General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhisthana Dharma Team

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS on 'GOING FOR REFUGE' (Lecture given in Bombay in 1981)

WOMEN'S PRE-ORDINATION RETREAT, RIVENDELL, July 1986

Present: Sangharakshita, Ashokasri, Vidyasri, Sanghadevi, Varabhadri, Vajragita, Christine Robertson, Tertu, Carla Remyn, Kathryn Boon, Pat Jilks

Tape 1, Side 1 (marked as tape 2 on the tapes!)

Sangharakshita: Yes. All right, first question:

> *Can you say something about Adi-Buddhas? How did they develop in relation to the Five-Buddha Mandala?*

Adi-Buddha seems to be a distinctively Tantric or Vajrayanic conception. Adi means primeval - or not so much primeval, primordial; or from the beginning. So an Adi-Buddha is a Buddha existing from the beginning. But actually, of course, it has nothing to do with beginning. 'Existing from the beginning' means beginningless, because there's no beginning, no absolute first beginning. So it's generally considered, or generally understood, that the term Adi-Buddha draws attention to the fact that Buddhahood transcends time.

How did Adi-Buddhas develop in relation to the Five-Buddha Mandala? That's not easy to say, except that it seems that the Adi-Buddha concept was quite a late one. But you could say all the five Buddhas - all Buddhas whatsoever - in a sense are Adi-Buddhas; that is to say, the archetypal Buddhas are Adi-Buddhas. They don't arise in time, they've no beginning, in fact; they are aspects, so to speak, to use that term, of something which transcends time, something which transcends time and transcends space.

But, in a way, Adi-Buddha is sometimes regarded as somehow going further than the Five Buddhas; I suppose because if you have five Buddhas, you've got diversity, you've got multiplicity, and perhaps on the highest level of all there isn't that multiplicity - not as a real multiplicity, not as a real difference. And so Adi-Buddha then seems to represent that; even though, as I have said, all the archetypal Buddhas really are Adi-Buddhas. You could say that Adi-Buddha is an aspect of the Dharmakaya, the Dharmakaya being one.

But on the whole perhaps it's best to say simply that the term Adi-Buddha draws attention to the fact of the timelessness of Buddhahood; that it is something which exists, so to speak, from the beginning, in other words exists beyond time and beyond space.

Carla: But do you have specific ones like Vajrasattva and Samantabhadra? Are there any more like that? .....

S: ... considering Vajrasattva and Samantabhadra as Adi-Buddhas - yes, because if you have recourse to iconography you have to give a distinctive form and shape. In a sense you could say the Adi-Buddha has no form, has no shape, but none the less if you want to represent a scheme of iconography you've got to give some form. Sometimes the Adi-Buddha, like the Dharmakaya Buddha, when represented iconographically, is represented completely nude, to suggest its absoluteness. Strictly speaking, there shouldn't be a representation of the Adi-Buddha, I suppose, but there are such representations.

Vidyasri: Well, that's what I was thinking when you said in a way it's an aspect of the Dharmakaya. I thought that the Dharmakaya couldn't be represented, so how can you say it's an aspect if it is represented?

S: Well, you could say that Buddhahood can't be represented at all. Amitabha can't be represented, and so on. But none the less we do have representations. I suppose there can be as many representations as there are ways of thinking about Buddhas and so on, thinking about Buddhahood. Really, they are beyond thought. If you think about them at all, you can imagine them as having different forms and colours and attributes, and you can represent them in that way.

I suppose you could also make a sort of contrast between the archetypal Buddhas who, as I said, in a sense are Adi-Buddhas and the historical Buddhas like Sakyamuni, who are not Adi-Buddhas, in the sense that to outward appearances at least they attained Buddhahood in time; whereas the Dharmakaya at least is eternally Enlightened. I say, the Dharmakaya at least, because with regard, say, to Amitabha there is a sort of legend according to which he was once upon a time the bhikshu Dharmākara, which means that he was once upon a time not Enlightened, and therefore that he attained Enlightenment. But here you get a curious sort of overlap between the historical and the archetypal.

But certainly as between the human Buddha like Sakyamuni and an archetypal Buddha, usually, and also of course the Dharmakaya, there is that difference. One attains Enlightenment in time, so to speak, whereas the other is eternally Enlightened, and there is no question of attainment.

Ashokasri: Perhaps I'm being stupid, but I still can't quite see the difference between Vajrasattva as an archetypal Buddha, coming through the samboghakaya , and Vajrasattva as an Adi-Buddha, coming .....

S: Ah, you're probably getting mixed up on account of the fact that Vajrasattva has a Bodhisattva form; so in one sense, in respect of his form, yes, he's a Bodhisattva, he belongs to a particular family, but in another sense he is not really a Bodhisattva at all, he's a Buddha, he's the Buddha, he's even the Adi-Buddha, and as such doesn't belong to any particular family, transcends the distinction of families. You find lots of Bodhisattva and Buddha figures have that dual aspect. On the one hand, they have a comparatively relative or limited place in a particular mandala or particular family; on the other hand, they have no limitations at all. They can be considered under a limited Bodhisattva aspect as belonging to a family, or they can be considered as representing or embodying Buddhahood as such, beyond all distinctions of family.

Again the difficulty arises when we think too literalistically. We think there definitely are five Buddhas, particular figures, either he [is] definitely a Bodhisattva or he's definitely an Adi-Buddha. But it's not really like that at all. It's like that only provisionally or for certain purposes or certain practices.

Ashokasri: I wasn't particularly thinking it was to do with just Vajrasattva, but - from the samboghakaya they're beyond time, so why have this distinction of an Adi-Buddha, who is beyond time but isn't from the samboghakaya ? .....

S: Again, it's literalism, because in the case of the Adi-Buddha, the fact that Buddhahood is beyond time is drawn out, so to speak, and embodied in a particular figure. It's just the same with all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, because is wisdom limited to Manjughosa? Is compassion limited to

Avalokitesvara? So in the same way, is timelessness limited to the Adi-Buddha, even though you've got a particular Buddha, so to speak, for that particular quality or that particular aspect?

Ashokasri: Yes, but I was thinking that timelessness was a quality of - of the archetypal realm.

S: Well, I think one must be clear what one means by the archetypal realm, because, as I explained the other day, in a way archetypes have got two aspects; inasmuch as - let's say you have an archetypal realm in the sense of the rupaloka, but the archetypes of that realm can be informed, or not informed, by a Transcendental content. As not informed by a Transcendental content, they are within time, because the rupaloka belongs to the samsara; but as informed by a Transcendental content, they do not belong to the samsara , they are so to speak Transcendental. So they exist, or can exist, under that sort of double aspect. So an archetype not informed by the Transcendental is subject to time; an archetype informed by the Transcendental but is filled by the Transcendental is not subject to time.

Sanghadevi: Is it just that when one thinks of Manjughosa you think of wisdom, and when you think of Avalokitesvara you think of compassion, so if you think of Vajrasattva you think of timelessness? Is it that way?

S: It is in a sense like that. Certainly that's one way of looking at it.

Pat: When you've got to timelessness, there wouldn't be a number of them, it would be meaningless to say they were individual ones at that point, would it?

S: Not necessarily, because all the Buddhas are primordial; all the archetypal Buddhas .... are primordial. So you can have a multiplicity of primordial Buddhas. But when you just as it were abstract the quality itself, then you embody it in a single figure, just as you do in the case of wisdom and Manjughosa.

But the short answer to the question is that Adi-Buddha means primordial Buddha, and he stands for the timelessness of Enlightenment.

Anyway, with question 2 we come down to earth.

> *On page 10 of the booklet "Going for Refuge" , you say that out of the depth of his gratitude such a person would Go for Refuge. It would seem that gratitude is an important factor in one's ability to Go for Refuge. In our culture, our response to being taught is often coloured by feelings of lack of confidence or that someone is being authoritarian.*

- something crossed out there -

> *Do you think that if we find it difficult to experience this quality of gratitude, this is one of the factors which hinder our ability to Go for Refuge wholeheartedly? What factors are involved in developing gratitude?*

There's quite a few questions there, in a way. Perhaps we should go first of all into the question 'what is gratitude?' What do we feel when we feel gratitude? What are the elements of gratitude, what are the factors making up gratitude? Has anyone got any ideas on this? Gratitude seems to be a complex feeling, so let's try to split it into its different elements, its different parts. So what do you find in gratitude, or what happens when you feel gratitude? What are you conscious of, what do you feel?

_____: Appreciation of what somebody's done for you.

S: Yes - well, that's going a bit too quickly. First of all, there is something that someone has done for you, or something that someone has given you. This is the

basic fact in the situation: you are given something, something is done for you. So then what's the next step?

Kathryn: You're the better for it, in some way.

S: You're not only the better for it, but you recognise that you are the better for it. So you recognise something has been done for you, you've been given something, that you're better for that; so then what follows? What's the next stage, so to speak?

_____: Your appreciation.

S: Your appreciation. There is - yes, appreciation, that sums it up. But is appreciation to be distinguished from gratitude, or is gratitude perhaps the name given to the complex of those three elements? Or is it more than that?

Kathryn: Gratitude sounds more active than -

S: More active, yes. You're grateful -

Vidyasri: Also, if you appreciate somebody, it may or may not be because they've done something for you; you could just appreciate a tree for being a tree. Whereas with gratitude, there's definitely the element that somebody has given something.

S: Yes. So normally, if you recognise that something has been done for you, or given you, something which benefits you, and you appreciate that, which means that you appreciate the person involved, you develop a certain attitude, perhaps, of even wanting to do something for that person. You may not necessarily do it, but there is a willingness to do it; and that seems to be an important part of the feeling of gratitude. You feel that that person is worthy of a return. I think gratitude doesn't necessarily involve the actual making of a return, but it certainly involves the feeling that the other person is worthy of a return, so to speak; or worthy of a response of that kind on your part.

_____: If you really feel they're worthy of that response, then it means give that response.

S: Ah, we're concerned - yes, but we're concerned with the actual meaning of the word gratitude, because we say 'we did it out of gratitude', which suggests that the doing is not included in the word gratitude. The word gratitude seems to stop short at the actual feeling - even though, yes, that feeling does naturally lead on to actual giving, at least under certain circumstances.

So you won't feel grateful unless you actually feel that something has been given you. You won't feel grateful unless you feel that what has been given to you benefits you. And you won't feel grateful unless you also appreciate that you've been given something that benefits you, and appreciate perhaps the person who has made that gift, and have the feeling of doing something for that person in return. So it seems that gratitude, in a way, is a quite composite emotion.

So therefore, going back a bit, will you feel grateful, if you don't feel that someone has done something for you or given you something? If that doesn't register, can you feel grateful? No. Sometimes it happens, doesn't it, that someone actually gives us something or does something for us, but it doesn't register, as I've said. Why is that? What happens then? Supposing someone gives you a present; you say 'OK, thanks.' It sort of doesn't register. Why is it? What is happening? Or someone does something for you; maybe you've forgotten to do your particular job for the day, someone does it for you; but when you learn that that person has done it for you you say 'OK' - and that's it. What is happening there?

Sanghadevi: There's no real awareness of others.

S: There's no real awareness. I'd go a little bit further than that.

_____: Cutting off, somehow.

S: Yes, that also is involved. But I think in our society, a fundamental element here is taking it for granted. (Murmurs of agreement.) It is as though it's due to you, it's owed you. And I think this is a very predominant attitude in our society today - at least in England, or at least in the UK; I won't speak about other countries - that you take it for granted that things are due to you. So it's as though no one's giving you anything really, it's your due, you're entitled to it, it's your right. So if you have that sort of attitude, you won't feel that something has actually been given to you, and therefore you won't feel grateful. And if you don't feel that something has been given to you, how can you feel that what has been given you is beneficial? So you see, it's our feeling that things are due to us, or that <u>everything</u> is due to us, wherever, that inhibits our feeling of gratitude. It's as though it's not only a complex emotion, a composite emotion, it's as though it's an emotion which is quite easily upset, so to speak; because there are a number of factors involved, and if one or the other of them is missing there's no feeling of gratitude.

Just to switch for a moment to, say, gratitude towards the Buddha: in the case of the Buddha, we feel, perhaps, that the Buddha has given us something, we are grateful for the gift of the Dharma. We recognise that the Dharma does us good, it actually benefits us. And then we appreciate the fact that the Buddha has given us that, and we want to express what we feel towards the Buddha to him in some way. But the whole thing seems to be based on the fact that you do actually feel that you've been given something.

So, turning it around, if you feel that something is due to you, you can't feel gratitude in the end. So in order to feel gratitude you've got to feel that things aren't due to you, or at least not to feel that things <u>are</u> due to you. So when you don't feel that things are due to you, what sort of state of mind are you in? What's the difference between being in a state of mind where you think things are due to you, they're your right, and thinking that things are not due to you? I'm not thinking of your thinking that you don't deserve anything; that's a quite different mental state, that's a negative mental state. But not thinking that things are due to you, and even thinking that things are not due to you, that you're not entitled to them. So what does that mean?

_____: Humbling.

S: Yes, it's very humble. You feel that you don't really have any real claim on the other person; it means that if the other person gives you something they give it out of their own free will. So in order to feel gratitude you've got to be able to recognise, so to speak, the full autonomy of the other person. They haven't <u>got</u> to do anything for you, they haven't got to give you anything. In other words, you are giving up the power mode, aren't you? Because it's up to them. If they give me something, it's a free gift, out of their love. I'm not entitled to it, I've no means of enforcing it, I've no right; it's just a free gift.

So gratitude, in a way, is the appreciation of a gift freely given. In other words, you can't feel grateful to another person unless you recognise that person's freedom and autonomy; in other words, unless you recognise them as an individual. Otherwise you'll think 'It's due to me; they ought to give it to me.' Then there can be no question of gratitude, because there can be no question of gift. You think you're entitled to it, which means that you think it already belongs to you. It's only a question of your rightful property being restored to you. So it means that gratitude is really quite a profound emotion, and really quite a spiritual emotion.

_____: It seems to have .....around it as well, being able to really receive something new rather than experiencing it all as I am already, and quite ... in that way. (?)

Kathryn: It would also seem to have lots of implications for friendship, too, and communication.

S: Yes. I was thinking of an amusing little story that someone once told me what it was they wanted me to give them as a present when they were ordained, but it was years before they were ordained; in fact they haven't been ordained yet! But they'd got it all worked out what they wanted from me, in that sort of way, it was really curious. One does come across these strange things.

Vidyasri: So why do we do that, why do we expect, think that it is our due?

S: That's quite a big problem, isn't it? Because this is very much people's attitude nowadays. One can only begin to speculate. It does seem to be a bit infantile; because the child expects everything from mother, and from father - well, quite rightly, that's natural to begin with. But it's as though, if you go on expecting all through life that things will be provided for you by life itself, just as mother and father used to provide everything for you, it means that really you are persisting in a rather infantile attitude, doesn't it? So that would suggest that the infantile person can't feel gratitude. Only the mature person can feel gratitude, because it's only the mature person who gets over that infantile attitude of always expecting, and therefore thinking that things are their due, and who can therefore leave the other person free to give or not to give.

If you have that attitude, when someone gives you something, there'll always be an element of surprise; because you weren't thinking of it as your due - even if it's a close friend. Even supposing it's your birthday, and that friend gives you a birthday present, there's still that element of surprise, if you have that genuine attitude of freedom with regard to the other person. It isn't something that you expect. You find this sometimes in families: they expect their birthday present and they expect their Christmas present, and sometimes you -

_____: .....

S: I don't know, I've only heard this, but husbands and wives work out weeks beforehand 'what I'm going to give you and what you're going to give me', and all that sort of thing. It means that it's become just a - in a way a formality. Because there should always be an element of surprise in the gift. It's the unexpected. Just as the guest in Indian tradition is the at...., the untimely one, one who just turns up, so the gift is something that just turns up, it's something that's not expected. To the extent that it's expected or anticipated, it's not a real gift, because you haven't left the other person free to give or not to give. Do you see what I mean? I hope it's not becoming too subtle a point.

Ashokasri: I think you experience that when you give a present to somebody and they've expected it. There's almost this feeling of not wanting to give it to them. (Laughter.)

S: Well, yes, that's natural, because what you're really doing is asserting your autonomy. You don't want to be under any compulsion, not in friendship. You should be free to give or not to give.

Ashokasri: You feel negated.

S: Yes, right. So supposing on your birthday your best friend doesn't give you a present, you shouldn't feel in the least disappointed, because if you are disappointed it would suggest anticipation, which would suggest you hadn't left that person completely free to give or not to give. It's just like in - dare I say it? - in love: 'You've got to love me - because I love you', for instance. But that's absurd, that's not a reason at all. Love, if it's real love, has to be free; it can't be compelled. 'Here am I loving you for all these years, and therefore you've got to love me, or else' - you know? That doesn't sound like love at all, does it? But that's the sort of thing you often hear. As we say, it's a sprat to catch a mackerel. You haven't heard that expression?

Voices: Yes.

S: A sprat to catch a mackerel - quite often that is what it is. A sprat is a little fish, and a mackerel is a rather bigger fish, so you throw the little fish in to catch the big fish. You put the little fish on the end of your fishing line, hoping to catch a bigger one.

So there's quite a lot to be said about gratitude. But I think this underlines the point that very often we don't leave people free; we try to get our hooks into people, we try to exert influence over them in one way or another, and it's because of that general attitude, to a great extent, that we find it difficult to feel gratitude.

So really, as we become mature, we ought to grow up not expecting anything from anybody. Not in a cynical sense - 'It's no use expecting anything from anyone, it's a pretty awful world, and people are pretty awful' - not that sort of attitude; but just because you don't feel that you've got any claim upon anybody, you don't feel you've got any hold upon anybody. You don't feel you can coerce anybody into doing anything. No one has got any duty to you, or you've got no rights over anybody. They're perfectly free and you leave them free. It's only out of that sort of attitude that gratitude can develop.

