

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

From the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties, Urgyen Sangharakshita led many seminars on a wide range of texts for invited groups of [Order members](#) and [Mitrās](#). These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Tiratna 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 Tiratna 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 [Tiratna has acknowledged as unhelpful](#) and which form no part of our teaching today. In encountering all of the ideas contained in over seventeen million words of Dharma investigation and exchange, we are each challenged to test what is said in the fire of our own practice and experience; and to talk over 'knotty points' with friends and teachers to better clarify our own understanding and, where we wish to, to decide to disagree.

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

QUESTION AND ANSWERS ON RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

[Women's Order Convention 1987]

Those Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Megha, Dayamegha, Ratnamegha, Punyamegha, Dayasri, Aniketa.

S: So you've all had discussion this morning on this topic of Right Livelihood and the Order, and the questions have been formulated as a result of the discussion. Yes?

Ratnavandana: The last three mornings.

S: The last three mornings. Ah.

Megha: Ratnavandana presented a paper based on three parts, looking at Right Livelihood situations in the past, the present and future. A lot of it was posing questions about Right Livelihood and taking as a basis, Subhuti's comments in "Buddhist Vision for Today".

Voices: (Murmurs)

Megha: Is it?

Voices: *Buddhism for Today.*

S: Buddhism for Today.

Megha: So it's taken from there and it's our basis about Right Livelihood situations.

S: All right, let's start off then. So question one:

"Only three Order members as a first choice signed up for the discussion group of Right Livelihood.

Megha: Yes.

S: *"Also increasingly fewer Order members are prepared to work in Right Livelihood situations although the number of Order members is rising. (a) What do you think are the reasons for this and (b) what effect do you think this will have on Right Livelihood in the Movement?"*

S: First of all, with regards to *"Only three Order Members as a first choice signed up for the discussion group of Right Livelihood - What do you think are the reasons for this?"* - I would say there's not much point asking me. It would be better to do a little survey of the Order Members present and ask them - those who

didn't sign up for the discussion group of Right Livelihood, why it was they didn't do so. Was it, perhaps, that the appeal of the other discussion groups was stronger, or that they weren't interested in Right Livelihood, or didn't think it affected them, or that they'd just had enough of it. So I would say that if one wants an answer to this question, it's better to ask the people concerned, because I can only speculate.

Dayamegha: I don't think we were asking you why they didn't come to the group, Bhante. It was more like information that this had been the response.

S: Well, ah, then you see, there were two statements: first of all that "only three members as a first choice signed up" and also, "increasingly fewer Order members are prepared to work in Right Livelihood situations", so the questions seem to refer to both of these ...

Dayamegha: (coming in) It more refers to ...

S: ... but even what I say applies, one could say, to the second part to that introduction, that, "increasingly fewer Order members are prepared to work in Right Livelihood situations". Well, why ask me? Do a survey of the Order. I can speculate. I may have some idea, but if one really wants to know I think one has to question the people directly concerned.

Dayamegha: You were going to do a survey of people here weren't you? [to Ratnamegha]

Ratnamegha: Yes, I was actually ...

S: For instance, one of the things I was talking about with Dhammarati quite recently, was that I felt, that with regard to the LBC, a survey should be conducted: a survey with regard to Order members and mitras, possibly Friends too, but certainly Order members and mitras; because I said to him that one hears all sorts of statements about, well, the LBC this, and the LBC that, and Order members around the LBC are such-and-such, but one doesn't really know to what extent those statements are based on facts, so I said I thought that one of the things the Council should do was to inaugurate a sort of survey; for instance trying to find out, first of all how many Order members there were in the area: that was the first thing, how many mitras; how many Order members, how many mitras live in communities, how many work in co-ops, how many Order members support or take classes - things of this sort. How many Order members live in single-sex communities, how many Order members or mitras are married or in sexual relationships, how many are celibate. How many are attending full-time courses, or part-time courses etc. If one collects all that sort of information, well then one has something to go by, otherwise one hears just these, well, sometimes baseless, sometimes well-based statements. It is very difficult to assess the total situation.

