't like to regard the missionaries as absolutely representative of Christianity, but then again when I come to this country I find as I deal with people, that so many of them have been harmed by their Christian upbringing, especially through being instilled with a sense of guilt and especially sexual guilt. And the church teaching is directly responsible for that.

It's really pitiful that people of twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, forty, fifty, are having to struggle with these sort of problems directly stemming from their Christian upbringing. In some cases they say, this is what they tell me, their lives have been blighted by their Christian upbringing.

[End of side one side two]

I remember the first time when I started becoming aware of this. I touched on the subject of Christianity very lightly in Birmingham at a one day seminar I held. This was long before the Friends was started. A one day seminar which I held up there and there were about thirty people present. A lot of older women. And I just happened to touch in the course of discussion on Christianity, and I felt a bit of a quiver go around the audience so just sort of out of interest I said, "Well, anybody who feels that Christianity hasn't had a very good effect on their lives?" And three elderly women at once put up their hands. So I said - I was a bit surprised - so I said, "Well, what have you to say about this?" So each of them in turn said with really strong emotion that she felt that having been brought up as a Christian had ruined her life and when I probed a bit further and said,

"Well, why?", she went, "My Christian upbringing," each of these women said, "hasn't given me such a terrible feeling of guilt". And this was my first direct encounter with this sort of problem among people in this country. And subsequently after the Friends was established I came across it more and more.

This is just one aspect of Christianity, but it's an aspect in which it really impinges on people's lives, this teaching about sexual morality. I mean look at the position of many Catholic Christians. The official teaching of the Catholic Church prohibits contraception by artificial means but a high percentage of Catholics actually practise it. In other words they are doing, in a sense almost compelled to do, something which they in a sense believe is wrong to do because their highest religious authority has laid it down that they should not do that thing. So it's like the child feels when it knows its disobeying its father or mother. So they probably live in a quite uncomfortable state. (Pause)

_____ : It's been quite noticeable on this retreat, event, that people have become very aware of their dreams, quite vivid in some cases. Could you explain a bit? Can you say something about dreaming and whether you think it's of any use?

S: Oh dear. I think probably dreams, or at least significant dreams, are more likely to arise in the course of retreats using that term in a general sort of way because you're removed from your usual stimuli, your usual preoccupations. So the dream, or the dream content, does get a chance to manifest itself.

Maybe in the course of your ordinary, everyday life, you're very much preoccupied with your work or your studies so maybe your dreams also relate to those things. So that represents the comparatively superficial level of mental activity but that prevents anything coming up from a deeper level. But when you're on retreat, well, you don't get those sort of dreams because you're not working, you're not studying, you're only concerned with the Dharma maybe or meditating and that has its own effects too.

So I think in the retreat situation dreams of a greater significance are more likely to arise and I think one should give them serious consideration. I don't think, I think it's a mistake to go too much into the meaning of your dreams. In a way the dream has no meaning. The dream is its own meaning. I think what is important to try and capture, or identify, is the feeling quality of the dream. Take the dream as a sort of message which is being conveyed to you, something of which you are becoming aware. And I think, I mean this point is made by psychologists, I think especially by Jung, don't be, don't take too seriously what he calls the manifest content of the dream, what the dream appears to be about. For instance, if you dream of women it doesn't necessarily mean that you're sexually frustrated. It doesn't necessarily mean that you've got a thing about women, or that you've got women on the mind. It may very well have nothing to do with women. The women in your dream are a symbol. They may be a symbol for the more emotional part of your own nature. They may be a symbol for creativity, the arts, they may be the Muses as it were. They may not have anything with actual women or your own individual relations to actual women. It may not have anything to do with that at all.

So you have to ask yourself, well what the dream really means so to speak, what it's really trying to convey, not be misled by the manifest content of the dream. That's just a simple example. I mean if you dream about horses, well does it really indicate that you've been thinking of taking up horse

riding or that you're interested in zoology. Does it really mean that? No. What sort of feeling do you get when you think of a horse? What sort of feeling does the dream of the horse leave you with? I mean you might for instance have a dream of, well, say a mouse and wake up feeling terrified. You might think, well, that's silly, why should I be afraid of a little mouse? But the mouse is a symbol of something clearly, to use the Jungian term. You haven't really dreamt about a mouse. There's more to it than that. So anyway ignore the mouse. Concentrate on the feeling, well the feeling of fear, I'm afraid of something. I've got to recognise that fear, acknowledge that fear. Don't start worrying about the mouse. Do you see what I'm getting at?