Pat: Are you compelled to feel gratitude to somebody if they give you something and you know it's because they want you to do something? You get this sometimes.

S: Say that again.

Pat: It happens locally quite often: people give a gift, but because they want something back.

S: That's the sprat to catch the mackerel. But you're not entitled - you don't want, I won't say you ought not or you ought - but you don't feel gratitude when something is given in this way, because it isn't a gift; it's a bribe. It's an inducement, it's not a gift. So you only respond with gratitude if they give it as a gift. Otherwise it's just an advance payment for services to be rendered. Well, isn't it?

Voices: Mm.

Vajragita: On the other hand, you can't not expect gratitude. Sometimes you have some .... classes and people just don't want to pay for it, ... give money. So then you should make it quite clear they are free to give .....

S: Hm, that raises a quite interesting point. This has been talked about quite a lot in the FWBO in England in the past. I remember in the very early days of the FWBO, when we were at Archway, quite a lot of people coming along, especially people who were sort of, semi-hippies, you might say, really felt that everything ought to be provided free, and they believed, or at least professed to believe, that there was some very wealthy foundation behind the FWBO paying for everything, so that it was only their right to get everything free; and the people running the FWBO had no right to deprive them of the facilities which this foundation, whatever it was, was paying for. It took quite a lot of time and trouble to convince some people that there was no wealthy foundation behind the FWBO, or behind the Centre, paying for everything and financing them. But they definitely felt that everything should be provided for free, and therefore they didn't feel any sort of gratitude, apparently.

But it's been quite noticeable over the last especially six or seven years, I would say, that within the Movement there is very much more gratitude than there used to be, and people, I find, express gratitude for the Movement and for the things that the Movement provides, much, much more frequently and freely than ever before. In fact, I would say that such expressions increase as the years go by; it's very noticeable. I remember that probably in the first few years of the FWBO I don't think anybody ever thanked, or certainly not me, for anything, or expressed any sort of gratitude. It's only started happening after some years, but now it

does happen quite a lot; so I take this as a very positive sign. It means people are more mature, to say the least.

But there are other aspects to this whole business, which are touched on in the question. I've tried to go into what gratitude really is to provide a sort of background. It would seem that gratitude is an important factor in one's ability to Go for Refuge. Yes, because it shows you appreciate what the Buddha has given - the Dharma.

In our culture, our response to being taught is often coloured by feelings of lack of confidence or that someone is being authoritarian.

Yes, in the case of Buddhism, in the case of the Buddhist, there is a teaching which is the Dharma, but a number of people, for one reason or another, have come to associate being taught with negative feelings, perhaps because of the way in which they were taught at school; and they tend to feel that when somebody is teaching them, they are being authoritarian, they are telling you what to do. It seems to me that nowadays, certainly in this country, people are very sensitive to this so-called authoritarianism. No doubt there is a lot of authoritarianism around, but it seems to me people are over-sensitive. I'm not quite sure why. Because, if you consider, probably people in this country are freer nowadays to do what they like than they've ever been before. We don't live under a dictatorship. We're usually pretty free to lead our own lives. There's all sorts of things we can do which we could never do before. Usually there's no one bossing us around and telling us what to do, especially if we're not working. But none the less people are very, very sensitive to what they look on as authority or authoritarianism: they react to it very quickly.

We don't seem to have had this in history before. If you read, say, Tudor history, you'll find Tudor kings - and queens, for that matter - sentencing people to death, and people being taken to the block and having their heads cut off; but the last thing they do is [say] 'God save the King' or 'God save the Queen'! There's no question of - they don't rebel against the royal authority as such, even when they're being executed. There's the famous story about a man under Queen Elizabeth, who was - I think he was a printer or someone like that - anyway, he'd circulated something that was considered subversive; so he was sentenced to have his right hand cut off. So his right hand was chopped off, so with his left hand he raised his hat and shouted 'God save the Queen!' [Laughter] How different that is from our own attitude; because here are we living under a comparatively very mild regime, which leaves us pretty free to do what we like, but we are always rebelling, or thinking we are rebelling, against authority - always <u>reactive</u>.

You sometimes find, even within the FWBO, a person says to another: 'Just pass me the butter.' 'Who are you ordering about?!' he says. I don't know whether it's like that among the women, but it's certainly sometimes like that among the men. It seems so extraordinary. But have you not noticed this? People are so sensitive; don't like to be asked to do anything, they feel that they are being ordered. What is it that has led people to get so incredibly sensitive about this question of authority? I just can't understand it. There must be some reason for it, unless they're completely mad; but even if you're mad there must be some <u>reason</u> for your madness. I just fail to understand it; at least, I haven't been able to find any explanation so far.

But you all know what I'm talking about, quite evidently. I don't know if you've ever <u>felt</u> like that?

This is why it's very difficult to people to work together, because if you make a suggestion - especially if you're all supposed to be co-operating - the other person says: 'Oh, isn't she being authoritative?' or 'He's telling me what to do, and he's no better than the rest of us, we're all just equal.' This is all tied up with this idea of equality, also: that no one has any right to tell anybody else what to do, so you end up doing nothing.

Pat: It makes you reluctant to take the initiative and tell people what to do, ...

S: Yes, otherwise you're accused of being bossy. Like Mrs. Thatcher. [Laughter] There's the poor woman, doing her best for the country, and she's accused of being bossy. Doing her best for the country in accordance with her own likes.

So it's all quite a complex issue, isn't it, really? Requiring probably a lot of sorting out. So if you're sensitive to authority, you probably will find it difficult to feel gratitude, because you won't feel that something is a free gift; you'll feel more that something has been imposed upon you, even. Some people, I know, in England - I don't know whether this is so abroad - feel uncomfortable when a gift is given to them, because they're not sure what they ought to give in return. A really odd state of mind. You hear that some people refuse invitations out, because they say 'Oh, we can't ask them back. We haven't got such a good dinner set' or whatever it is. 'We won't be able to give them such a good meal, so we'd better not go because we won't be able to ask them back.' You find this sort of talk in social circles, don't you? Oh dear.

'Do you think that if we find it difficult to experience this quality of gratitude, it is one of the factors which hinder our ability to Go for Refuge wholeheartedly?'

Well, the answer seems to be yes.

And 'What factors are involved in developing gratitude?'

Well, I think we've really touched upon that, haven't we? You've got to leave the other person free; you've got to get over this reactive attitude towards authority. You've got to recognise that something has been given to you freely, and that it benefits you. You've got to have that feeling of wanting to not exactly give something back - there's no question of 'back' - but generosity in the other person sparks off generosity in you. There's no question of a return or exchange or a tit for tat, or anything like that.

Sanghadevi: It's almost as if, in a sutra, a person's response is to give themselves. They Go for Refuge.

S: Yes. So in that sense, you can't really give yourself to another person. I know I sometimes quote Walt Whitman, who says 'When I give, I give myself', but you can't take that too literally; because can you give yourself? What do you mean by giving yourself? It's nice to use these phrases, but what do they mean? Can you give yourself to another person, say, in the full sense? Is it possible?

Ashokasri: Well, you can't really retain your autonomy, can you?

S: Yes, you can't give yourself and at the same time retain your autonomy. So it's in a way a paradoxical situation. You can only give yourself to another person if the other person is ready instantly to give you back to yourself. You can only give yourself really to a person who makes no -

(End of side 1, Side 2)

..... 'I've got you!' That's a very unreal and perhaps disastrous situation - especially if you give yourself to each other in that way, that's even worse. That can sometimes happen. 'I belong to you and you belong to me' - it's the beginning of something quite dreadful there.

Do you know what the Pali word is for gratitude? Have you come across it? It - at least the word that is translated as gratitude - is katannuta ; it comes in the Mangala Sutta. Katannuta. It's not one of the words one often hears talked about or explained; I don't know whether that's significant. It doesn't even occur very often in Pali itself. But we can see, from the discussion so far, that gratitude is really one of the most positive of all the virtues, even, and one of the qualities most characteristic of the individual.

Ashokasri: Why do you think it isn't used very much in Pali?

S: Well, I suppose you could say that it was a sort of natural healthy attitude on the part of so many people that there's no need to draw attention to it. It could have been that. Usually, qualities or virtues are only emphasised when there's a need to emphasise them, that is to say when they are lacking. That's why I have said in the past that it's rather interesting, looking at things in this way, that in the FWBO things like communication are emphasised so much - what does that suggest?

_____: We have a very different set of scriptures from the FWBO!

Kathryn: Has gratitude got a lot to do with generosity? Could you tie the two things up?

S: I think the two things certainly do overlap. They aren't the same thing. You can be generous not out of a feeling of gratitude but just because you see a need. Yes, I think it's probably correct to say that there's a certain area of overlap, but that the two are not actually the same thing. Gratitude, I think, in the long run, will always involve giving, but giving doesn't necessarily involve gratitude on the giver's part, because the giver may not have received anything from the person to whom he is giving something. The mother gives to the child, but the child doesn't feel any gratitude towards the mother. Or the mother, rather, doesn't feel any gratitude towards the child because the child hasn't as a conscious individual actually given anything to her.

_____: Do you think there's a bit of a reaction against gratitude in a religious sense because when people have had enough of Christianity - 'Thank you for our daily bread, thank you for - ' you know, it is constant, and you react against it.

S: Yes, it did just occur to me that when one is young one is sometimes told, 'You ought to be grateful'. But then that shows a complete misunderstanding of gratitude, because there's no ought about it. And if you are told you ought to be grateful, there will quite naturally, in a way healthily, be a reaction against that. 'You ought to be grateful that you've got such good parents, you ought to be grateful that they send you to such a good school at such incredible expense', etc. etc. - 'give you such a good education, such good clothes to wear. You should be grateful and thankful that you're not like poor little children in other parts of the world who don't get all these things.' Well, that is just killing the feeling of gratitude; it can't thrive under those sort of conditions. It must be something that comes spontaneously, by its very nature.

It's really strange that parents - well, why do parents do this? It's a dreadful thought; why do parents do this? I suspect it's sometimes because the parents don't really want to do those things. They don't want to spend all that good money on their children's education; they'd much rather really spend it on having a good time themselves, but they feel that they ought to, it's their duty, perhaps, in some cases. I think if they really did it out of love they wouldn't insist that children are grateful in that way.

So I think a parent who says to his or her child 'You ought to be grateful' is one who is doing things for the child with perhaps a wrong motive, or at least perhaps not a very pure motive.

And then God - hm! Thanked, yes, indeed: you're told you ought to be grateful to God, he's made you, given you life. He's made this beautiful world for you. But you don't feel like being grateful, do you? and you're told you ought to be grateful, so - perhaps gratitude, this word gratitude has had rather a bad press for that sort of reason - because so many of us have been told we ought to be grateful. I'm glad to say my parents never told me that I ought to be grateful. I had an aunt who was always telling me that I ought to be grateful to my parents. Luckily, my father always used to tell her not to talk like that; he used to shut her up, because he was a sensible man. But I do remember, even as a child, noticing this - that she was always saying that I ought to be grateful; telling me what a

wonderful father I had - not that she - I didn't have a wonderful mother, according to her, because she was my father's sister,[Laughter] but I certainly had a wonderful father and ought to be grateful for everything he did for me. Perhaps she used to think my mother ought to be grateful for being married to her brother! But anyway, I remember her attitude was not a very positive one, and my father never liked it, he never liked her telling myself and my sister that we ought to be grateful.

So I think that is, as I said, the thing that kills gratitude. Never tell anyone that they ought to be grateful to you for what you've done. Sometimes mothers do this - say, 'I've worked my fingers to the bone for you.' Wives say it too. One should never say it, even if one is likely to think it, never say it.

It just ..... a reluctance to leave other people free. You want to bind them and tie them down, put them under obligations - which is really so unfortunate.

Vidyasri: But also it makes me think there must be a big lack of positive emotion, because somewhere it's as if people want other people to appreciate them, so they can't just leave it free to happen, but have to somehow manipulate it to happen, because - I was just wondering .....

S: It's a craving for it, not a healthy need but rather a craving.

Vidyasri: Yes, but why is that there? It's as if there's a lack of just healthy positive emotion.

S: I think we must tread a little carefully here, because if there isn't an element of Insight, even in the positive emotion, there will be an element of craving; even if it isn't very conspicuous. I think it's only when you get some measure of Insight that you do start becoming really free from possessiveness, and really granting the other person the freedom of autonomy, and are really able to operate in accordance with the love mode and not the power mode. It's a very basic thing.

Ashokasri: So how do you encourage people to feel gratitude? You can't tell them to be grateful, but -

S: Well, you can give them gifts; but give them quite freely, and if it's necessary just make it obvious from your attitude and manner of giving that it's just a free gift, nothing expected in return; you're just happy to give. Though with some people you have to be careful even about that, because they've been so badly brought up in one way or the other that they sometimes feel that even a free gift places them under an obligation; they can't take it as a free gift. So you have to be a little careful how you give - unfortunately.

I read about an incident a little while ago: a man who for a bet just stood at the street corner handing out five-pound notes. No one would take them! Well, it is a pretty unusual sort of thing to do. One ought to be able to face up to a situation like that. Maybe some people thought they were forged notes, and it was just a joke. But even if it was a joke, why not join in the joke? Some people were afraid of being made fools of.

_____: 'Candid Camera'.

Christine: It's interesting that with classes at the Centres, they seem to go better when we charge them for them.

S: Yes, we got away from that point, didn't we? - or I did. I think because then people know where they are. I think if you say, 'Just give what you feel like giving' in a way they're not confident in their own feelings, and they start thinking, 'What ought I to give? What do they expect me to give? Are they telling me to give what I feel like because they're hoping I'll give a lot, or are they saying "Give what you feel like" because they don't expect very much?' So the person goes through agonies of indecisiveness - 'Shall I give 10p, or shall I give'

- what is it now? '20p, or shall I give a whole pound?' They don't know. But if you say, 'It's so much', it's much more clear-cut, and they don't go through those agonies of indecisiveness, they don't have to make up their own minds. I think it's partly because of that, at least. People feel more at home with that situation, where it's just a question of paying for what you receive, and a question of voluntary contribution, and therefore perhaps the question of gratitude doesn't come in. If you pay for something, there's no question of gratitude; you've been supplied with goods or services and you pay for those, fair enough. But if you're told to give what you feel like, in a way you're being asked to feel grateful, perhaps; or perhaps that's how they take it, and that they find very difficult.

I know some people have said that in those circumstances they feel quite a lot of resentment and unwillingness to give anything. They're trying to work out in their minds how little they can get away with. So it's a relief when they're told, 'Well, you give a pound' or even two pounds. It's a relief. Because in a way that turns it into a transaction, and they're more at home with that.

Ruth: But then it is quite important also at Centres to have the dana bowl where people can give, because .....

S: Yes. Well, then it's clear, it's quite clear that that's distinct. There's no obligation at all, because you've paid what you were expected to pay. You've done your duty as it were, and anything over and above that is entirely your own free will, so no one feels bad not putting in the dana bowl when they've actually paid their whack. And when someone does feel real generosity will just do accordingly.

I remember someone told me once, years ago, someone who afterwards became an Order member, that when he first started going along to a Centre he felt so grateful for having made that contact that every time he attended a class he just had to put a five-pound note in the bowl, and that was some years ago when a five-pound note had some value. But that was his spontaneous feeling. He had a very ordinary job, not earning much money, but that's how he felt. He felt so grateful at the contact he'd made. It really was the light at the end of the tunnel for him; he was going through a very, very bad patch.

Vajragita: Sometimes I ....

S: Well, I think therefore for such people it is a positive step even to think in terms of a transaction, because this saying 'The Dharma ought to be free' is just a rationalisation for their meanness.

_____: I suppose you could say the Dharma is free, but the electricity costs so much.

S: Yes, this is the sort of thing I used to say - yes. So ..... in fact Buddhadasa used to make that point at the old Archway ..... had to deal with a few who wanted everything laid on for nothing, he'd say 'Yes, the Dharma's free, but the facilities which we need to give the Dharma are not free, we have to pay for them.' Even then, they felt there was this foundation behind us which ought to be paying for everything. It's as though we're almost teaching them and intercepting the money in providing everything for free. It was really quite extraordinary.

Anyway, that's all a thing of the past, fortunately.

_____: .....

Vajragita: It's usually the rich people who have the difficulties (?).

S: Anyway, is that enough about gratitude? We've gone into that fairly thoroughly, haven't we? Or is there any other little point not dealt with? All right, let's pass on to question 3. Yes, we probably won't get through all these questions ..., but never mind, because we have - I think that's a more thorough discussion of gratitude than we have had at any time. It should be useful.

Ashokasri: It would be good for Mitrata some time.

> *3. In Nanamoli's account of Yasa's going forth, it is said that he became independent of others in the teacher's dispensation. Is this Stream Entry? Is it saying that he came to his own independent, individual understanding of what the Buddha taught, in the sense of gaining direct spiritual insight into it?*

This is what it appears to mean. It means he isn't having to take certain things on faith. He isn't having to take them on faith because he knows them for himself from his own experience, as a result of his own insight. And, yes, this does seem to be tantamount to Stream Entry.

> *In the same story, it says that Yasa reached the point where he could no longer revert to the house life. This seems to be the stage of arahatship.*

Yes, that is so, it seems. Some of the earlier Pali texts - different stages and attainments aren't differentiated quite so sharply as later became the case, but it does seem that the state of 'coming to one's own independent, individual understanding' or 'becoming independent of others in the teacher's dispensation' corresponds to Stream Entry, and reaching the stage where one can no longer revert to the house life seems to correspond to arahantship. Anyway, that's pretty straightforward, but then something more complex comes:

> *How radical a change in lifestyle is necessary for one to traverse the higher stages of the spiritual path? In what would these changes consist? Would one expect quite a radical reorientation of one's life prior to arahatship? In the story, it appears that Yasa's father, mother and wife were capable of becoming Stream Entrants and presumably continuing to grow spiritually from that point, while still living a house life.*

This is true, but a point that I've made before is that perhaps the house life in the Buddha's day meant something rather different from the house life today. Can you see that? Have you any ideas of the way in which it might have been different then?