So I must say I don't know in the first place, why "only three Order members as a first choice signed up for the discussion group" and I'm not sure also why "increasingly fewer Order members are prepared to work in Right Livelihood situations, while the number of Order members is rising". I've got some idea, but

that may only be part of the truth, or my idea may be cancelled out by certain factors in the situation. I don't really know. I'd like to know but that's a different ... knowing is different from speculating.

Dayamegha: What are your speculations Bhante?

S: Well, I don't know whether it's even worthwhile speculating. I know some people are concerned about livelihood as such, and think perhaps a co-op is a rather shaky basis. That's one thing. There are the demands of the Right Livelihood situation: some people perhaps are not prepared to face them. But again this is only speculation.

Dayamegha: Is it with respect to a co-op structure per se, or a business per se? ... that the co-ops themselves as they exist are shaky, or is it the co-ops structure ...

S: No, I'm not saying that they are shaky, or that they are not. What I'm saying is that I gather that some people feel that they are not likely to get a proper livelihood by continuing to work within a co-op or Right Livelihood type structure; that if they want more money, if they want, say more time to themselves, well, they have got to acquire some other skill and work outside, not in a co-op. This is what I've heard. How well that is based, that's another matter. But I certainly have heard that. But then with regard to the question: "What effect do you think this trend will have on Right Livelihood in the Movement: - well, it's quite clear (Chuckling). If fewer and fewer Order members want to work in co-ops, and fewer and fewer people seem interested, well in the end, there will be no Right Livelihood in that sense, it's quite clear? But I don't think actually that is going to happen. We do have some strong right livelihood situations. I mean, there is the situation in Croydon where they have the co-op in the form of "Hockneys" and the shop both flourishing, and the same with Windhorse Trading. Some of the other smaller businesses are doing reasonably well, I think some of the gardening businesses, but no doubt the whole question of team-based Right Livelihood needs a lot of re-examination, and people have, perhaps, to re-examine their attitudes towards it. But I think I must emphasise that we need to have more facts at our disposal before we can really say very much, and I think people have to avoid trying to take a short cut in any situation, just asking me what I think, instead of making the appropriate survey and finding out what people think, and why they are doing certain things rather than certain other things.

Dayamegha: We came up against that when we were discussing it. It was actually very hard to understand what had happened - so many different influences.

S: Yes. Right. Let's see what question two has to say.

"If Order members are not choosing to work in team-based Right Livelihood situations with a commercial basis, does the structure of centres, co-operatives and communities as defined in "Buddhism for Today" still fit in with our vision of a 'New Society'?"

Well, yes, it does? But it means that to some extent people are failing to work out

that vision. This is what it really means. There's nothing wrong with the vision and there's nothing wrong with that threefold structure - Centres, co-operatives and communities - it is important that we transform - begin to transform - the economic life of society. But again I'm not pessimistic, not in the long-run, because we do have some successful Right Livelihood type businesses.

Dayamegha: So it's not that there's anything intrinsically wrong with a ... well, perhaps, intrinsically wrong with that structure of commercial based businesses?

S: Well, how can it be wrong to want to transform the economic structure of society? But if one gives up that attempt it means one is, in a sense, just withdrawing into a private world of religious activities, experiences, and not thinking in terms of transforming society at all, because it's quite useless thinking of transforming society without transforming the economic structure which is so basic to society (Pause)

Dayamegha: When we talked about it, it seemed like perhaps that point of it being a direct way of transforming the economic interface - how did Subhuti put it? The social and political ...?

Voice: "Platform".

S: Mm.

Dayamegha: .. that somewhere that has been the thing perhaps we have all lost sight of the most, in a sense. (Pause)

S: In a way the question is wrongly put: "Does the structure of centres, co-operatives and communities as defined in "Buddhism for Today" still fit in with our vision of the New Society?" Well, first of all comes the vision, and then there's the way of implementing the vision, and that implementation of the vision is represented by the structure of centres, co-operatives and communities. (Pause) It's like a three-legged stool. (Chuckling) Well, if you remove one leg, well, it's not really a stool any more, you can't really sit on it. (Pause)

Anyway, question three - you're talking about your own experience and maybe we can get more to grips with it.

"From our own experience within co-ops, our ability to communicate and co-operate are the two areas/aspects, of ourselves which are challenged most directly; by not choosing to work in co-ops does this indicate people are avoiding this sort of confrontation? What does this imply?"