You might find you even have sort of communal dreams. You might find that several of you dreamed about the same thing the same night which indicates a sort of telepathy. Haven't you ever found that. I mean this, I'm told that this goes on quite a bit between married people. That the husband and the wife have the same dreams. Well, I mean, how many married people are there here? (Laughter) Come on, own up! Well, it is said, I mean this is what some of my married friends tell me and people who are very closely connected in other ways can have the same dreams.

_____ : A lot of us here have had dreams about you while we've been.....

S: So it may be ...

_____ : Did you have any awareness that everybody was dreaming about you?

S: This does often happen in the Friends. Well, I mean, people in the Friends I know often do have dreams about me. I don't think, I'm very rarely conscious of this but one can say it may be in a sense they have dreams about me, in another sense they don't have dreams about me at all, that I represent some element in their, for want of a better term, unconscious.

_____ : Do you see them as being of practical use, actual practical use to get in touch with yourself or to understand elements of yourself (?)

S: I think dreams very often do give one clues and especially, it does seem, if you have the same dream or same kind of dream over and over again, in Jungian language, which I think one shouldn't take too literally, it's as though your unconscious is trying to say something to your conscious mind. There's something that your conscious mind is ignoring and that your total being wants to insist upon and to remind the conscious mind of. The conscious mind is only a narrow part of ourselves and sometimes it can ignore the rest of us. So when you keep getting this same dream, over and over again, it's as though that 'part', inverted commas, which Jung calls our unconscious is trying to get through and to remind you of something which you really need to bear in mind, that you really need to take into consideration. Perhaps, for the sake of example, you're always dreaming that you're going on a journey. Well, you can take that literally. Maybe you do need to move. Maybe you can take it metaphorically. You've got stuck, you need to move, you need to be on your way. This is what the unconscious is telling you. You've been too long in one place, in one sense or the other. You need to move, you need to move away. You need to travel if not literally, at least metaphorically. So, I think, yes, it's quite a good thing to listen to the voice or the message of the unconscious.

_____ : You talk of Jung a bit there. Do you agree with his, I don't know a lot about it but his idea that the symbols that are coming through in your dreams are sort of in touch with an older consciousness, a primal consciousness to some extent?

S: I think I have some reservations about all of that. I think I prefer to leave it simply at the idea that through your dreams you are in touch with some deeper level, call it the unconscious within yourself. Some hidden aspect of yourself. I think that's all that one really needs to know from a practical point of view. This also raises the whole question of time. Experience of time and space in relation to consciousness. Yes, you may be in touch with something primordial as it were, but then what does that mean? I think that whole concept needs clarification. But you're certainly in touch with something wider, or if you like, deeper, than the ordinary conscious mind. Something which is also in a sense "you". As much "you" as the ordinary conscious personality with which we generally identify ourselves.

So it's as though dreams, if we read them right, can help us reclaim hidden aspects of our personalities, our own being. On the other hand I do know that people can get unhealthily preoccupied with their dreams and spend a lot of time thinking about them and talking about them and writing them down and analysing them. They almost, they talk the dream to death. They kill it. I think one must beware of doing that.

Suvajra: Do you think it's useful, advisable even, to try and protect your dreams. I'm thinking of two examples, two instances. One is that, supposing you're avoiding something in you life, and the dreams continue telling you, "Well, look at this wrathful form" Do you think it's advisable to try and affect your dream by sort of suggesting to yourself before you go to bed, "Well, let's meet this thing in the dream"?

S: I don't think you need to. I think you just need to ensure that you're just receptive to whatever the dream, or whatever your unconscious through the dream has to offer. I think one shouldn't sort of conclude prematurely that you've understood what the dream is trying to say. You shouldn't impose anything on the dream. I think probably, on the whole that would be a wiser attitude. Because if you're just open and receptive, I mean if the conscious mind is just open and receptive, then the unconscious through the dream will tell you what it's trying to say. What it wants to say. But I think one should beware of imposing anything on the unconscious. It could be a subtle method of avoidance.

Suvajra: The second thing I was thinking of was - I was speaking about it this morning in the study group - was that I discovered that you could become conscious in a dream. Do you use that for meditation?