_____: It was not so nuclear. It wasn't a nuclear family, it was an extended family.

S: There's that, yes. It was an extended family. Perhaps not so many emotional tensions and pressures within the family group, in some ways at least. But apart from that?

_____: Marriages were arranged. You didn't have this personal 'I love you, you love me' business at the beginning.

S: Yes, there's all that, yes. Because most people lived in the country under rural conditions, and life generally was perhaps slower paced, perhaps more peaceful; more regular, more rhythmical, closer contact with nature. So perhaps there was quite a big difference between the house life then and the house life now. And don't forget life would be very traditional, it would be based on spiritual or semi-spiritual values, and you'd feel those values in every aspect of your lives.

Christine: So there would be elements that would support a spiritual practice, ... couldn't necessarily expect ....

S: Yes. And if you, say, sat in a corner quietly meditating, no one would think you were doing anything strange or eccentric. Or if you wanted to fast on a particular day, that would just be accepted without any comment. People had no struggle with their family to be able to sit quiet or to be able to fast and to give up meat. It would be regarded as natural, quite natural that you should engage in some spiritual practice.

One sees in India, even today, that there's a sort of spiritual underpinning in many ways of even quite ordinary life. So ordinary life there - house life or family life - isn't quite so secular or apart from spiritual values as often happens in the West. So there is that to be borne in mind. Also perhaps in those days people had more time, at least during the rainy season when there was nothing to do in the fields.

But anyway, that doesn't really resolve the question with regard to ourselves; so the question really is: 'How radical a change in lifestyle is necessary for one to traverse the higher stages of the spiritual path?' This is the basic question here, so let me read that again and we'll discuss it. 'How radical a change in lifestyle is necessary for one to traverse the higher stages of the spiritual path?'

Of course, it does depend on what your lifestyle is at present and what your personal circumstances are. I think what happens in the case of most people is this: I think that usually they don't make any big drastic change in their lifestyle. They don't, for instance rather extremely think 'My goal is arahantship in this life, and an Arahant can't live at home, can't do this, can't do that'. So you then proceed to give up all those things so that you can become an arahat. This is not the way that people proceed in the FWBO. I think usually they proceed in a much more piecemeal, step-by-step way. Usually you change your lifestyle because your lifestyle becomes a bit uncomfortable. You can also see that it's not very conducive to leading a spiritual life. So you modify your lifestyle to some extent, partly because you feel uncomfortable with that lifestyle to that extent, and partly because you can see that if you were to modify your lifestyle in that way it would help you. So as a result of that you get into a rather more positive spiritual state, and that results in a further modification of lifestyle.

It's not as though people think it out all in advance and do it all at once. So you find people giving up meat, or they leave home, or they go and live in a spiritual community; it's a gradual, piecemeal modification or change in their lifestyle in accordance with their growing perception of the nature and requirements of the spiritual life.

So 'How radical a change in lifestyle?' Well, you can't say, because it is a step-by-step business. You have to ask yourself quite conscientiously at every stage 'Is my lifestyle hindering me in any particular respect?' Supposing you've got into the habit over the years of going, say, to the cinema two or three times a week - you just ask yourself 'Now I've got into the spiritual life, do I really enjoy this? Is it really helping me, or would it be better if I give it up?' or 'Would it be better if I gave up going to parties?' or 'Would it be better if I gave up eating meat?' It isn't as though you sit down and work it all out in advance, but I think this process should be going on all the time; there should be, I think, a constant modification of lifestyle because if that isn't going on it means you're not growing. As you grow, you will need, in your own interests, to make certain modifications in your lifestyle. It could be, in certain cases, [that] someone's lifestyle is already very positive, but I think that very rarely happens; usually one's lifestyle is not very conducive to the spiritual life. So as one starts growing spiritually, one starts modifying one's lifestyle. So that's not something that happens at one fell swoop, it's something you're doing all the time in different ways with regard to different aspects of your life or your lifestyle.

It's very difficult to generalise, because people's lifestyles differ; their experience of the spiritual path differs in certain respects, and so the modifications that they make with regard to their lifestyle differ. Some things that certain people find easy to give up, others find very difficult.

Carla: It feels quite good for you, like a gradual refinement, because it feels like it's always opening up doors for other people around who watch people growing and developing, they see that refinement happening.

S: People do notice, especially if they haven't seen you for some time. But it's important not to think that lifestyle doesn't matter. Some people have a bit of a

rationalisation that 'It's commitment that is important.' Well, that's true: commitment is primary, as we say, lifestyle is secondary. But that doesn't mean that lifestyle is unimportant. Lifestyle, though secondary, does reflect commitment.

Sanghadevi: I wonder if people who particularly live in London can fall into almost resigning themselves that they can't change their lifestyle that much beyond a certain point because of the dynamics of living in the big city, ...

S: It's almost as it you've got to give in to all the temptations. Several people have talked to me about these things recently. I think people just have to be more strong-minded. It is really almost as though they think sometimes that if certain temptations are around they just can't be blamed for falling victim to them - there are all these films on, all these plays and all these concerts - they've just got to go if they live in the city, as though they're helpless. That isn't really true at all.

I think - coming to a more general point - it's a general attitude of our society that if something is there you've got to have it; you've got to enjoy it or experience it. You can't just leave it. This has very big implications for science, because there are certain things we shouldn't have allowed ourselves to know. We shouldn't have allowed ourselves to know how to make atom bombs, for instance, and hydrogen bombs and nuclear weapons. But because it was possible, we thought we'd got to do it. But not everything that it is possible to do should be done, nor should everything that is possible to be known be known.

So in the same way, not everything it is possible to experience should be experienced. So it's as though people living in London sometimes think 'Here are all these possibilities of experience', and they take that to mean since the possibilities are there you've got to explore them, you've got to experience those things - which is nonsense.

_____: Is this an expression of craving?

S: I think it is; that's one aspect of it, anyway.

Sanghadevi: I think that's a very interesting point, the one about not everything we could know should be known.

S: Well, the Buddha sometimes made that sort of point, didn't he? Well, for instance, in the parable of the man struck by the poisoned arrow; he didn't need to know all those things about the arrow, what sort of feathers it had, what bird it came from, whether the man who shot it was of this caste or that caste; he doesn't need to know all those things. They can be known, but there's no need to know them. Here's this man dying of the poisoned arrow and he wants to know all those things. What's the point? Yes, it is a sort of craving.

Pat: Would you say that some things, say, in science should not be known, full stop, or should wait until the people who want to know it are ready to have that knowledge?

S: Well, that is another point, say with regard to spiritual teachings, there are some things that people want to know before they're ready, which means they can't know them. They may hear the words or read the words but that doesn't mean that they thereby know them. But you do find that attitude in people, too; sometimes because they overestimate their own capacities. Look at all the people in the West nowadays who are reading all sorts of books about Tantric teachings, and going for the ones which are said to be the most advanced, because they feel that's the level that they're on. Well, they're not; they've not even started in the spiritual life. But they think they're really qualified to learn or to hear the highest spiritual teachings. It's actually arrogance, or worse than that.

Kathryn: Is it a craving to have power, to have control - thinking in terms of

wanting to know everything?

S: That can be an aspect of it, but I think basically it's just greed. You're just one great big hungry maw, wanting to swallow everything. There should be lots of things that you are quite happy not to know. But I think that's a sign of a quite mature person, that they're happy not to know certain things - not because they are happily sunk in a piglike ignorance, but just because they know it's not necessary to know a whole lot of things, and they're just happy not to know those things.

_____: ..... take responsibility to do that ....

S: Yes, indeed, you should take responsibility for your knowledge. You shouldn't feel that you've got, say, to read a book because it's just lying beside you, or you've got to go and see a film because it's on; you've got to watch TV because TV is there. That's a quite common thing, isn't it? If the TV set isn't there people don't even think of watching TV. If it's there, it's as though they've got to sit in front of it and watch it. ... studying these things certain people ... (?) It's quite interesting.

But it's true, isn't it?

Pat: What would you say about an interest in current affairs? Because I'm accused by family and such - I don't like to watch news or read the national newspapers, because it doesn't have a very good effect on your mind. And they say, 'Oh, you're closing your mind, you're not interested in what's going on in the world.'

S: I think one has to judge where one is and what one's priorities are. I personally keep an eye on world affairs, and even what's going on in Britain generally, but mainly out of concern for the Movement and just to keep an eye on anything which might affect or even threaten the Movement. At Padmaloka, at the Order Office, we subscribe to a particular cuttings agency which deals with news items of interest to charities, usually concerned with changes in the law and things like that. So we try to take short cuts of that kind also. But I think if we do have an organisation like the FWBO, charity, and it's growing, we need to keep an eye on these things. So some of us do. Also keep an eye on what's happening in the world. Sometimes one wishes one didn't have to. It's quite pleasant to be away on retreat like this and not to hear anything on the news, not to see a newspaper - even though usually we only see a Sunday paper. It's quite pleasant to be free from that for a while. But none the less, I think a few people in the Movement need to be aware - a few more responsible people - need to be aware of what's going on in the world. But I don't think one should bother oneself too much about things one can't really do anything about or which don't really concern one; because there are so many things that one could worry about, hundreds and thousands of things. You could worry yourself silly every day of the week if you wanted to, and that's pointless.

It's again another aspect of house life in ancient India: there were no newspapers. You didn't know what was going on in the neighbouring kingdoms; it wasn't until years and years later. You didn't know what was happening on the other side of the world, you didn't know about earthquakes in Peru or famines in Ethiopia. So life on the whole was much more peaceful, you had fewer things to occupy your mind with, fewer things to bother about.

Going back to this question of lifestyle - yes, it is important, and I think we should constantly monitor our lifestyle, and try to see whether there's any inconsistency between what we actually feel is our commitment and our lifestyle at that particular moment. Because we should be constantly reshaping our lifestyle. We shouldn't always think of it in terms of giving up things, because it's also doing things, and doing things that we haven't been doing before; so, in a sense, gaining things too. We might come to the conclusion it's a skilful thing to go and look at more art galleries, or to spend more time in study. There will be a change of lifestyle in that way. The changes aren't necessarily just giving

up things that you like to do.

But I think most people in the FWBO, or many people, have made a very big and very drastic change of lifestyle just by virtue of the fact that they live in spiritual communities. I think that's probably one of the very biggest changes that one could make, and that has all sorts of repercussions - .... in all sorts of ways. To be a vegetarian means a big change in lifestyle; to give up alcohol means a big change in lifestyle. If you give up alcohol you can't go to the pub - well, unless you drink non-alcoholic beer; I believe it's becoming more and more freely available, which is interesting. It means normally that you give up a whole type of social life. Some people, as you know, spend every evening of the week down at the pub, and that's an important part of their lifestyle; give up alcohol, and that goes - a great big modification straight away. The same with meat - there are all sorts of things you can't enjoy, so to speak. All sorts of things you can't take part in. So there's a big change in your social life, which again is an aspect of your lifestyle. You don't go to parties, don't go to nightclubs, don't go to discos; it means a big change in your lifestyle. I'm assuming you all do know what I'm talking about!

_____: I can hardly remember - [Laughter]

S: And the changes of lifestyle must be related to actual changes in your commitment or your feeling about your commitment. Sometimes changes in lifestyle can be quite artificial, and you get a lot of that in the Buddhist East, where perhaps you may be putting on a special robe, or living in a special way; but it's not actually very much related to where you actually are spiritually, unfortunately.

So the question was: 'How radical a change in lifestyle is necessary for one to traverse the higher stages of the spiritual path?' Well, clearly the higher the stages that you reach, the more radical will be the actual changes of lifestyle. They won't be radical for you by that time, because you will be going step by step; they'll be quite natural. Maybe years ago you would have thought that giving up meat was a very big thing, and you might even have thought in some cases you couldn't possibly do it; but now you do it and you think nothing of it, you don't feel that you're giving up meat every day; you've just forgotten about it. And that is a real modification of lifestyle - when something has become so <u>much</u> a part of your lifestyle, either positive or negative, you no longer give it any thought; it's just like breathing, just as natural as breathing. That's why sometimes people say to you - people from the outside world - 'Oh, how can you give up so-and-so, how can you do without so-and-so? Oh, it must give you a lot of trouble, a lot of difficulty.' You don't feel like that at all. So therefore they can't understand, sometimes, why you go around looking so happy when you've given up this and given up that. The reason is that at this stage you don't feel you've given it up; if anything, you feel you've gained something. You don't go round with a miserable face thinking of all the good things you've given up. Well, occasionally you might have heard people admit that occasionally the thought has just crossed their minds: 'I wouldn't have minded a sausage' - but anyway, it's a little thought that very quickly passes. It's the taste of a thing that they suddenly remember, not that they actually wanted to consume poor Mr. Pig. Anyway let's pass on.

> *4. Is the correlation you make between the opening of the Dharma Eye and Stream Entry in the Going for Refuge booklet traditional, or a connection you have made?*

I don't recollect the Buddha saying anywhere that 'when I speak of opening the Dharma Eye I mean Stream Entry or vice versa', but it is pretty clear that the two are different ways of speaking about the same experience.

Where can we find -

(End of side) Tape 2 (marked as 3), Side 1

S: I dealt with No. 4(a), didn't I? Now we come to (b):

> *Where can we find out more about the Five Eyes? They are not mentioned much in The Three Jewels and the Survey.*

There isn't really very much material on the Five Eyes. I know of only one place where they are dealt with, as far as I remember, quite systematically, and that's in a text that isn't really very accessible: that is the Prajnaparamita Shastra of Nagarjuna, which is translated into Chinese. It doesn't survive in Sanskrit. Some scholars say it never existed in Sanskrit, and was a Chinese compilation, but much of it has been translated into French; and somewhere there there is a discussion of the Five Eyes - so I'm afraid we shall have to wait a little.

But none the less the distinctive features of the Five Eyes in a general way are quite clear, aren't they? They're clearly correlated with different levels of development: the first two relating to mundane development and the other three to spiritual development. I'll keep my eye open for further material in the course of my reading, but it has occurred to me to try and say a bit more about these in a more systematic way. But I shall need a bit longer.

Then

> *Is the Eye of Truth the same as the opening of the 'Third Eye'?*

We don't really get this expression, the 'Third Eye', in Buddhism. We get it, of course, in Lobsang Rampa! That's perhaps rather another matter. But both in Buddhism and in Hinduism, deities, in the case of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and others are represented actually with a third eye, that is to say an eye in the middle of the forehead. I don't know, though, that that represents any higher faculty in particular. It could represent the divyacaksu, could represent the dharmacaksu - it just represents some higher faculty in a general, even a vague, way.
You could, of course, speak of the Eye of Truth as the opening of the Third Eye, and in view of the associations with Lobsang Rampa perhaps we'd better avoid that.

> *What do you develop as an arahant to get up to the stage of opening the Universal Eye? In the original classification, was only Sakyamuni Buddha regarded as being capable of reaching this stage, since arahatship appears to have been regarded as the end of the spiritual path in the Hinayana?*

There's an important general point to be made here, which is that in the Buddha's own day it doesn't seem that a hard-and-fast distinction was made between his Enlightenment and the Enlightenment of the disciples. That distinction, at least in a hard-and-fast way, it seems came to be made only later. In what seem to be the earlier parts of the Pali Canon. the only real difference between the Buddha and his disciples, his Enlightened disciples, seems to be that he attained Enlightenment without the help of a teacher, whereas they have attained it with the help of a teacher. But with regard to the actual content of the Enlightenment experience there seems to be no difference. None the less, even the Enlightened disciples were very conscious that the Buddha was their teacher, and that difference seems to have been emphasised more and more as the centuries went by, until arahantship came to be considered something very, very much inferior to supreme Buddhahood. And then, of course, you got the Bodhisattva Ideal developing, as the path to that infinitely higher supreme Buddhahood. So in a way the whole perspective of Buddhist spiritual life was distorted to some extent.

So what is the content of this universal vision? Perhaps we shouldn't bother too much about it, since it's probably quite a long way off. But it's universal, it's *samantra*, it has no limit; perhaps this is the most important thing that we can say about it. It's unlimited from the transcendental point of view, inasmuch as it doesn't represent just one aspect of the Transcendental experience but every aspect. There's Wisdom, there's Compassion, there's purity, there's everything. But also it's universal with respect to the universe itself. It sees the whole

universe, and it sees it in its reality; and probably here we have to bring in the Mahayana teaching of *sunyata*. And perhaps also, even more so, the Avatamsaka Sutra's teaching of universal mutual interpenetration; probably, in the last analysis, that really represents the content of the Buddha's universal vision.

It's not that other formulations aren't based on that experience - they are so based - but it's as though the Avatamsaka Sutra's formulation is the most comprehensive and exhaustive. I take it everybody has at least heard of the Avatamsaka Sutra and its teaching? I mentioned about it just a little bit in 'The Eternal Legacy'.

So 'What do you develop as an arahant to get to the stage of opening the Universal Eye'? I suppose the questioner assumes a distinction between arahantship and the Universal Eye, but that distinction rests upon the sort of distortion that I mentioned earlier. It's probably better to distinguish, as it were, two kinds of arahantship: one, the original arahantship of the Buddha's own teaching, which was virtually identical with Supreme Enlightenment, and the other, arahantship as it appears in certain Mahayana sutras as representing a lower and as it were individualistic spiritual ideal. One could say there's no way from that individualistic spiritual ideal to supreme Enlightenment; you're just on the wrong path, it's just a misconception. There's no such thing as that sort of Enlightenment really, it's just a figment of somebody's imagination.

Dayanandi: In the Five Eyes, though, is it a fourth eye, the Buddha Eye, and the fifth eye, the Universal Eye?

S: That's true, yes. Though how does one make the distinction? It becomes quite difficult, doesn't it? What is the list I give? The eye of flesh, the mamsacaksus, then the divyacaksus, then the dharmacaksus , and -

Dayanandi: Then the Buddha eye, then the Universal Eye.

S: Then the Buddha Eye - I think it's sometimes the other way round. But clearly there is some sort of distinction that is quite difficult to perceive between the Buddha Eye and the Universal Eye - can you be more universal than Buddhahood itself? Well, if you have to make a distinction, let's say that maybe the Buddha eye represents the eye that sees everything as sunyata, whereas perhaps - this is only a suggestion - the Universal Eye is the eye that sees everything in terms of the Avatamsaka Sutra's universal mutual interpenetration. It's probably difficult to say there's an actual difference in the experience, but at least there's a difference in the formulation. Buddha Eye is Buddha Eye; presumably it's Samyaksambuddha Eye - could you go higher than that? You could say - this is something that just occurs to me now - that they do represent different aspects, the Buddha Eye being as it were the more subjective aspect, and the Universal Eye the more objective aspect.

But the real, the crucial difference is between the first two eyes and the third eye, because even the fourth and fifth eye are in a way also dharmacaksus - the vision of the Dharma goes even deeper or becomes more universal.

No, there's a prajnacaksu also, isn't there? Yes. (Voices.) Where does that come in?

Sanghadevi: That's the one that should go to the arahant.

S: Well, then, perhaps that does make it simpler, because you've got the mamsacaksu, the eye of flesh; then we've got the divyacaksu, the divine eye; then we've got the dharmacaksu, which is the eye of Insight into Reality, corresponding to Stream Entry. And then we've got the prajnacaksu, which is the wisdom of the arahant, if you distinguish the wisdom of the arahant from the wisdom of the Buddha. And then, perhaps, we've got, you could say, the Buddha Eye, also called the Universal Eye - the Buddha Eye representing the subjective and the Universal Eye the objective aspect, but I've not gone into that ..... in that particular text. One could look at it like that.

Ashokasri: You do say it's the Universal Eye, also known as the Buddha Eye.

S: Oh, I do say that? Ah, yes. But sometimes they are distinguished. Yes, there's more than one list, one might say. But even if they are distinguished, the question still arises: on what basis? So perhaps one could say that the Buddha Eye represents, so to speak, the more subjective aspect and the samantacaksu the more universal. But perhaps one doesn't need to go into it too minutely; as I said, it's clear that the dharmacaksu is the spiritual vision, and it's clear that beyond the spiritual vision of the Stream Entrant there are other, higher levels of spiritual vision, and those are represented - exactly in what way is difficult to make out - by those other caksus: the prajna, the Buddha, and the samanta.

In other words, you could regard all those other eyes as developments of the dharmacaksu. You couldn't possibly - yes, you can regard the divyacaksu as a development of the mamsacaksu, because they are both mundane, aren't they? But you couldn't possibly regard the dharmacaksu as a development of either the mamsacaksu or the divyacaksu, could you? Because they are both mundane, whereas the dharmacaksu is purely Transcendental. But you can certainly regard the Buddha Eye and the samantacaksu, or the prajnacaksu too, as developments of the dharmacaksu, because all are Transcendental; the difference between them is one of degree and one of depth.

So the really important distinctions to bear in mind are the distinctions between the eye of flesh and the - what have I called it, the second one?

Voices: The divine eye.

S: The divine eye, on the one hand, and the divine eye and the eye of the Dharma on the other. Further refinements can be left to look after themselves, as it were. If you develop the dharmacaksu initially and you try to develop that more and more, those other caksus will come into existence, so to speak, automatically. But the dharmacaksu is the one that one should aim at. If you develop the Divine Eye, that's a bonus; it's not so important. And the eye of flesh, of course, you already have. All right:

> *Does the opening of the Universal Eye reflect the more cosmic dimensions of Going for Refuge?*

Well, I suppose logically it must; because if you establish a correlation between different levels of Going for Refuge and different levels of Insight, then there must be, corresponding to the Universal Eye, a corresponding level of Going for Refuge. So if the Universal Eye represents the highest level of all, then clearly the Going for Refuge will be a Going for Refuge, so to speak, to oneself, though not oneself in the original sense of self; it will be Buddha Going for Refuge to Buddha, as I think I say.

> *If you correlate the arising of the Bodhicitta with Stream Entry and the opening of the Dharma Eye, can the Eye of Wisdom and the Universal Eye be correlated with the higher stages of the Bodhisattva Path at all?*

Well, this brings us back to something I said at the beginning, about the distortion, because when the arahant ideal is degraded, so to speak, and becomes the ideal of spiritual individualism, and when the Bodhisattva Path develops in contradistinction to that, then the original trend, original tendency of the path is in a way lost sight of. I've gone into this quite a bit on tape - I don't know whether you're familiar with all that material? I don't want to recapitulate too much, but broadly speaking in the Buddha's original teaching, as far as we know, we have sila, samadhi, prajna. We also have the Noble Eightfold Path. And the Noble Eightfold Path can be reduced to the three siksas, the sila, samadhi, prajna - you're familiar with all that, yes? All right: but then later on you get this rather narrow, individualistic arahant ideal, which was not the original arahant ideal, which was more or less the same thing as Buddhahood. Originally, of course, sila, samadhi, prajna and the Eightfold Path are regarded as means to <u>the</u> goal,

whether conceived of as Buddhahood or arahantship; but when the ideal of arahantship becomes degraded, the three stages of sila, samadhi, prajna and the Eightfold Path are still regarded as stages to arahantship, but in the degraded sense. So you then have to have a path which appears to be different from the path of sila, samadhi, prajna, the Noble Eightfold Path; you have a path to Supreme Buddhahood, and that, of course, is the path of the Bodhisattva, the path of the paramitas.

So therefore it appears, due to this sort of historical development, that there are two paths: one, the path of the arahant, which includes the three siksas and the Eightfold Path, and the other the path of the Bodhisattva, consisting of the ten paramitas and ten bhumis - though to make things more complicated the three siksas and the Eightfold Path are fitted somewhere into that also.

But the two things, broadly speaking, drift apart. So then the question arises of their correlation. But you can't correlate them in that distorted form; you really have to go back to the Buddha's original teaching if you want to bring about an effective correlation. So it all does become rather complicated, unfortunately.

So it's not as though the Bodhisattva path needs to be correlated with, say, the Eightfold Path and all that. If you go back far enough, prior to the period of distortion, the two are really the same; they don't need to be correlated. But in the divided form you can't correlate them, due to the distortion that has taken place.

So really the Bodhisattva Ideal is a restatement of the original, as distinct from the developed or degraded, arahant ideal, and the Bodhisattva path is a restatement of the three siksas and the Eightfold Path. I've made this more or less clear in the Survey.

So where does that leave us with regard to the questions? 'Can the Eye of Wisdom and the Universal Eye be correlated with higher stages of the Bodhisattva Path?' Well, you can only correlate the Eye of Wisdom with the Bodhisattva Path as a separate path if you place arahantship as a stage within the Bodhisattva Path, within the bhumis - which, of course, is sometimes done, though it doesn't fit very easily. But it does all become rather artificial, doesn't it, this trying to make this thing fit into that, and it's all become a bit remote from actual experience.

Pat: Could you not begin to worry too much about it, instead of concentrating on .... ?

S: I suppose you could. But inasmuch as you come across these terms and subdivisions in Buddhist literature, you try to make some sort of sense of them. But I think sometimes, in a way, from a spiritual point of view, you can't make sense of them, because they've been elaborated in a purely theoretical manner by Buddhist thinkers to too great an extent. I think what we have to do is to come back to actual spiritual experience and to the earlier formulations of the Buddha's teaching, and think in those terms. I think it's simpler just to think in terms of the different levels of Going for Refuge, the distinction between the mundane Eightfold Path and the Transcendental Eightfold Path; and think in terms of Stream Entry and opening of the Dharma Eye and seeing that that has an altruistic aspect which can be regarded as represented by the later teaching about the Bodhicitta, and then press on from there.

For instance, if you read a book like Habdayal(?)'s 'The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Sanskrit Buddhist Literature', you can see how complicated the whole thing becomes - when in every bhumi so many teachings are crammed, which the Bodhisattva is regarded as realising or achieving in that particular bhumi, and it's lost all contact with actual spiritual experience. It's Mahayana scolasticism. You sometimes feel that even reading Gampopa's 'Jewel Ornament'; certainly we felt it in Tuscany sometimes, going through certain chapters of that text.

So I think it's very important that we do stay with not just our spiritual experience but spiritual experience in general, and in a sense don't take too

seriously purely theoretical elaborations and analyses and so on.

So when one says that the arising of the Bodhicitta corresponds to the opening of the Dharma Eye, what one means is that that experience which in certain Pali texts is referred to as or described as the opening of the Dharma Eye, corresponds, broadly speaking, to that experience which in Mahayana scriptures is referred to as the arising of the Bodhicitta. Even though it is approximately the same, or, let us say, the same spiritual experience, the angle of approach to it is rather different. Hence the difference of terminology.

In the case of the opening of the Dharma Eye, the emphasis is on vision; the emphasis is on that stage of development as an insight into the nature of Reality; whereas when one uses the language of Bodhicitta the emphasis is on the usefulness of that experience, not only for yourself but for all other living beings. But it is one and the same experience; because unless you have an Insight into Reality, how can you help yourself and other living beings? And if you want to help yourself and other living beings you have to have, ultimately, an Insight into Reality, so the two are inseparable. Therefore the arising of the Bodhicitta is an aspect of the opening of the Dharma Eye, or the opening of the Dharma Eye is an aspect of the Bodhicitta.

And the Mahayana puts things in terms of the arising of the Bodhicitta, which is as it were more altruistic - presumably to counteract the individualistic tendencies that had crept into the spiritual life of Buddhists by the time of the historical emergence of the Mahayana.

In some ways, it's a pity we have to spend time over these things, but it's inevitable when you come at the end of a period of 2,500 years of development of Buddhism! If you'd been around in the Buddha's day you wouldn't have had to bother about all this. It would have been much simpler and more ....

In the Going for Refuge booklet, you speak of the Dharma Eye under its cognitive aspect. I wonder if the development of the Imagination is a better way of looking at opening of the Dharma Eye. I am thinking of Keats' development as a poet in his attempts to understand impermanence and unsatisfactoriness.

I'm not sure that there's a better or a worse way. It's just, I suppose, that certain modes of speech or certain expressions are more appropriate in one context, or in talking to one person or one kind of person, than another. One must also remember that the term imagination can be used in two senses - ah, I see that it has a capital I, as an afterthought; it was originally a small 'i',[Laughter] but it's been changed into a big I. Well, fair enough. It shows whoever asked the question was aware of the difference.

But yes, you can surely speak of the opening of the Dharma Eye in terms of, let us say, the awakening of Imagination with a capital 'I'. But I think you'll have to be very careful to make clear exactly what you mean by 'Imagination' with a capital 'I'. It won't be immediately clear to most people. It really means - Imagination in that sense is the faculty of perceiving archetypes as embodiments of, or as informed by, the Transcendental. I don't think probably even Keats got as far as that.

But yes, speak in terms of Imagination with a capital 'I', by all means, but make clear what one means by that. I think Imagination in the Coleridgean sense, as I sometimes say, is a very useful term indeed. I think in Blake's sense - Blake uses the word Imagination in a quite meaningful sense, doesn't he? Certainly not as meaning fancy. Can anyone think of a quotation from Blake, using the word Imagination? I'm sure there are quite a number. **(Silence.)** No one! [Laughter] We can always look it up in the Blake Dictionary.

You speak in Il Convento about following 'those images which speak to us'. You liken the process to a butterfly following our own personal myth in this way, following our own personal experience of greater truth. Do

you think that this will lead to the opening of the Dharma Eye?

Well, again it depends on an understanding of this difference between the two kinds of imagination, doesn't it? I suppose it's not impossible: some Zen masters are supposed to have experienced Enlightenment after just seeing a leaf fall, or something of that sort. But I think, when I spoke in that way in Il Convento, I was concerned about establishing contacts, establishing connections. It's connected, I think, with the establishing of emotional connections. If, so to speak, you are out of touch with your emotions, it doesn't matter to begin with exactly where you establish contact with your emotions, or what sort of emotions you establish contact with. The important thing is to make some kind of emotional contact. That will lead to other emotional contacts and experiences, and you can then start in terms of refining them or making them more skilful. The original requirement is, or the original need is, to make that emotional contact.

So it's the same, I think, with the imagination. You won't be able all at once to make contact with or awaken your Imagination with a capital 'I', but never mind. Make some sort of contact with the imaginal, some sort of contact with archetypes, regardless of whether they are bearers of any transcendental significance or not. You need to awaken your imagination, and presumably you need to awaken your lower imagination first, and perhaps that will lead you to Imagination in the higher sense. Some people admire even the pictures on chocolate boxes, don't they? Don't discourage them. Maybe that's their only contact with the arts. It's very easy to dismiss people a bit - maybe they like pretty calendars of pussycats and things like that - well, don't discourage them, just encourage them to appreciate something better. The important thing is to make some kind of contact.

So when you go to an art gallery, don't bother about these three stars and four stars and all that sort of business, don't bother whether the painting's by a famous artist; do you like it? Does it speak to you? Does it mean anything to you? Concentrate on those paintings that do mean something to you. Make that kind of contact. Don't concentrate on what you ought to like or ought to admire or ought to appreciate. Never mind if it's by some third-rate painter. If you like it, that's a very important thing. And sometimes the work of quite minor painters, at certain moments of our lives, appeals to us much more than the works of the greatest artists. The same with writers. It's not always the great classics that appeal to us; sometimes it's a quite minor writer who really appeals to us and really means something to us. Never mind; follow that up. Even if it's Barbara Cartland! (Forget about her.) [Laughter]

Apart from the lady just mentioned, has anyone discovered any quite minor writer - a good writer, but not one of the great classics - who has appealed to them? From a literary point of view, not psychology or something of that sort. Can anyone - ?

Pat: I like Ray Bradbury, which is a science fiction writer, but it's really poetic, to me it's poetry, the way he writes.

S: The name is vaguely familiar, but I haven't read any of his writings. Anybody else? Any poet, or novelist? .....?

Sanghadevi: An American-Chinese woman, Maxime Hingston (?).

S: I must say I haven't heard of her. But you think she's good?

Sanghadevi: Mm. Unfortunately, she's only written three books, and I'm waiting. I'm hoping she'll write some more.

S: A minor writer whom I appreciated years ago was Mark Rutherford. He wrote at the end of the last century, ... He is definitely a minor writer, but a quite good writer: he led a rather sad life and lost his Christian faith but didn't really find anything to replace it. And his books are very well written, slightly

mournful. Some of them deal with poor working-class life - but are very honest books, that is what appeals to me about them, and well written. Another fairly minor writer whom I like is Frederick Rolfe: he wrote 'Hadrian the Seventh', and one I read more recently, 'The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole' - a very strange work, but very beautifully written. He isn't particularly - neither of them are particularly well known. You'll find them in the 'Oxford Companion to English Literature', but they're not names that are on everybody's lips by any means, not even in the FWBO.

So, yes, I think the minor writers and minor painters are not to be underestimated. If one makes a connection with one or another of them, that's very good. So let the butterfly flit on its way. You remember why it was I used this image of the butterfly? - because the butterfly, according to Yeats at least, follows a zigzag path - in other words, not a logical path. You're not following logic and reason, you're just following your feelings, which may not necessarily take you in a straight line. This is the wisdom of the butterfly, though not a greedy bird of prey.

> *5. If you are continuously open to change from Stream Entry onwards, what factors come into play that determine the rate at which you progress?*

This has been the subject of discussion in a book I read recently, or rather started to read recently, which is quite interesting. The author almost seems to suggest that, according to the Pali Scriptures, once you gain Stream Entry, that's it: not that you are there - but of course you will never regress; but, according to tradition, it will not take you more than seven more lifetimes - it could take less - to reach full Enlightenment. So he raises the discussion: what makes that difference? Because you can't regress, you can only go forward; so why do some go forward more quickly than others? And the answer <u>he</u> gives, which according to him is based on the Pali Scriptures - I haven't had a chance yet to go into it properly - is in a sense karma, your past conditioning. Some people have a heavier mundane conditioning, so to speak, than others, so that when they reach Stream Entry it takes longer for that Insight to burn through or break through their conditioning in some cases than in others. And that determines the amount of time it will take you to reach full Enlightenment. It is not a question of effort so much as a question of the amount of psychological conditioning that that Insight has to undo.

One can see there is something in that; that may be the answer to the question. Because we do know from our own experience, our own contact, that some people have an enormous backlog, don't they, of psychological problems and difficulties, even from this present life? And it really does mean they do sometimes have a definite insight - maybe it isn't Insight with a big 'I', but they do know where they stand and they are working on things; and perhaps their Insight isn't less than the next person's, but they have a much more difficult time because they've got so much more to work on, so clearly it will take them longer to reach the ultimate goal than those people who, with the same Insight, have got much less to work upon.

So the image that occurred to me was that of acid. A drop of acid can fall on a certain substance, and it can burn its way through it very quickly, or eat its way through it very quickly. The same drop of acid fallen on another kind of substance will be able to eat its way through it much more slowly. But it's the same drop of acid. So Insight seems to be like that. So this is why - I discussed this at length with an Order member recently in a quite interesting way - this means that you can have an actual Insight, and even perhaps be a Stream Entrant, but still have a lot of problems, in the sense that you've a lot to work on, a lot that still bothers you. But none the less, Insight is there, and all the time it is working away, is eating away at these problems, at this psychological conditioning. Once Insight has arisen, you don't necessarily have an easy time, but at least uncertainty is gone. It's as though you've actually got some firm ground on which to stand, even though there are still some storms raging all round you.