S: Yes, you can become conscious. Indeed you can manipulate dreams. You can even have the dreams that you want. But you have to watch it because if you're not careful you might have the dreams that you want.

_____ : (?)

S: So in a way when you visualise you're dreaming but you're dreaming in an aware and a controlled sort of way. You're creating a positive dream in a sense. Of course, on a correspondingly higher level. You're having a vivid suprasensory experience, in this case with a sort of spiritual content. (Pause)

_____ : Were you saying that there's a danger in learning to (?)

S: Well, I didn't use the word 'danger'. It's a word I try to avoid using. There's always danger in a sense that, well, at every instant you can either go up or you can go down depending on your attitude, whether reactive or whether creative. So when you're confronted by a dream or when you find yourself in a dream state and conscious, well, you can either use that experience reactively, to indulge that perceiving conscious mind in one way or the other, or you can use it creatively by creating a dream which is positive or inspiring or by just remaining open to whatever the unconscious, so to speak, has to offer. So yes, there's always danger. I get a bit impatient when people say with regard to a certain practice or certain attitude or way of doing things, "Well, isn't it dangerous?" Well, yes, everything's dangerous. The spiritual life is dangerous the whole way through from beginning to end. Of course it is. Human life is dangerous. You could get killed any minute, to take it quite literally. So, no need to ask is it dangerous. Of course it's dangerous because everything is dangerous. And as I said the spiritual path is dangerous in the sense that at every step you could either go in the wrong direction or go in the right direction 'til you reach Stream Entry. There's always the possibility of doing something the wrong way. (Pause)

Robin: Could you give me some indication as to how I can develop a greater awareness of feeling in the mettā bhāvanā. I seem presently to be able to only experience it on sort of head level and I understand from talking to Order Members that the sort of energy seems to come further down somewhere?

S: Further down? Not so sure about that if one takes it too literally. I would say what is important is in every stage of the practice to try to establish contact with an actual feeling of some sort. For instance, supposing you're in the first stage and you're directing or trying to direct mettā towards yourself. Well, what does that mean? Mettā means really the ardent wish that someone should be happy. So, all right, supposing you're not able very easily to summons up that feeling of mettā towards yourself. All right, you should then think of some situation in which you've been really happy. I mean, a skilful situation in which you've been really happy. Suppose you've been really happy walking over the downs say when it's been a lovely sunny day. Well, just think of that occasion and just try to recapture that feeling of happiness and joy that you had then and then think, well, "May I always be like that. May I always be happy." And then you'll find the feeling towards yourself of 'May you be happy, May I be happy' will come. But you have to establish contact with some actual feeling of being happy and joyful within your experience.

The same way when you think of the near and dear friend and try to develop mettā towards the near and dear friend. If you don't find it easy to summons up the mettā immediately, well, just think of that friend and imagine yourself back in some situation with that friend when you were very, very happy together and had good communication or an enjoyable time, obviously in a skilful way together and then, as it were, mentally recreate that and wish well towards them. "Well we had such a good time together. He's such a good chap. I really do like him". And then build up the mettā in that sort of way. "Well, may he always be like that. Happy, whether we're together or not. Whether he's on his own, wherever he is, may he be happy".

And then of course, by that time you should have built up sufficient momentum so that when you think of the neutral person, you summons up a visual image of the neutral person, the mettā from the previous stages will spill over. Very difficult to start with a neutral person if you're not naturally full of mettā, still more difficult perhaps to summon up mettā towards the inimical person.

Robin: But you don't think there's anything particularly wrong with it feeling as if it's all sort of around one's head, so to speak, and not particularly coming from say one's heart?

S: So long as it's around one's head and one is merely thinking of those people or thinking of developing mettā towards them without actually feeling anything, to that extent you're not actually doing the practice. You're not actually doing the mettā bhāvanā. You're just mentally rehearsing without actually feeling anything. That's why it's important to establish contact in each of these stages with an actual feeling, especially during stages one and two because it's those stages that get you going and carry you through the remaining ones. Do you see what I'm getting at?

I think most people, if they think back they can recollect occasions on which they were really happy. Occasions on which they were with a near and dear friend and really happy with him, doing something with him and so on. So you should initially try to establish contact with a positive feeling by recreating that sort of situation and dwelling on it and recapturing the feeling and then enlarging the feeling.

Robin: But quite often I can certainly remember occasions when I was happy, but it's like I remember a day or a situation but it's quite difficult to actually relive the actual moment because in a sense I wasn't actually aware of being happy. I was just completely lost in the feeling at the time.