So I think it's quite important to remember that, because sometimes people think

that unless all your problems are resolved and you're always peaceful and happy and calm and mindful, you haven't made any spiritual progress and you haven't got any Insight; that is not the case. You can have a quite genuine Insight into things, and be even in a sense quite spiritually advanced -

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- this particular Order member - he found what I said quite helpful, because he is a man of some maturity and some insight but none the less in a sense he still has things to cope with or to struggle with, and he was rather puzzled by this, and wondered whether it invalidated his Insight, the fact that the still had to cope with all these difficulties. But I said no, because even if someone attains Stream Entry, it's so to speak only Stream Entry; Insight is there, but you've still a long way to go. And what does it mean, the fact that you've still got a long way to go? Problems, difficulties, unskilful mental states - that's what it means. It means that part of your being, so to speak, if you can speak in this way, is purified, but not the whole of it; and it's the unpurified part of your being that gives you the trouble. But you have as it were to accept this, and accept that, yes, you have some measure of understanding, some measure of Insight, some measure of spiritual progress, but it doesn't mean that the difficulties are over, or the struggles are over, or even sometimes that the unhappiness is over. But more and more that will be the case.

Otherwise sometimes people tend to feel a bit of despair if things aren't on a completely even keel the whole time. I remember there's a Christian mystic - I forget who he was, I forget the exact words - but he said something to this effect - the words are supposed to be addressed by God to him, God is supposed to say: 'I did not promise that you would not be tempted. I only promised that you would not give way to temptation.' So it's a bit like that. The fact that you've developed Insight doesn't mean that unskilful mental states won't attack you, but it does mean that the unskilful mental states will never completely overwhelm you. There'll be some residue, something in you which stands absolutely firm despite everything - this is what it really means - and that is not shaken, not moved, whatever happens to you, so to speak.

Vidyasri: I was really struck in this book, 'The Life of the Buddha', that after the Buddha's Enlightenment Mara appeared several times and in this book it's quite noticeable that for something like about the first seven years Mara appears constantly, but the Buddha just isn't shaken.

S: Right. It's almost as though - this is in a way heretical - there's a little corner of the Buddha's being, the Buddha's personality, that isn't quite transformed by the Enlightenment experience. That process goes on. But I think I've made the point before that one mustn't think that the Buddha was fully Enlightened at one particular instant, so that, say, at 12 o'clock he was unenlightened but at one minute past 12 he was fully Enlightened; not like that. It's as though the process took some time - weeks, months, even perhaps years, for that Enlightenment experience to fully permeate every aspect of his being. And so it may be this is the significance of those Mara episodes, at least in those years immediately after the Enlightenment - possibly. It's an interesting way of looking at it. Because why should he appear? You could say he can't see that the Buddha is Enlightened, he can't see that there's no hope; but Mara also, perhaps, has a subjective aspect; there's certainly a Buddhist tradition to that effect, except that there's four Maras, and one of them is klesa-Mara - Mara as the personification of the defilements.

Pat: I find that very encouraging, ... but why should some - how does it happen that over lifetimes some people have a heavier karma? It sort of -

S: It's because of all the naughty things you've done!

Pat: I know! But why should some people be more inclined to naughty things than others?

S: In a sense, there's no answer to that, because karma is beginningless. But it certainly does seem, as you come into contact with people, that some of them have a heavier burden from the past. I've really felt this sometimes. I've known people for whom everything seems to go wrong, due to no fault of their own, again and again and again, and you can't help wondering why. I knew someone like that in Kalimpong. In the most extraordinary ways things would go wrong for her, and they'd never go wrong for me in that kind of way, or for anybody else that I knew. For instance, she'd get home late at night and find she'd lost her keys. Things like that were constantly happening to her. Or she was robbed. Or she'd get on the wrong train, after making careful enquiries and being told by the porter 'That's the train.' I remember all sorts of incidents. Nothing like that ever happened to me. I'm not claiming any - you know - [Laughter] ..... good karma, but it did seem that in the case of this person, and others I've known - even some people we know in the FWBO, but in their case it's mostly from this life itself - seems to be such a big and heavy battle, they've so much to cope with, much more than others. But their insight, their understanding, their commitment, may be no less than that of other people. They've just got more to work with, more to undo.

Vidyasri: Maybe this is a silly question - how can you recognise whether it is that your commitment is no less but you've got more to work with, or it's actually you just haven't got enough commitment?

S: Well, you can know, perhaps, that your commitment is no less than some other person's, though you have more to work on, just when you get to know that other person more deeply. And it'll be acknowledged between you that, with regard to commitment and perhaps Insight, there's nothing to choose between you, but one of you has a much more difficult time than the other. So it may be even understood among a group of people, so to speak, that - yes, there's not much to choose between you as regards commitment and spiritual development, in a way, and Insight, but none the less some do have a much more difficult time than others do. I think it's important to bear this in mind and not think that if a particular Order member, say, even a Mitra, is having a difficult time, they are necessarily either less committed or have less Insight. It is not necessarily the case.

But anyway, you also asked about distinguishing between - what was it? Just having a heavier backlog, as it were, and actually not being committed. I think you'll know that within yourself, whether you are making as much effort as you could. I think if you ask yourself you will know whether that is the case or not, or your spiritual friends may be able to tell you - say 'well it isn't that you've got such a heavy backlog of past karma or psychological conditioning or unfortunate experiences: you are just not making enough effort'. They may well be able to tell you that. But none the less that point does hold good, that with no less Insight or sincerity or commitment than others, you may be having a much more difficult time on account of what you bring over with you from the past.

Look at Angulimala: even as an arahant, he was stoned by people. He had to bear that on account of his crimes committed in this life itself, but that didn't detract from his Enlightenment, even though he had to endure what were on the physical level very painful experiences, he was still Enlightened. The Buddha was still Enlightened when the fragment of stone pierced his foot; it didn't detract from his Enlightenment. So one can have the same thing even on the mental plane, you may be struggling with unskilful mental states, they may be very strong, but none the less the certain basic Insight and commitment is not affected. In the words of the famous poet, your 'head is bloody but unbowed'. And maybe some of you have sometimes felt like that.
Anyway, let's press on.

> *If the arising of the Bodhicitta is this immensely powerful impulse towards Enlightenment for the benefit of all, in what sense can one talk of the Bodhisattva falling back into individual Enlightenment, prior to the stage of irreversibility of the seventh bhumi? Is the arising of the Bodhicitta akin to having a flash of vision, but that vision can be overlaid, not developed, if the conditions are not supportive - i.e. there*

is the Path of Vision and the Path of Transformation?

Well, this is a question which arises out of the historical development which I mentioned earlier. Dropping the terms Bodhisattva and arahant and all the historical developments, and just putting the matter quite straightforwardly, if you've achieved Stream Entry, or if the Dharma Eye is opened, or if the Bodhicitta has arisen, but if you've reached that point of no return, there is no question of your adopting a basically individualistic attitude towards the spiritual path and the spiritual life. It is impossible, you might say. Not that your individualism has been altogether overcome in practice - yes, because you're not fully Enlightened; but inasmuch as Insight is there, you will not accept, in the light of that Insight, an individualistic spiritual ideal. So there will be no question of your falling back. There is no such thing, really, as individual, in the sense of individualistic, Enlightenment; that's a misunderstanding. So you will not be guilty of that misunderstanding after real Insight has arisen.

The traditional Bodhisattva path, which considers that path as distinct from the arahant path - that is the so to speak degraded arahant path - can think of the Bodhisattva as falling back before he reaches irreversibility in the sense of the irreversibility of a Bodhisattva to the lower ideal; but that sort of experience is not possible in reality, one might say.

Sanghadevi: You still could be having to work on individualistic tendencies in yourself, but you'd have actually had quite a deep experience but overall that isn't how you want to function. (?)

S: Right. Because inasmuch as there's no real difference, in the light of the Buddha's own teaching, between supreme Buddhahood and arahantship, there can't really be a falling back from one as distinct from a falling back from the other, or irreversibility for the one as distinct from irreversibility for the other. Those two kinds of irreversibility really represent a quite false distinction, inasmuch as the separate ideal of supreme Enlightenment and the separate ideal of individualistic arahantship represent a false distinction. There's only one irreversibility, which is from the experience which we can best call Stream Entry - though not taking that in a Hinayanistic sense, but in the original sense.

Sanghadevi: Seems like these Mahayana scholars [were] wasting their time and energy.

S: Well, they didn't waste in their own time, because they had somehow to get back to the Buddha's original teaching; but not having, in those days, a historical sense, they couldn't as it were say that in the course of historical development the Hinayana's got rather off the path, you've got to go back to what the Buddha originally taught; no, they couldn't do that. They accepted the Hinayana teaching as it was, as the Buddha's teaching, but they believed that the Buddha had taught, in addition, a higher teaching. That higher teaching they regarded as the Mahayana.

So one could say that the whole trouble arises out of the lack of a historical sense on the part of those ancient Indian Buddhists. We have that historical sense, it's very strong in that sense, but therefore it is difficult for us to see what happened. But then it does become rather difficult when the different forms of Mahayana and the spiritual life are cast in those particular moulds. We have to unfreeze them, as it were, or melt them down, melt them back into the Buddha's original teachings. So if some Tibetan teacher comes along, and basing himself on his tradition says, well, first of all you think in terms of individual Enlightenment, and when you've reached that you start thinking about Enlightenment for the benefit of all - well, we can't really take that seriously, can we?

7. Can you elaborate more on what you have meant when you said the Bodhicitta is more likely to arise among a collection of individuals? Is it that a collective momentum of spiritual intensity is built up, and the Bodhicitta arises in one or two of these people, and a few more of these people, or do you mean it arises in all of them simultaneously? Do these

individuals have to be peers, spiritually speaking, or do they have to be literally living and/or working together?

I don't think there's any hard and fast rule. What I was thinking of - I haven't been able to find satisfactory language for this - but if you have a number of people together, or, if you like, working together, and if the relation between them, the communication between them, is sufficiently intense, something will happen; something that one of them by himself or herself could not have achieved or could not have achieved without much more difficulty. This is the sort of thing I'm getting at. You know, sometimes it happens in the course of discussion, doesn't it? (*Murmurs of assent*) - that you have a really good discussion; you spark one another off. It's not easy to spark yourself off. So it's that sort of thing I'm thinking about.

So it's not just with regard to ideals - I think even Insights, can arise in that way. Sometimes among a group of peers, sometimes between someone who is more spiritually developed and someone who is less, as in the case of the exchanges between Zen masters and their disciples. So I think it's basically a matter of people sparking one another off, and the Bodhicitta is one of those sparks, as it were - or one of the biggest of those sparks. Is that clear?

And there is, yes, a sort of collective momentum or spiritual intensity, as the question puts it, that is built up among a number of people, and then as I said something happens.

Ashokasri: Would you say that it arose within maybe a couple of those people, and reflections of it arose in other people?

S: Yes, of course, within the group there will be degrees of intensity. There are some who are participating more intensely than others. If there are, say, a dozen people present, there will be three or four, perhaps, who are communicating much more intensely, and they do the sparking off. But others catch something from it. This can definitely happen. And when we have our study group leaders' retreats for men, there are nowadays 20 or more present, which is really dreadful in a way, it's far too big, but we can't do anything about it - but fortunately, in a way, the discussion always goes on between six or seven people. They are the people who really ask the questions, who really are a bit challenging or really try to probe more deeply into things.
So, yes, sometimes something is sparked off. But everybody in a way participates, because everybody is listening and everybody is receptive in varying degrees. So this also can happen within a particular group or spiritual community; and often it happens between those people who know one another best, and obviously one will know one another better if you've worked together or you live in a spiritual community together. You know one another's minds better.

8. You have commented recently that you do not see enough Bodhisattva spirit in the Order. Do you think one of the reasons is that we do not expect a strong enough degree of objective Going for Refuge from someone when they are accepted for ordination?

I'm not sure about this. This view has been expressed recently, but I must say I'm not sure about it. I think it's important that Bodhisattva spirit is real Bodhisattva spirit. That is quite different from doing things, however genuinely or efficiently or effectively, out of a sense of duty; Bodhisattva spirit means something different. Well, in the full sense it means Stream Entry. So you can't expect people to be Stream Entrants before they are accepted for ordination.

I've sometimes wished that there was more outwardgoingness in the Order, but on the other hand the outwardgoingness must be from a deeper level, from actual experience, not outwardgoingness in a purely activistic, social work type of way. And it does take time for people to develop spiritual experience and spiritual maturity. I don't think you can really expect someone, say, fresh from Tuscany or fresh from this retreat to go and fling themselves into some objective situation

as though they were real Bodhisattvas. I think that would be unrealistic. Yes, to help out in certain practical ways, but they need to mature a lot, think a lot, reflect a lot, study a lot, meditate a lot, communicate a lot, before they can be outwardgoing really and truly from any depth of experience. So I think perhaps people shouldn't be encouraged to be outwardgoing prematurely, otherwise it will be just a pseudo-Bodhisattva spirit.

I know that we really do need people to be more outwardgoing, and I'd love to see, say, at least 100 more Centres in Britain, but people have to be really ready to do that.

Vidyasri: So when you say this about not enough Bodhisattva spirit in the Order, then -

S: Perhaps I shouldn't be taken too literally, but I certainly do think that in the Movement as a whole there are at least some Order members and some Mitras who could do more than they are doing at present. Perhaps I don't really mean very much more than that. I see the urgency of the need very clearly; sometimes I feel sorry that others don't seem to see it so clearly. That would certainly encourage the emergence of more Bodhisattva spirit. I get a little disappointed when I see some Order members whiling away the time, not really doing very much that is useful, either to themselves or to others. There aren't many of them, but there are a few at least. There shouldn't be even any, shouldn't be one.

How can we help more people to develop a genuine care for others?

I think they've got to be able to look at other people; they've got to be able to forget their own problems, in a sense, just forget themselves; be more aware of other people, and feel more for other people. I don't know how you teach people that. I suppose you teach them that with the help of mindfulness in general, including the Mindfulness of Breathing. But point out to them when they are insensitive, or even blind, with regard to other people.

Vidyasri: It seems that that's what's needed, isn't it? If it's not enough to encourage people to act out of a sense of duty, the only way to do all this is -

S: It's really Insight or vision. A genuine care for others - that means being able to see that others have a need, and you can't see the needs of others if you are too obsessed with your own needs, if you are too self-centred. And you can't see the needs of others if you don't have some kind of spiritual vision, at least in a rudimentary way. So the only real way to help more people to develop a genuine care for others is just to encourage people in a more intensive practice of the spiritual life. There's really no other way, especially, as you say, 'a genuine care for others', not just doing good in a do-gooder sort of way or a social work sort of way; something more genuinely based. There are no short cuts, I'm afraid.

Do you think there is something inherent in the Tuscany process which, whilst encouraging people very rightly to deepen their own practice and spiritual experience, does not bring out the Bodhisattva aspect enough?

I'm not really sure how one distinguishes between these two. Because if on an ordination retreat you commit yourself, well to the extent that you commit yourself genuinely, to the extent that you Go for Refuge genuinely, the Bodhisattva aspect is there, isn't it? It's inseparable. Perhaps people are thinking a bit too much in terms of results. I do know that quite a few people do leave the Tuscany process just wanting, really, to get down to more study and meditation. I don't see that as a bad thing at all. I don't see it as selfish or individualistic because there's lots of work to be done. I see it more as providing a firmer foundation for real work, perhaps a little later on.

I think perhaps what people need to be warned against when they come away from Tuscany or any ordination retreat, or even any retreat at all, is just getting distracted. In the course of a retreat, even a weekend retreat, you build up something. It's very easy to dissipate that when you get back into the big city - assuming you haven't had your retreat in the big city itself. Sometimes people,

even coming back from Tuscany, get distracted within two or three days, and that's really quite sad - maybe not seriously distracted, but more than they really need to. I think one must be really careful to, so to speak, preserve whatever you gain in the course of retreat. I think that's the biggest danger. You're safest, of course, if you go straight back into a spiritual community - a strong spiritual community - and don't have too much to do for a while around the Centre, because even around the Centre there are distractions. Well, people are distracting, aren't they? People are the biggest distractions - some of them, anyway.

It's not a skilful thing, for instance, if an Order member comes off an ordination retreat, or if anyone comes off retreat, that you at once invite them to a rather wild party. It's not a skilful thing to do. Maybe I'm putting it a bit strongly or exaggerating a little bit; I don't think there are too many wild parties these days - but one or two, I think. But it's not a skilful thing to invite someone who's just come back from retreat. It's the last thing that they should do - go to a party, perhaps, however innocent.

> *In the ordination ceremony, we say: 'For the benefit of all beings I accept this ordination.' Do you think this other- regarding aspect could be drawn out more, perhaps by being commented on along with the Ten Precepts by the person conducting the ordination ceremony?*

Perhaps; though I have made the point that the Ten Precepts really all have an another-regarding aspect, don't they? I've made that point, I think, in 'The Ten Pillars' . And one is doing metā bhavana all the time. So I just wonder whether this is correct. Yes, all the different aspects of whatever you call it - Going for Refuge or commitment - need to be drawn out, but I think we shouldn't think of this Bodhisattva aspect as a separate something, because if you really do commit yourself, really do Go for Refuge, that altruistic aspect is there anyway. But it may take time to manifest, because you aren't yet fully mature, don't perhaps have all that much to offer, certainly in the way of, say, teaching or functioning around the Centre.

I think we have to avoid thinking of the ordination process as a means of preparing people for working in Centres; that's not so. The purpose of the ordination retreats is to prepare people or help people to commit themselves to the Three Jewels. How that commitment manifests is another matter. But we shouldn't think of the ordination retreats as directly geared to the needs of Centres. Some people may go straight off to Vajraloka or Taraloka and just spend most of their time meditating and studying. One could not say, therefore, that they didn't have any Bodhisattva spirit. I'm sure there's lots of things for Bodhisattvas to do in meditation and retreat centres.

I think sometimes it seems to boil down almost to people saying: 'Unless people come back from Tuscany willing to throw themselves into the nearest co-op, they haven't really committed themselves!' But I'm afraid that's saying or expecting a bit too much.

Vidyasri: And yet, at the same time, you have made a lot of point in recent months or years about the lack of people's awareness of the objective situation, ... could do, so -

S: That is true. But I don't want to say that they must do specific things. Someone's awareness of the needs of the objective situation and the terrible state of the world might lead them to decide to devote their whole lives to meditation in a cave for the good of humanity. They might genuinely feel that was the most adequate response. It is not that they have therefore got to go and work in a co-op or a Centre in a particular way. I think sometimes people working in co-ops quite naturally feel so great a need for workers that they are very disappointed when workers don't come straight off the ordination retreats and straight into the co-ops. One can understand their disappointment sometimes, but again one has to leave every committed person free to decide for himself or

herself what form their commitment will take.

But, having said that, it is true there are people who could do more. There is a distinction between a weak commitment and a commitment which is strong but doesn't find expression in the way that you perhaps would like it to find, or in which it would be convenient for you to find.

It means sometimes people's perceptions of the needs of the objective situation are different: someone newly ordained may take a look around the Movement and may think the greatest need is not for people working in co-ops, the greatest need is for more meditators; and he might go off and do just that. He is not being self-indulgent, he is acting in accordance with his perception of the real objective needs of the situation. So one has to respect that.

If, of course, someone comes back and is just lazing around and not doing anything in particular, then one might say he or she is not really aware of the objective needs of the situation; but not otherwise. You have to be really quite sure they were just lazing around. They might be doing something quite different.

Vidyasri: Just recently Devamitra visited the LBC, and he commented to me that he found it very noticeable that he thought that not very many of the women Mitras were really interested in the Dharma, because they didn't aspire to be Dharma teachers and didn't express that. And he was struck at the varied interests that people seemed to have. And he seemed to definitely imply that this indicated that most of these people weren't being very wholehearted or very committed to their spiritual practice and the Dharma.

S: Well, a Mitra is a Mitra; a Mitra isn't an Order member. I know we are upgrading all the time, but perhaps one doesn't really expect a Mitra to be fully committed to the spiritual life or fully committed to the Dharma. I think what Devamitra was noticing was the number of women who got involved in alternative medicine, in the arts and so on, rather than in the Dharma, rather than in studying the Dharma. Maybe he is right to take note of that, and right to be concerned, but I think also there's another aspect, which is the question of means of livelihood; because, one, people don't really like to be on the dole and shouldn't be on the dole; and, two, it is a practical question, what about the means of livelihood? So I think some people in the Movement, including a number of women, are taking this quite seriously, and they've looked about for a means of livelihood whereby they could support themselves, and which would also be Right Livelihood, and they've decided on these things.

So while they are studying and qualifying themselves they aren't able to give so much time to attending classes and so on. But that doesn't necessarily mean that their basic involvement or commitment is any the less. It might in some cases; in some cases it might indicate a relative lack of interest in the Dharma, but in other cases it might not.

But sometimes one does wonder, at least one wonders: 'So-and-so is doing, say, evening classes in painting, and she goes along to pottery classes, and she's also studying acupuncture - well, how deeply is she involved with the Dharma?' You can't help wondering. But then people take their own time, don't they? And so long as people maintain their contact and they are in contact with you personally, with Order members personally, and they do go along to a Mitra study group, perhaps one can't really insist on more than that. One must be careful not to push people too hard in the wrong way. Though it would be nice, it would be lovely to have them more fully involved with the Dharma, clamouring for ordination and committing themselves to co-ops for years on end - it would be lovely. But then you can't push people. At the most you can just try and stir up those who seem to be a bit lazy.

You can't help wishing sometimes that there were more people around, perhaps, when you do actually see there's so much to be done and maybe when you yourself are working very hard or perhaps even overworking. You can't help sometimes wondering why it is that others are not prepared to throw themselves

in more wholeheartedly, why they can go gaily off to an art class and leave you to do all the cooking and washing up. You can't help wondering sometimes.

I think also, touching on these more peripheral things, one has to be sure oneself, if one does get into the arts or go along to art classes, that it isn't just a sort of dilettante interest, it isn't just a sort of escape from anything deeper or more genuine or more demanding. I sometimes wonder if one's interest in the arts can be very superficial, you just tinker with them, and not take them really seriously, don't really relate them to your own growth and development. It's almost just a way of passing the time in some cases. I think that has to be avoided, and if you see a Mitra involved in that way, I think you do have the duty to try to get them to see that. Or if you see an Order member involved in that way.

> *Bearing in mind the comparatively small size of the Order, is it valid for an Order member to pursue their own interests for several years?*

Well, really that's the same question, isn't it?

And *Is there a time or times in one's spiritual development when it is necessary to withdraw for a longer period of time from external activities in order to go deeper in one's practice?*

I think from time to time everybody needs to withdraw, whether Order members or Mitras. You need a period of withdrawal - it may be for a weekend, it may be for a week, it may be for a month. If you have been working for years and years, it may be a whole year; you may need a whole [year's] sabbatical. However inspiring the work that you're doing, whether you're working around a Centre or working in a co-op, I think from time to time you do need to be quieter, you do need to devote more time to meditation, you do need to be more solitary. So I think there has to be a natural rhythm of engagement and withdrawal, engagement and withdrawal; with perhaps shorter and more intense periods of withdrawal and of engagement. I think that's the broad answer to that question.

The questioner speaks of 'one's own interests' - well, what does one mean by 'one's own interests'? If you're studying acupuncture, is that just your interest? Well, it relates to other people, doesn't it? If you're studying, say, painting, is that just your own interest, or has it a significance for the Movement too? Could you not produce thangkas? Could you not produce images? A lot depends on your motivation, whether you go into it as a distraction and an escape or as a real, genuine aspect of your spiritual life. It is that that needs to be probed, not if someone goes to art classes it is necessarily their own interest in a narrow, subjective, selfish way; that is not necessarily the case, though it may be. Sometimes these activities are a means of people getting in touch with their own emotions, etc., and that may be necessary before they can go any further at all. One has to look at that too. It's not easy to lay down general rules. One should look in each case at the individual person, where they're at and what they are doing, what the effect of what they are doing or proposing to do will be on them.

I think I'll answer one of these and then leave the rest for tomorrow, because one pertains to what we've been already discussing, and the other questions go on to a different area.

> *In your original talk, 'Levels of Going for Refuge', you distinguished between cultural Going for Refuge and provisional Going for Refuge. In the talk on 'Going for Refuge' you gave in Bombay, you do not make this distinction. Was this for the purposes of that particular talk, or do you no longer think it is appropriate to speak of these two levels?*

No, actually, I used the terms 'cultural Going for Refuge' and 'provisional Going for Refuge' for the same level, which I also called 'ethnic Going for Refuge'. I think 'provisional' probably isn't a very good term; probably 'ethnic' or 'cultural' are better, more appropriate terms for that particular first level of Going for Refuge, when you just repeat the words of Going for Refuge, perhaps without very much idea of what it's all about, just because -

(End of Tape 2, Tape 3)

.....joins in the Sevenfold Puja, including reciting the Refuges and Precepts, but just does it quite happily and with some positive emotion because everybody else is doing it.

Sanghadevi: ..... needs have Mitras and Friends lumped into cultural/ethnic categories? (?)

S: Well, if one has categories at all, there are sure to be intermediate categories, as it were. I'm sure that some people do just happily join in in that way. On the other hand, there might be people who have been Mitras for years and thinking very seriously about Going for Refuge. So it's not so much a question of who fits where, but the actual levels themselves.

Sanghadevi: So you wouldn't bother about those two separate levels in the original talk? The point I'm making is that when you first gave that talk at an Order Convention you spoke of the cultural Going for Refuge, the provisional Going for Refuge, the effective Going for Refuge, the real Going for Refuge and the cosmic Going for Refuge.

S: I can't remember that. Does that mean that there's five levels of Going for Refuge?

Sanghadevi: There were five levels, because there was cultural, provisional, effective -

S: I think in a way provisional is redundant. I think it's covered by ethnic and cultural, which basically means that you repeat the words without fully understanding their significance, just because everybody in your group or in your culture is doing that. So in a way it's provisional, because it does provide some kind of basis for the next level, but maybe provisional isn't a very good term.

You could if you liked say that Mitras are halfway between. But I'm concerned to distinguish the actual levels rather than tie the levels to particular groups of people, necessarily; though obviously one expects the Order member at least to have the effective Going for Refuge; hopefully, in due course, the real Going for Refuge.

Anyway, shall we leave it there, then?

(End of session)

Tape 3, Side 2

Day 2

Sangharakshita: Before we start on today's questions, I was trying to think back to my talk on 'Levels of Going for Refuge', and trying to remember why I used the term 'provisional' Going for Refuge - you remember we talked about it and the difference between the provisional and the ethnic. As far as I remember, when I spoke originally of provisional Going for Refuge, I had in mind the ex-Untouchable Buddhists in India. I think I did, I'm not absolutely certain but I think I did. And I think that I had them in mind for this reason: because quite a lot of them, at least originally, in fact the vast majority of them, simply took the Refuges and Precepts quite blindly. they didn't really understand what they were doing. So their Going for Refuge wasn't an ethnic or cultural Going for Refuge, in the sense that Buddhism was not part of their culture, they weren't ethnic Buddhists, they weren't 'born Buddhists', they were being converted to Buddhism; but they were being converted to it on a very superficial group level, without any real understanding at all. None the less, that could be a basis, if they were so fortunate as to come into contact with Buddhist teaching, for an effective Going for Refuge. So in that sense I called it provisional. So in a sense, there

is a difference between ethnic Going for Refuge and provisional Going for Refuge, and again in a sense there isn't, because they are both on the same level.

But inasmuch as the ethnic Going for Refuge is the Going for Refuge of someone born into Buddhist surroundings, and inasmuch as the provisional Going for Refuge is the Going for Refuge of someone not born into Buddhist surroundings but being converted to Buddhism in a very superficial manner, there is that difference but at the same time they can be compared. The level is the same, but the point of departure is ..... Maybe that makes it a bit clear.

So you could have, as it were, you could make a sort of diagram with provisional Going for Refuge coming from this angle and ethnic Going for Refuge coming from that angle, and coming together. Then you have the effective Going for Refuge, then the real Going for Refuge, then the Absolute Going for Refuge. It would be like that. It would be like a little stick man as it were without head and without arms, just to make it clearer.

All right, let's pass on to today's questions.

> *What are other Buddhist groups' response to the Western Buddhist Order regarding Going for Refuge? Can you see us affecting other Buddhists' attitude towards Going for Refuge?*

At present we don't have, really, much information about the response of other Buddhist groups in this respect. I think in the long run we will affect the attitude of other Buddhists towards Going for Refuge; I think they are already beginning to realise, some of them, that we do take the Going for Refuge quite seriously, and a couple of weeks ago I found in an Eastern Buddhist magazine an article which among other things dealt with the Going for Refuge. It was by a Sinhalese Buddhist monk, and he certainly dealt with it in a way that I'm sure he would not have dealt with it, say, 10 or 15 years ago. I do know that that particular monk does see the *Golden Drum,* or *the Newsletter* as it was, so it is quite possible that there was some influence there. That's just one particular example.

That's not to say that other Buddhist groups may necessarily admit that they are being influenced by us, but none the less I think it is inevitable that they will begin to take the Going for Refuge more seriously, just because of our very strong emphasis on that.

> *Have you had any correspondence in the last few years indicating that other Buddhists respect or are inspired by our approach?*

I think yes, it's mostly done by way of response to Subhuti's book. Subhuti's book evoked a very positive response - other than the reviews, of course! The reviews seem to have been mostly written by people with axes to grind, but after all he's sold, I think, 5,000 or more copies to date, and he has some very good letters from a number of different countries, and people have spoken to him about his book - that is, the first one. So I think quite a few people have a better idea about the FWBO and what it stands for than they had before. I think in that way Subhuti's book has done quite a service. But none the less I do really want him to write this little booklet on the Order, along the lines of the little booklet about the co-ops, if you remember that: that is to say, something quite basic, quite simple - four to five thousand words, no more - and well illustrated; making clear exactly what is the Western Buddhist Order, what the Refuges mean to us, what Precepts we observe, what we study, what our practice is, what sort of meditation we do, the relation between the Order and the FWBOs. I think that will be very helpful. Because I think we are a bit of a mystery to a lot of Buddhists, because they are so set in their own ways, it's difficult for them to imagine another kind of approach. And also, though we may well understand our approach among ourselves, we haven't as yet tried to put it across very systematically to the rest of the Buddhist world, other than through Subhuti's book.

Vidyasri: I think that's true; and also what - like some other Buddhists that I

know, what they see in the FWBO, and I think it would be good to have something actually in the Order, because it's like the - well, it deepens .....

S: Right. It is the Order that is behind the FWBO. There can be an Order without FWBOs, but there can't be FWBOs without an Order. So there are people who see the FWBOs and who even quite admire them or respect them, see the co-ops too, but they don't really see what is behind them.

So I think a little booklet on the Order would be very useful. Subhuti has been going to write it for some time, but he's been so busy that he hasn't been able to do it. But he is going to devote his mornings in Spain to this sort of work.

> *Have you observed any signs that Theravada Buddhists in England are beginning to appreciate the central importance of Going for Refuge since you gave your talk on Going for Refuge in 1981?*

I can't say that I have noticed any signs, but then I'm not much in contact with Theravada Buddhists. It could be that they have taken some note of what I said; I don't know. But, of course, a real sign of their appreciating the central importance of Going for Refuge would be a lesser or less exclusive emphasis on formal monasticism.

Ashokasri: Do you think Trungpa appreciates Going for Refuge in that sense?

S: Well, in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition generally there is rather more of an emphasis on Going for Refuge in a practical way than in the Theravada. There is, for instance, the Going for Refuge and Prostration Practice. So I think inasmuch as he is a Tibetan Buddhist, Trungpa probably does appreciate the significance of the Going for Refuge rather more than many Theravada Buddhists. But that isn't really reflected in his writings, so far as I know them. In his writings he certainly doesn't pay any particular attention to the Going for Refuge.

But on the other hand, I must say among all the Tibetan lamas who are working in the West and writing and producing books, he does seem to have got to grips with Western culture and Western psychology and attitudes to a much greater extent than anybody else, I think. He seems to have immersed himself in it much more thoroughly. So I think he is quite distinctive in this way.

In Theravada Buddhism too there are works even dealing with the Three Refuges and the Going for Refuge, but they don't really play much part in people's actual thinking or spiritual practice. The recitation of the Precepts and the Three Refuges in Pali is very well known; Theravada Buddhists are doing it all the time, obviously, reciting the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts. But they never stop and think about them. It's rather extraordinary. Or perhaps it isn't. We tend not to think about things that are familiar, you tend to take them for granted and think you in fact know all about them. So I think we'll have to be patient but persistent.

I also think that one of the things that we really have to bring out in this booklet - Subhuti does go into it a bit in his 'Buddhism for Today' - is the fact that, by virtue of the Going for Refuge, a member of the Western Buddhist Order is just a member of the Order. The fact that they are not monks and nuns does not mean that they are lay people in the traditional sense. They are another category altogether; they are just committed Buddhists. So I think in having contacts with Theravada Buddhists, for instance, one must be very careful that when you make it clear that you are not monks and not nuns you don't cause them to think that because you're not monks or nuns you are therefore lay people in their sense. This is very difficult for them to understand, because traditionally you are either a monk or a layman, you are either a nun or a laywoman. There is no third category for them. You are either upasampada or anupasampada in technical terms. There is no middle way here. But our basic point is that there is, because the Going for Refuge is common, and the commitment to the Three Jewels is common; you take your stand on that, and whether you are a monk or a nun or a layman or a laywoman is quite secondary. But they think it's primary.

I think one of the main functions of this booklet will be to make it clear that members of the Western Buddhist Order are neither, on the one hand, bhikkus or bhikkhunis, nor, on the other hand, upasakas or upasikas in the Theravada sense. That's the most important point. That you are a different kettle of fish altogether.

So it's possible for us to relate to other Buddhists to the extent that they Go for Refuge. If they don't take it very seriously, it's very difficult for us to relate to them as Buddhists, however friendly we may be just as human beings. You can be quite friendly with a Christian monk or a Christian nun, and respect their spiritual commitment, but you don't really feel that you have much in common with them fundamentally, because their commitment is different. So it's much the same with even Buddhist monks and nuns if they attach great importance to being monks and nuns and not much importance to Going for Refuge. You don't really have anything very deep in common on the basis of which you can relate in a spiritual way.

Vidyasri: Is the Burmese tradition Theravadin?

S: Oh yes, they are quite strict Theravadin, yes. But their Theravada is a somewhat different type from the Theravada of Ceylon or the Theravada of Thailand. But if you go to a Theravada country, quite a lot of people, if you try to explain that you are neither a monk or nun nor a layman or laywoman, they'll just laugh at you; they won't take you seriously. It's so remote from their way of thinking, and they are so convinced that they are right and that their form of Buddhism is the real Buddhism. It [will be] quite interesting to see how Asvajit gets on in Sri Lanka. So far he seems to be doing quite well, conducting meditation retreats and so on and giving lectures. But inasmuch as he is an Anagarika and he wears yellow robes, there is a bit of an approximation to their way of thinking. But none the less I am sure he is putting something across. We have one Mitra now there, as you probably know, that's Siri Poonasekeri(?), who was in England for some time, also in New Zealand. He wrote a whole series of articles in an English newspaper in Ceylon - in Sri Lanka - putting forward the view that the FWBO type of Buddhism was the real Buddhism. So, you see, we are having some little impact perhaps, even in Sri Lanka. Well, a series of four or five quite strongly written articles in a couple of .....