S: I don't think it is actually difficult in practice just to recapture that. If one just dwells on it a bit. Maybe it's a question of imagination or just forgetting about the present and just allowing oneself to go back. Maybe it's just sometimes we're a bit too much preoccupied with the present. We're a bit worried. It's not easy to get back into that past state because we're too much with the present state which may be very dissimilar. If you're present mental state is one of sadness or irritability say it's not very easy then to get to recapture those moments of happiness. So therefore I think also we have to try to ensure that when we do sit for the meditation we are in a calm, un irritated, at least mildly pleased mood if not actually happy mood. Not in a disgruntled or sour or bitter mood, not tired and so on. Otherwise it's quite difficult to recapture those sort of experiences and develop the mettā.

Because some people have mentioned and this ties up with what I said about Christianity sometime ago, that they find it very difficult to develop mettā towards themselves because they feel that they don't deserve to be happy. They're so wicked, they're so sinful they don't deserve to be happy. They deserve to be punished in fact. Some people seem to feel this towards themselves quite genuinely, they don't deserve happiness. So if you feel that way well then it means you've got to also go into this whole question of guilt and recognise its irrationality and try to get free from it. Say that you do deserve to be happy, every human being deserves to be happy. (Pause)

_____ : I frequently find when I get to something like the neutral person, I sort of wake up and realise I haven't developed any mettā at all and it's very difficult to get started with that person. Do you think one should just persevere anyway or should you maybe just try and hop back a couple of stages and build up ...

S: Well, yes usually it's said that if you find difficulty with a further stage of whatsoever meditation practice, if you find great difficulty, well, go back, do the previous, the earlier stages, strengthen the basis, as it were, then go forward when you feel you're able to do that. One does this with the mindfulness of breathing too. I have noticed a tendency in the FWBO over the years for people to drift away from the mettā bhāvanā if they're not careful. They learn both methods but then in the end

they find they get on pretty well with the mindfulness of breathing, they get pretty concentrated so they find the mettā so much more difficult that in the end they may just drop it altogether and just carry on with the mindfulness of breathing. Well, sometimes one can in fact do that, just concentrate on one single meditation practice but I think in the case of most people in the Friends it's probably advisable to cultivate both of these. If you do give more importance to one, well, probably it should be to the mettā bhāvanā. That's the one that probably most people need to cultivate more. It's really strange isn't it. (Pause)

Anyway what does the silent majority think? Because communication enhances mettā I'm sure. If you've communicated really well with somebody in the context of the communication exercises you can feel very warm towards them afterwards and you can carry that feeling over into your mettā bhāvanā.

_____ : How, what kind of guidance could you give us on deciding how much meditation a day is good for you?

S: Well, (?) good for you, well, as much as possible. (Laughter)

_____ : (?) I mean .. (?) what your waking hours, sixteen hours a day, for four days in (?) four or three days(?).

S: I think people need to do enough to keep them really in touch. Do enough so that every time they meditate they can reach a really concentrated state. Of course different people have got different periods of time available. Some people have their own particular difficulties with meditation but I think that if you feel that your meditation is becoming just a routine and that you aren't having at least some inkling of an experience of higher consciousness, if you're not actually experiencing real concentration and emotional positivity whenever you meditate then you need to increase the amount of meditation you do each day. I wouldn't like to speak definitely in terms of so many hours. I think that individuals vary so much, people's conditions vary so much, one can't really do that. One does very often speak in terms of one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening as a sort of minimum. It would be very good if everybody could do that at least but even that may not be possible in some cases. But I think rather than thinking in terms of an hour or two hours one should just ask oneself "Well, am I actually in contact, so to speak, when I meditate? And maybe each time, or nearly each time, nearly every time I meditate, if I'm not then I probably need to do a bit more or to do it more carefully, more mindfully. With a bit more preparation, less hurriedly and so on.

Robin: Is this different level of consciousness quite a self evident thing?

S: Oh yes I think one will recognise it, that it is a state that you don't generally experience during the day when you're going about your various activities. You are more calm and more collected, more concentrated. There is a minimum of mental activity. You feel emotionally positive, clear, buoyant. It's a very recognisable state and you should be in this each time you meditate. You should end up the mettā bhāvanā feeling positive and exhilarated with your emotional positivity just going out, radiating, out towards everybody that you've been recollecting. It's not all that difficult really. It just requires fairly steady practice and reasonable general positivity, I mean certainly not beyond the capacities of the average person. Well, even someone who is not really into spiritual life can do it. I mean, not really into spiritual life in the sense of not explicitly recognising a transcendental factor in existence.