Varabhadri: What sort of circle would read that?

S: Well, first of all they would be English-knowing people, it's an English newspaper. But in Sri Lanka a higher percentage of people understand English than in India, the level of Western education is quite high. And there seem to be quite a few Western-educated Sinhalese Buddhists who are quite loyal to Buddhism but don't really quite go along with the monastic orthodoxy. I think you'll find more and more such people in all Buddhist countries as the years go by, and I think they are our constituency, as it were, at least to begin with. They are not keen on all-night chanting sessions and proffering dana to bhikkhus and all that sort of thing, but they are interested very often in meditation; and there are very few bhikkhus to teach meditation.

So it may well be that we can establish something in Sri Lanka. I am pretty certain that we will be able to do so.

Pat: Is meditation not part of their form of Buddhism, then?

S: Well, I'm afraid that the meditation tradition in Sri Lanka broke down almost entirely, and it's been revived only quite recently, usually in the form of the so-called vipassana from Burma, but not much else. So there's certainly a field there for anybody who is able to teach meditation, especially to lay people. They do have forest monks there who lead very ascetic lives, a very small number of them; they practise some forms of meditation, but it's usually considered to be beyond the lay people, beyond their capacity. But that is beginning to change. There are quite a few lay people, maybe more especially Western-educated ones, interested in meditation in an intelligent way. So those are the sort of people

who are likely to go along to Asvajit's retreats. There are quite a few women among them, I hear; .... got English-educated women.

Sanghadevi: Do you remember in *Shabda* some time ago .... Devaraja suggested that we should make more use of some of the rules of the Vinaya? I was wondering what you actually thought about that in terms of -

S: Well, I've two reactions to that. In the first place, before people start thinking about extra rules I'd like to see them really fully observing the Ten Precepts that they've already taken. But the second thing is, if there are any rules or provisions in the traditional Vinaya which we actually find helpful and useful in our own lives, by all means let us take them and observe them; but we must relate them to our own lives. That is absolutely essential.

For instance, there's the rule about bhikkhus not handling gold and silver. Well, you could, for instance, at least on retreat, just not have money, not even think about money. After all, the retreat organiser is there like a loving mother or father as the case may be, to look after you; you don't need anything. Just give her or give him all your money, and just don't have any for that whole month; don't think about it. You won't then even be able to go down the road and buy chocolate bars. So, yes, that is a rule that one could observe, at least in the context of a retreat. And there's the rule of celibacy or chastity; well, one can certainly observe that too from time to time. Some people, as they get older, might like to take it up on a more permanent basis. There are all sorts of rules relating to simplicity; certainly they are good to observe - rules relating to etiquette: not making a noise while you're eating - that's one of the secular .... that's a good rule to observe. This retreat seems quite good in that respect! [Laughter] On some of the men's retreats you do hear quite a bit of chomp-chomping. [Laughter]

So, yes, my reaction or my response is twofold: don't bother too much about observing extra rules if your observance of the Ten Precepts is not particularly good. But apart from that, certainly, have no hesitation in adopting traditional rules that are actually helpful to you. Perhaps not adopting them for life, but on those occasions when you can observe them and then they really will be useful.

Sanghadevi: What were your reasons for starting a Movement based primarily on Going for Refuge and not bringing in the monastic element at all? Was it basically because you did see the corruption and the hollowness of the monastic system as it is now, or was it ..... ?

S: I think that was my point of departure, because even when I was in India, right from the beginning when I wrote my *Survey*, I could see that monastic life had become very formalistic. And I think I criticised Theravada formalism very strongly in the *Survey*. But at that time, and for quite a few years, my aim was more to get everybody practising more strictly; but I eventually started thinking differently and felt that no, that is not enough, that's not radical enough, in a way. And I eventually came to see that the Going for Refuge was in fact the basic and fundamental thing, and that monasticism as such was of secondary importance, it was a matter mainly of lifestyle; and that it had significance only as an expression of the Going for Refuge, not in its own right. So over the years I've been working out the implications of that position more and more.

Sanghadevi: So would you say in a way it can only be recreated out of people just starting from scratch with the Going for Refuge -

S: Yes, starting from spiritual fundamentals. It might end up on that basis, with people, just some people, living just like monks or nuns, and in a sense observing as many rules as anybody does. But it would be on a different basis.

Sanghadevi: And presumably with some of the rules it would be rules, if they arose, which were appropriate to living conditions now? .....

S: Well, yes, right. Well, some rules we observe that Theravadins don't observe. In the FWBO we are nearly all vegetarians; very few of them are vegetarians. So, in some ways, we are stricter than they are. One should also see that. That is something that affects us every day. Some people are even vegans, but the vast majority of Theravada bhikkhus are meat-eaters, and perhaps even insist on having meat. The majority of Theravada bhikkhus don't meditate. The vast majority of people in the FWBO do meditate. So who is stricter? Who is laxer? You have to look at fundamentals.

Sanghadevi: We speak about the gravitational pull, and one has an idea of what that means, and I was wondering if maybe some element of a gravitational pull in another sense for the monastics, ... become quite institutional. It's not like a pull into things in a worldly sense, but somewhere there's a -

S: Well, formal monasticism can co-exist with a basically quite worldly attitude. I've met so many monks who have observed more or less all the rules, but whose basic attitude is thoroughly worldly and unspiritual, they don't think in spiritual terms at all; but technically they are good monks and respected as such. So to me that is really a travesty of monasticism.

So I'm not against monasticism by any means, though I insist that monasticism is valued not as an end in itself but only to the extent that it does express the Going for Refuge and actually helps you in making your Going for Refuge effective and real, and helps you in your spiritual life. So I think our basic position in the FWBO is quite clear, and fully in accordance with the Buddha's actual teaching, as far as we can make that out from the Pali Canon itself.

Perhaps it does need to be all spelled out much more for the benefit of Buddhist groups outside. Non-Buddhists don't have much difficulty in understanding if we explain it, but Buddhists belonging to other groups or other traditions have some difficulty.

Another thing that puzzles people is the fact that members of the Order work, for instance work in co-ops; because the Theravada tradition at least is that the monk doesn't work. It's not quite the same in Mahayana Buddhist countries, especially Tibet, because they do have the Bodhisattva Ideal. Tibetan monks do work, usually in the monastery, and work means work; some are cooks, some are carpenters, some are tailors, some are builders, some are hewers of wood and drawers of water; but they work. The majority of Tibetan monks in the old days did work of one kind or another and also did some meditation and puja. It was only the more advanced monks who engaged in full-time meditation and study. Some became administrators.

But the Theravada tradition is that the monk doesn't work. The Theravada monk is not even supposed to boil water for himself and make a cup of tea; it's supposed to be done for him. And bhikkhus, therefore, in Theravada Buddhist countries are waited on hand and foot, and it's not really good for them. Some of them, to give them their due, don't like it because they're young and they've got lots of energy; they don't always feel like studying or chanting or meditating; they don't mind doing a bit of work, they'd quite like it, but it's not allowed. The lay people will be quite horrified and jump up and stop them doing it, and say 'No, no, no, I'll do it, Bhante', and the bhikkhu has to sit down. You see? Much less still do they work and support themselves as a spiritual principle in the way, say, that Zen monks do. So I think that whole aspect of monasticism isn't good - that is, Theravada monasticism. But as I say, it doesn't apply to the monasticism of Mahayana Buddhist countries, because they've had the Bodhisattva Ideal as a rather modifying influence.

I think this is perhaps one of the dangers of Theravada Buddhism in the West, that it will attract people who just want to be supported - because a lot of them do want to be supported. You join and you don't have to work, you're looked after; perhaps you can go to the East and live in a monastery. Even if you come back to the West, well, you'll still be supported, you won't have to work. So maybe that's all right if you are able to devote all your time to meditating or

teaching, but most bhikkhus aren't able to do that. And in any case, I really wonder whether it's good on principle that committed Buddhists should always look to support to the Sangha; because also that means that you have to have two classes of Buddhists - those who work but don't practise the Dharma, and those who practise the Dharma, supposedly, but don't work. It makes for that sort of division. So to have a monastic sangha in the traditional sense you've got to have a believing laity; but a believing laity that doesn't take the Dharma very seriously with regard to their own practice. But, on the other hand, they've got to get something out of it, so this is why bhikkhus in the East encourage the idea that if you give dana to the monks, if you support the monks, you get lots and lots of merit and a good rebirth. It becomes a bit of a vested interest, that kind of teaching. You can see how it happens.

Sometimes bhikkhus and their servants really lay it on thick - the amount the merit to be acquired by supporting bhikkhus. Well, it works quite well from the point of view of economics; it does ensure the support of the monastic order. But is that really the best kind of set-up, especially in the West? So I didn't feel very happy, say, when the Chithurst bhikkhus tried to introduce the practice of begging in a Sussex village. In a way you admire their adventurousness and their determination, but was it a wise thing to do? That's the point.

Vidyasri: Do they still do that?

S: I think it's more or less dropped now; I'm not surprised, because it isn't easy to keep up.

Sanghadevi: They do still do a traditional round, but they've got specific people now that they - well, they just visit, who will give them a meal. But in fact most of the food is bought, ...

S: Or Buddhist laypeople come and bring it and offer it in the vihara.

Sanghadevi: They do work there, but - they do work and build their vihara, but .....

S: But they don't have to.

Sanghadevi: They don't have to earn money to keep the place going.

S: That's the responsibility of the laypeople.

So it's a rather unfortunate sort of division of labour. I think maybe it's all right in the case of the exceptional person to be supported, especially as they get older and they've as it were proved themselves; but to take in very young people as monks or as nuns and they're supported right from the word go and treated with a great deal of respect, I don't think has a good effect on them.

Again, I've seen in the East that bhikkhus, if they aren't treated in the way that they are accustomed to, they are quite at a loss. They are so used to being treated with a lot of respect, a lot of formal respect; if they're not treated in that way, they don't know where they are. They can't relate to other people, very often, just as human beings or fellow Buddhists. There's a certain awkwardness. I think more so in the case of Western Theravadins, because the traditions aren't so natural to them as they are to Theravadins in the East.

I used to tease some of my Thai bhikkhu friends in India - because they used to sometimes talk about going to the West and preaching the Dharma - so I used to tease them and say, 'You've got to be very careful if you go to the West, especially if you go to America, because ladies will want to shake hands with you' - because of course that's against the Vinaya. So I remember one rather earnest monk said: 'Oh no! Surely not. If a woman was to shake hands with me, I would be on fire with passion!' [Laughter] I said: 'You'd better not go to America!' I said: 'If that is your position, that you can't even shake hands with a woman without being on fire with passion, perhaps you shouldn't be trying to

lead a life of celibacy at all! You're not quite ready for it!' He was quite a good friend of mine, he didn't mind my saying that.

> *Do you think there is an optimum size beyond which it would be undesirable for a public Centre to grow? I've heard you do not think the LBC should get any bigger, and that we should think more of starting smaller satellite Centres in other parts of London. If this is the case, would you see an enlargement of the LBC taking place on a future date after we have expanded more in London?*

It's really very difficult to say. I think the LBC is probably big enough at the moment; I think probably we just have to make more use of the facilities that we have there. For instance, I heard that there were only 30 people at the Padmasambhava Day celebration, which is really quite sad that there should be so few; and maybe we don't make use of the place in the afternoons. So before we start expanding the Centre we just need to make more use of the existing facilities.

But apart from that, apart from any question of expanding or not expanding our existing big Centres, I think it would be good if we covered as wide an area as possible, so that, for instance, no one in Britain was farther away than, say, 50 miles from an FWBO Centre. I think we need to have a network of Centres, just so that the maximum number of people have the possibility of getting to know about us and coming into contact with us. I think we have rather concentrated in the south-east. That's why I was very pleased that Taraloka was established in Shropshire - it is Shropshire, isn't it?

Sanghadevi: Technically, just in Wales.

S: OK. And also that some Order members have moved to Cambridge, and others to Birmingham, while two others are thinking of going to Liverpool. A couple have moved across from Glasgow to Edinburgh. That's all to the good. I'd like to see a little bit more activity in the West Country: I'd like to see activities in Plymouth and also, I think, Southampton on the south coast. That area isn't covered at all. And lots and lots more Centres in the Midlands and the North. Places like Newcastle.

_____: Berlin?

S: What to speak of the Continent! - where we have so few centres, hardly any.

So I think, at present, even though it may be our bigger Centres could expand a bit or could grow a bit bigger without any harm, I think none the less in view of these larger considerations we ought to give priority to setting up a greater number of Centres all over the place - possibly even more in London. Yes, I'd like to see a Centre in North London - a lot of people up there. And another one in south-west London - Wandsworth, Battersea, that sort of area, Clapham; there's so many people down there - and no Buddhist Centre at all - no other groups have centres, have they?

> *In the Buddha's time, it seems that many people became Enlightened through personal contact with him, and many more perhaps in the years since. Is a person automatically a Bodhisattva upon Enlightenment, since they are interlinked and, as you say, Going for Refuge, spiritual individualism and spiritual altruism coincide?*

'Automatically a Bodhisattva upon Enlightenment'. I am not sure, really, what that means. Can anyone throw any light on it?

Pat: It means if you're Enlightened, because sometimes you see - I think you've actually answered this in answers to previous questions - you have the arahant and Bodhisattva separation, but previously last night you answered it.

S: Because, after all, the Buddha himself functioned, so to speak, like a Bodhisattva; the Buddha himself, after initial reluctance, decided out of compassion to teach the Dharma at Brahma Sahampati's request. And he spent 45 years doing that. And his so-called arahant disciples were also quite active in spreading the Dharma out of compassion. You remember the reading we had the other evening: the Buddha said to the first sixty disciples: 'Go and proclaim the Dharma which is perfect in the beginning, middle and end, for the gain and the welfare of beings, out of compassion.' So yes, you can't really distinguish the so-called arahat, the original arahat, from the so-called Bodhisattva. So at every stage of genuine spiritual development, there is a development of you as an individual, and also there is a growing awareness of the needs of others and a growing wish to help them.

So if (a) is correct - that is the previous -

End of Tape 3, Tape 4, Side 1

> *..... cause the maximum benefit and make their presence felt. Is this true?*

That's quite a question, isn't it? I'm not clear whether the question is referring to human Bodhisattvas or archetypal Bodhisattvas. Because a human Bodhisattva, after functioning efficiently for a lifetime, dies, in the sense that the physical body just ceases to exist. So that Bodhisattva is not operating, so to speak, on the physical plane any more.

Pat: Is he not reborn into another body, because of his previous attainments?

S: Well, according to the Buddha's own teaching, as far as we can make out there are two kinds of Nirvana: Nirvana attained during one's lifetime and Nirvana attained at the moment of death, which is called Nirvana without remainder, which means you are not reborn. This is the original Buddhist teaching, even in a sense the Theravada Buddhist teaching. But Mahayanists sometimes look at it in a different way, and say there's no need to be reborn out of compulsion but you can choose not exactly to be reborn, because you in the old sense don't exist; but you can as it were choose to emanate, if you like, a form which will take birth or rebirth for the benefit of others; but not necessarily on this earth, not necessarily in this world system.

Sometimes the Tibetan Buddhists say that Avalokitesvara is Sakyamuni the Buddha continuing to operate in his purely spiritual form from the time of the parinirvana. So, yes, in a way there is continual activity, though not in the sense of the old personality continuing and not necessarily on this particular plane, on this particular earth. But it's difficult to imagine that, let's say, force of compassion just ceasing to exist. It must exist somewhere and be operating somewhere; but exactly where and how we really don't know.

Sanghadevi: Are you talking about Bodhisattvas on quite a high level, as opposed to Bodhisattvas of the Path? - or, let's say, the ..... Stream Entrant Bodhisattvas, they can be born anywhere?

S: Yes; yes. What to speak of ....., using the other terminology, a Stream Entrant will be reborn.

_____: .....

S: Or a Stream Entrant-cum-Bodhisattva could be reborn. But perhaps there are around now more highly developed people than there were some hundreds of years ago. There are more people around, anyway. It's very difficult to tell. Perhaps they are artists and writers now. Some people like to think that Keats was a Bodhisattva. (Laughter)

_____: Do you not think he was? [Laughter]

S: I don't think anyone has suggested yet that Ronald Firbank was a Bodhisattva - well, they might do, anyway.

_____: He's certainly a deva.

S: So one would assume that they would choose to be reborn where they could cause the maximum benefit and make their presence felt - certainly one would assume that. But one doesn't know where that place is, where they would have that maximum benefit. It might be some place that we don't know of. Perhaps one is really expressing one's disappointment that there aren't more Bodhisattvas around.

Pat: Yes, I think that's right.

S: It would be useful, it would be helpful. But perhaps they are around, but one can't see them. One must take that into consideration, too. Maybe they are trying desperately to get into contact with one, but one just won't listen.

_____: .....perfected their skilful means. [Laughter]

S: Oh, [Laughter] skilful means are skilful means, but even the Bodhisattva with the greatest skilful means can't make people listen if they don't want to. You know the little rhyme I sometimes quote:

Induce the equine quadruped
To element aquatic,
Exgurgitation, it is said,
Must still be automatic.

In other words, translated into the vulgar tongue, you can lead a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink. I don't know where this comes from, these little bits of nonsense ..... [Laughter]

There is also the point, perhaps you could say, that the archetypal Bodhisattvas operate on an archetypal plane, and you have initially to rise to that plane before you can contact them or feel their influence. So something has to be done by you in such cases first. There's also what Gampopa says about - I forget his exact words, but what he said was Bodhisattvas appearing in the form of ordinary spiritual friends; they are the Bodhisattvas who are most accessible to you; so if you've got spiritual friends, you're in contact with Bodhisattvas, admittedly perhaps not on a very high level, but they are Bodhisattvas inasmuch as they are spiritual friends; and there's quite a lot of spiritual friends around. What are you complaining about? [Laughter] Maybe we should just count our blessings.

Think of all the scriptures, Bodhisattvas occurring in the form of scriptures - so many of them, getting translated into English so that we can read. There are dozens and dozens of them you haven't read yet; all those Bodhisattvas waiting to pour themselves into your ear.

Vidyasri: I was struck with your Wrekin Trust lecture as well, when you said that, in a sense, whenever a kind or generous action is performed it was an expression in a sense of the Bodhisattva Ideal, and that actually that spirit is much more prevalent.....

S: Think of this recent phenomenon, this 'Band Aid' business; that wouldn't have been possible a few years ago, even thinkable, and it represents a quite remarkable use of modern technology, doesn't it? - television and all that, for a very good humanitarian purpose, involving millions of people. So we have to look at the positive side of things too. Tens of thousands of people, maybe hundreds of thousands, must have contributed to that particular appeal.

_____: Do you think a few years ago people wouldn't have been so willing to .... ?

S: This is difficult to say, but I think something like that could not have been

organised some years ago. Quite a few years ago, it just wouldn't have been possible and probably wouldn't have been technically feasible. So that is the other side, so to speak, of our technological revolution; it can be put to positive uses, it isn't entirely negative. If people have the will to make a positive use of it, they can do that and evoke a response. This is really quite amazing that such a strong response was evoked. I know people sometimes try to denigrate it by saying it was just an expression of the feeling of guilt on the part of richer Western nations, but I don't think it is that; I don't think you can be cynical about it in that way. I think there were genuine feelings of compassion and wanting to help on the part of quite a lot of relatively ordinary people, who might not have been tremendously well off. So it does show a bit of Bodhisattva spirit, and maybe Bob Geldof deserves his knighthood, in fact deserves to get it from the Queen herself and not from the Prime Minister (?). Or maybe you didn't hear about all that.

Ashokasri: I tried to explain to Vidyasri .....

> *If Bodhisattvas ultimately help others to become Bodhisattvas, the numbers increase with time in a world system. Why is it stated that the knowledge of the Dharma decreases and then dies out in a world system, having to be rediscovered at a future time? Where do they all go then, and why do they leave that world system?*

S: I suppose one can answer this only in terms of the gravitational pull. The gravitational pull is very strong, and samsara is very strong, and constantly undermining whatever spiritual structure which has been created. But on the other hand, the Bodhisattvas still are around and they recreate something when opportunity offers. It's as though these two forces are at work all the time. You can certainly see the influence of the gravitational pull even within the Movement itself, even within the Order you can see there's something you have to constantly fight against.

_____: In what way are you thinking particularly?

S: Well, there's always this tendency for things to settle down, to concretise, become matters of routine to be kept up for the sake of appearances, and then the rot has already set in. There are tendencies at work all the time, and one has to resist them. Which means you have to make an effort all the time until you reach Stream Entry, you can't afford not to; because you won't just stand still, you'll slip back.

I think you have to go halfway to meet the Bodhisattvas. They can't take you by the scruff of your neck and drag you off to Nirvana or Enlightenment, though some Mahayana sutras may give that impression; some Mahayana sutras give the impression that people at large are completely passive, and it's only the Bodhisattvas who are active and that the Bodhisattvas will 'save' them. I think that sort of language is unfortunate. They won't save you, they won't ferry you across literally; they'll only show you the way, just like the Buddha did, and encourage you.
You know how it is, even on your own relatively humble level: you try and encourage somebody to do something positive, like go on a retreat. If they really don't want to go, what can you do? You can't start becoming negative and try to push them or coerce them, it is impossible.

Anyway; a few more, on the fetters.

Sanghadevi: There's just a short one at the bottom of that page on path and fruit.

S: Oh yes, path and fruit. That's quite a simple one.

> *Is there anything of spiritual significance in the distinction which is made between path and fruit in the path of Stream Entry to arahant?*

Yes. I think the expression 'path and fruit' is a bit unhelpful. It's more like seed

and fruit, you could say. The distinction between path and fruit is explained in this way: you've all heard of the action process and the result process? It's exemplified by the Wheel of Life, isn't it - by the twelve nidanas? So on the transcendental level, on the transcendental path, the path stage corresponds to the action process and the fruit corresponds to the result process. In other words, you have what we might call, say, a transcendental volition, which is you as it were being active, having a very powerful, penetrating, positive mental state, imbued with Insight. So the path, in this sense, represents you as actively having that sort of mental state, which is a sort of transcendental volition; and then the fruit stage represents the spiritual experiences, the transcendental experiences, which come to you as a result of that transcendental volition, and which result in a permanent modification of your character, so to speak. So it's really a transposition of this action process and result process to the transcendental path itself.

Sanghadevi: So you can talk of a transcendental volition - ?

S: Yes. This is my own expression.

Sanghadevi: - at the point of becoming a Stream Entrant?

S: Yes. This is my own language, there isn't a satisfactory language to describe it in Pali. It's like, for instance, there's an analogy in meditation, short of the transcendental experience; you make an intense effort to concentrate - that is the action process; and then as a result of that you - as it were sitting back, not making a further active effort - you experience an intense bliss. This is the result process. So on every level you get this sort of distinction between action process and result process.

_____: Could you say a bit more about what you mean by transcendental volition?

S: Well, volition is, so to speak, will, isn't it? A transcendental volition is when you are sort of set on Enlightenment to such an extent that you, in terms of these questions, actually break through the fetters. There's a distinction between knowing and being. There is a point where they coincide, but you can know something without really willing that that thing should be. In a way, you know that there is such a thing as Enlightenment, but you don't necessarily will it in the sense of making a wholehearted effort to realise that. When you make that wholehearted effort, that is the volitional aspect; when you actually succeed in breaking through a fetter, then one can speak of that as a transcendental volition. There is a cognitive aspect and a feeling aspect too, obviously. Anyway, the fetters.

> *Could you say that, by concentrating totally on the first fetter, fixed self-view, if we break this one we will break the other two fetters too? Is the first fetter fundamental in the way that the first precept is fundamental to all the other precepts?*

In a way that is true. In a way, sakayaditthi is fundamental, fixed self- view. But on the other hand, the three fetters are very closely interconnected, and you can make a start on any one of them, and by attacking that one at the same time attack the other two. So it's not necessary to think that you've got to start by attacking the first fetter; you may be attracted to attacking one or another of the other two fetters - well, you're perfectly free to do that. If you do that, to that extent you will in fact also be attacking the first fetter, though that is in a way more fundamental, one might say.

> *To break the fetters, we need to make an effort in our practice. Is it mainly through meditation that we will build up the necessary base to break the fetters?*

The base, of course, being Insight. Yes, one might say the normal basis for the development of Insight, and it's only Insight or vipassana in the strict sense, that

can break through the fetters. The normal basis is meditation, is samatha, but I think also we must realise that we can develop Insight at other times as well. There are many stories of Zen masters who developed Insight, as I mentioned a little while ago, watching the falling of a leaf. You get those sort of stories in the Pali Canon too. So even though normally Insight is developed on the basis of the highly concentrated mind, even the dhyana state, that you develop while sitting and meditating, so to speak, you must also be alive to the possibility that you can develop Insight in other situations too; especially the sort of existential situations. I think when somebody dies, it's a very powerful experience, especially someone closely connected with you. It's a very powerful experience, you don't have to sit down and meditate at such a time, in the technical sense; but the death experience may have such a strong effect on you that, with a little effort, you can develop Insight, without sitting down and trying to experience the dhyanas first. In a way you are concentrated; the shock of the experience concentrates your mind.

Dr. Johnson said that the thought of death concentrates a man's mind wonderfully. If you know are going to be hung tomorrow morning, your mind will become remarkably concentrated. It's true, isn't it? (Laughter.) You may love Tara very much, but you find it quite easy to forget her mantra; but if someone told you you were going to be shot tomorrow morning, you wouldn't find it very easy to forget that; your mind would be wonderfully concentrated.

So these sort of shocks, these sort of existential experiences, do concentrate our minds in a way quite naturally; sometimes our mind is concentrated through worry. Not long ago, one of our Friends' child was very seriously ill, and the parents thought of nothing else for two or three days, day and night. So there was concentration there, and they could, if they'd remembered, have reflected then and used that as an occasion for them to gain Insight.

Vidyasri: Why does something like death concentrate the mind?

S: Well, it threatens your whole being, doesn't it? Death is death. It's a serious situation.

Pat: Other things are likely to pale into insignificance.

S: The human instinct for survival is very very strong. It takes priority over everything else.

So I'm sure there are lots of opportunities that we have for developing Insight, not just in meditation, We should be on the lookout, almost, for such opportunities. For instance, supposing a good friend goes away for a long time and you're quite sad; well, all right, reflect - yes, this person is a good friend, I'm very sorry to part from them, but why? Why this sadness? Why can't I let that person go? Reflecting in this way, you can develop a measure of Insight. It isn't always necessary to sit down and meditate in the technical sense. Another very good situation is the situation of jealousy. I mean jealousy in the full sense, sexual jealousy; it's a very strong and very negative emotion. So when you've experienced it just ask what's happening? You can develop real Insight in this way. Jealousy is one of the most powerful of the emotions, it seems; it can be quite consuming. So you think, well, I'm jealous because such-and-such person is talking with a third person - but why? Am I really losing anything? Is there any loss to me because that person to whom I am attached is talking to a third party? Do I really want to possess them in that way? Is that friendship? Is that love? If you reflect in this way, you can actually develop Insight, and you must take advantage of such opportunities - not just leave it to the moment when you are sitting and meditating.

Carla: So would you say that the kind of Insight is the same as the one gained in meditation?

S: Oh yes: insight is insight is insight. I don't say you always develop real Insight, either in that situation or in meditation, come to that, but they are both opportunities, so - the point I am really making is you mustn't associate the

development of Insight simply with the formal sitting and meditating situations. It's perhaps more likely that Insight will arise in that way, but it can arise in these other ways as well.

Ashokashri: Sometimes I think it's more likely to arise in an active situation, more out in the world - the kind of experiences you've mentioned - than actually in meditation, because I'm not sure that most people get that concentrated in meditation.

S: It depends on how much of it they do. If they go away to a place like Vajraloka, they gain a quite substantial experience of meditation, and a greater possibility of developing Insight. But if you're just doing a quick half-hour before going off to do something else, well, it doesn't really provide a really solid foundation for developing Insight. You've got to give the meditation a chance, as it were.

_____: Oh yes, I didn't mean that sort of thing.

Vidyasri: These examples that you gave - they were both situations in which you confronted quite basic negative emotions in yourself, and that it's through reflecting on that that one would gain Insight.

S: Fear, for instance. 'Why am I afraid, what is this fear?' You feel threatened, so you identify with yourself as being direct the experience of the strength of sakayaditthi, fixed self-view. (?)

Vidyasri: So you would gain the Insight by exploring what was happening with that?

S: Yes, indeed. Analysing it, in a way, trying to see it and see through it, and trying to resolve the emotional negativity so that you are free from that feeling. You would then have had at least a minor breakthrough. Most people experience these sort of emotional .... situations from time to time; most people have suffered bereavement, most people have felt violently jealous, most people have felt fear. These are all opportunities to develop Insight.

Pat: I have found it really helpful to - I started in September writing a diary, and when I had these feelings that day to actually write them down, it comes out what I actually do feel about it.

S: That's good. Because also you forget these experiences very easily. You might think at the time you'll never forget, but you do, and if you write it down in diary form, weeks or months later you can be looking through those pages and you're reminded, and you can take up that reflection again and perhaps deepen it, renew it. But this is quite important.

Carla: So it looks like the more intense an emotion is like that, the easier it is in a way to .....

S: I won't say the easier, but the greater the possibility of the Insight. Because you know the old saying, the bigger the heap of mud the bigger the Buddha image. As powerful as is your negative emotion, so powerful will be your Insight when that negative emotion is resolved. This is the basis of the so-called Tantric approach, isn't it? It's what it really means.

Ashokasri: Presumably the same could happen with a strong positive emotion? Or is that less likely because you're less likely to reflect?

S: That's less likely because you're less likely to question it. You see, it's when you're suffering you say 'Why am I suffering? Why should I suffer? Why should I be suffering? There's no justice in the universe.' But if you're happy, you don't say 'Why should I be feeling happy? Why should I be feeling happy and not somebody else?' You don't usually think like this. So it's the suffering that is more likely to make you think and reflect, unfortunately.

Vidyasri: But if one did start to analyse a positive emotion, I suppose you could gain the same Insight....

S: I suppose you could, but it's much more difficult, just because it's more difficult to be mindful. It's noticeable that when you are experiencing something pleasurable you usually tend to become unmindful. That's when you must beware of unmindfulness, when you are in a happy, positive, jolly state. But suffering makes you think, makes you mindful, which is rather a pity.

Ashokasri: I was thinking about the kind of instance when you're trying to identify with somebody and understand more. I see something analogous in that situation, in terms of developing .... Insight.

S: I think you can have an experience of Insight in intense communication with another person, but I say this with a little hesitation because I think you must be very careful not to identify that with the ordinary romantic situation when you've fallen in love. Then it's more like the opposite of Insight will arise, you'll be violently projecting. But in more, as it were, human situations, where there isn't that falling in love element and no projection, you're just very close to another human being on equal terms, and communicating very honestly and intensely, I'm sure Insight can arise in that situation. But it's not the sort of standard romantic situation, I have to stress that.

Not that insights might not arise in that situation at all, but usually in connection with possessiveness and jealousy and that sort of thing. They are painful sort of .....

Vidyasri: So how can it arise in communication, through transcending - sort of dissolving the barriers between the two?

S: It's as though you become intensely aware of another person, they become intensely aware of you, and when there is this intense mutual awareness it's as though when it reaches a certain point of intensity, by virtue of that intensity it breaks through the limitations of your respective individualities. You actually feel that you are the other person and the other person is you, and it's not a romantic projective sort of business, it's something quite different. I think some people have experienced this or a glimpse of this, in the course of communication exercises.

So the gist of it is that there are all sorts of opportunities for developing Insight. Another situation is when you feel very lonely. Usually if you feel very lonely, what's your impulse? - just to go and see somebody, or maybe switch on the TV or something like that. But if you can stay with the feeling of loneliness and ask yourself 'Why do I feel lonely? What makes me feel lonely? What is loneliness?' you can develop Insight. Perhaps you can do this on retreat, because sometimes on a retreat, almost inevitably you do feel a bit lonely, but then you can look into that and examine it.

> *You have said, Bhante, that we can break the first fetter through being creative. In what sense are you using the word creative? Are you linking it directly with experiencing impermanence?*

Not quite; when I spoke of being creative, I was speaking in terms of bringing into existence something new. So you break the fetter, the first fetter of fixed self-view, when you bring into existence a new self, or by bringing into existence a new self which is essentially creative. If you want to put breaking the fetter of fixed self-view into positive terms, you could express it as being the creation of a new self.

> *Could you say you are experiencing impermanence when you experience things creatively?*

In a way, yes, because creativity implies change, and change implies

impermanence, so they are all interconnected. Creativity is in a way a positive experience of impermanence, in a sense. Without impermanence, no creativity is possible.

Has impermanence different levels?

Well, I don't think impermanence itself has different levels, but there are different levels on which the principle of impermanence applies.

Do different people experience impermanence in different ways?

I'm not sure about different ways; certainly different situations. Some experience the impermanence of their possessions. Some experience the impermanence of human relationships. Some experience the impermanence of nature - the seasons. Some experience theirown impermanence; they look in the mirror and see a few more wrinkles, a few more grey hairs - time is passing, you're over the hill! Tottering down the other side! So different people are perhaps more sensitive to different aspects of impermanence.

Vidyasri: What did you mean by saying there are different levels on which the principle of impermanence applies?

S: Well, for instance, you could say in traditional Buddhist terms there's the kamaloka, there's the rupaloka, so the same principle of impermanence applies on those different levels. It's not that there are different levels of impermanence itself, but there are different levels of mundane existence, and the principle of impermanence applies on all of them, whether lower or higher.

In some ways impermanence is a very inspiring thought, because without impermanence there'd be no transformation, no creativity, you'd be stuck with the old self for ever and ever and ever. And how terrible that would be. You might be able to put up with it for the first one or two million years [Laughter], but after that I think you'd get very bored with this old self, really fed up with it. Here one is at present, hanging on to it for all one is worth. So one is trying to hang on to what you don't really want in the long run, anyway. That's where of course our delusion comes in.

Sanghadevi: Just going back to your description of the three fetters in terms of creativity, clarity, commitment: I had interpreted it that you were saying that if you develop creativity or develop clarity or develop commitment, then that's putting in positive terms how you can break the fetters, but you seem to have said in relation to creativity they're more descriptions of what it will be like breaking the three fetters, not so much the effects, the positive effects, of breaking the three fetters, rather than the things we do in order to break them.

S: I'm not quite -

Sanghadevi: You seemed to be saying that in regard to creativity that you break the first fetter, and what you are doing is bringing into existence a new self, which is essentially creative, and that's the sense in which you use the word creativity.

S: Well, you can talk about creativity without referring to the breaking of the fetters.

Sanghadevi: No, but in this specific context - you seemed to be using creativity, clarity and commitment as descriptions of how you are, having broken the fetters; whereas I had thought using that term, these were things you could do -

S: Well, it's both actually. Because if you are creative, you will at the same time be breaking through the fetter that you've not yet broken through. But having broken through it, you don't cease to be creative; you go on being more and more creative, by way of the sequence of positive transcendental nidanas.

Anyway, that was the last question, I think. We've covered some relatively new ground.

End of Session

Transcription Work Completed 1st July 1994

Transcribed by Joyce Mumford
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Copied and Distributed by Margje Perla-Zeef