Even if you look at it as sort of mental or emotional hygiene you can still do the mettā bhāvanā. (Laughter) You don't have to believe in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha to be able to do it. It's still mundane though highly positive and skilful. A non-Buddhist can do it. (Pause) After all when you do it there's no reference to the Buddha, Dharma or Sangha is there. It's just your emotional attitude towards other living beings including yourself. You could say that it's in a sense psychological. A very necessary foundation for anything in the way of spiritual life and activity in the higher sense. And no-one objects to being happy presumably. You don't have to be a Buddhist to want to be happy. (Pause)

_____ : Do you think it's more difficult if you take up meditation when you're older, to get into it as when you're younger?

S: Again I find it very difficult to generalise. I find some young people getting into it really well, easily and quickly. I've had some old people doing likewise. It seems to depend on quite different factors other than those of age. I mean younger people can have turbulent energy which gets in the way. Older people can have more worries and responsibilities that get in the way. (Pause)

_____ : Can you say something about ways of carrying over that feeling from your practice, in meditation practice into the day because sometimes, although you can get it over and have a really positive feeling in your practice which helps you set up the day but other times you get a bit more than that. It's as if when you walk out, out of the shrine room you really can feel yourself more alive and more aware, but it seems that that just seems to go, that just drains away very, very quickly.

S: I'm sure everybody experiences that. You just need to bear in mind that fact to begin with. That as you go out of the shrine room door, you have to say to yourself, "Be careful. There are hundreds of Maras around waiting to rob me of whatever it is that I've gained". Just be aware of the fact that the gains of meditation can be very easily dissipated and be aware of your own reactive mind which of course I suppose is what Mara essentially is, in a way. Be aware of your own reactive mind. I've noticed myself so many times, people coming out of the shrine room and proceeding straight to breakfast and it's as though they've haven't been meditating. At once they start gabbling. It's not that anyone has asked them anything or that they have had to do anything. It's entirely them. They've started it. So once must be mindful and aware of this that the reactive side of one's own mind so easily and automatically just swings into action again and just two minutes after a good meditation you can be just nattering away with all sorts of stupid things as though you've not been meditating at all. It's your fault, plain and simple, it's not the world that's been and disturbed you. It's just yourself.

So first you must watch that and be on one's guard against oneself and then no doubt one will be more easily able to deal with what are actual distractions coming from outside. Or at least deal with objective things, things that need doing, objectively, without straying to far from one's meditative or at least one's concentrated state. Be careful of one's reactions to what people say to you or what they ask you to do. If you've already betrayed your own mind, well, it's too late really to bother much when other people start interrupting you and distracting you.

_____ : I was referring to the first case that if you find that, it's as if just because you build that up immediately you find just the thing that destroys ...

S: It's one's own self that does it, in a paradoxical way. I mean some people just come straight out of meditation and they pick up the newspaper or something like that, pick up a comic. You can see it, well, even a Superman comic doesn't really help you here. (Laughter). I did see someone I think it was at Vinehall reading a Superman comic. I think it was Superman. Yes, it was.

_____ : (?) find Superman a good inspiring (?)

S: (?) Well, fair enough. But not just after the meditation!

_____ : Would it be a good idea after meditation just to go outside for a quiet walk?

S: Yes, that's good, and it's communing with nature, so to speak. Nature won't ask you any questions.

_____ : I (?) after meditation just to stand outside (?) fifteen minutes before breakfast.

S: That's a good idea. Nature can be very calming, very restful. Very often, not always. But at least no verbal communication is required.

_____ : After every meditation I have a definite period of silence.

S: Well, that would be very helpful no doubt. Well, sometimes we do have it on retreats don't. Sometimes it's good to carry on the silence until the end of breakfast, not end the silence, if you are observing silence, when meditation ends. (Pause) I think most people discover that when silence is being observed they really conserve energy so they feel more alive. It's because they've expended less of their vitality than they usually do.

Anyway we've been talking about mettā bhāvanā, maybe now we should go and do some because it is time. And the bell in how many minutes?

[End of session]