Well, first of all of course, one really needs to ask the people concerned. They might not admit that they were avoiding this sort of confrontation, but by cross examining them one might be able to find out. If they are in fact avoiding this sort of confrontation it means that they are not so sincere in their determination to develop, as one might have thought, or as they themselves had supposed. (Pause) You say here from your own experience within co-ops our ability to communicate

and co-operate are the two areas/aspects of ourselves which are challenged most directly so that you seem to be quite sure about.

Dayamegha: (inaudible)

S: It is therefore quite possible that by not choosing to work in co-ops this indicates people are avoiding this sort of confrontation. Well, you know the people better than I do. I mean, what do you all think? Those who work or have worked in co-ops. Are people choosing not to work in co-ops because they are avoiding the sort of confrontation that working in - what does it say? ... "Because it challenges their ability to co-operate and communicate". (Pause) Do you think this or have you actually found this? Have you reasons to suppose that?

Punyamegha: One of the things we thought was that very often people aren't possibly ready to cope with it, and either the support isn't there to help one through it, or the support is there but you're not even ready to be open to receive it.

S: Yes.

Punyamegha: To work in that situation seems to need quite a high level of individuality ...

S: Right.

Punyamegha: ... and the structure itself hasn't ... there hasn't been enough, maybe, individuals, in it to help through the people who aren't quite ready to take up the challenge.

S: I think what I did say, years and years ago was I thought that probably, only Order members should work in co-ops. (Laughter) Yes! Because what I said and what I still think is well, what does a ... taking the word 'co-op' - taking the co-op structure in the narrow sense, and some of our Right Livelihood or team-based Right Livelihood businesses are no longer based on a co-op structure in a technical sense or a legal sense, but nonetheless they are co-operative in a broader sense. If you have a co-op you've got a group of people who have equal responsibility in principle, that doesn't mean they've got equal skills, or that they're interchangeable in terms of skills, but they have equal responsibility, so that there are no employers and no employees regardless of the specific functions the individual members of the co-op are performing. So you've got a situation in which people all accept responsibility, and that isn't easy, because what one usually finds within a group of people working together, some, for one reason or another, accept less responsibility, take on less responsibility, which means that the others have to take on a bit more responsibility to take up the slack. So therefore there is at once a polarisation of those taking on more responsibility and those taking on less responsibility. Usually those who take on more responsibility are in the minority, those who take on less responsibility are in the minority (sic). Then those who take on less responsibility for the same reason that they take on less responsibility are resentful that (chuckling) other people have taken on more responsibility ...

Voices: (Murmurs of agreement)

S: Even though it's the fact that they've taken on less responsibility that obliges the others to take on more to keep the whole show going. In this way resentment develops, all sorts of criticism develops and so on. So you need really, to have a co-op at all, a group of really mature and responsible people. But you can't really expect that degree of responsibility which implies commitment from people who are just becoming involved with the FWBO, or perhaps who have even joined the co-op directly with very little experience of the FWBO at all. I know that there've been cases where people have joined a co-op, in the sense of beginning to work for a co-op, or in a co-op, without having any real understanding of what a co-op is all about.

Punyamegha: Yeah. I think that is true: our expectations have been unrealistic in that sense.

S: Mm.

Punyamegha: We haven't known (exactly what to do?)

Ratnavandana: What about the other way around? I mean, we often have people who say that some people are overly responsible and in a sense, don't leave any room for some of the other people, and often that's a kind of excuse people use...

S: Yes, that may sometimes happen because there are some people who are over-ready to take on responsibility, but I think the other type of situation where other people, at least by default don't exercise their full responsibility, that's much more common. (Pause)

Dayamegha: I think perhaps it's also partly that we've learnt as we went along exactly what it meant to work co-operatively.

S: Also, perhaps, it's not without significance that the two most successful businesses, namely the one in Croydon and the one in Cambridge have an unusually high percentage of Order members working in them: this is probably no coincidence.

Voices: Yes.

S: Also in some situations in the past in some co-ops, there has been a tendency where there's been very few Order members. Supposing there's been one, as soon as a second Order member is ordained within that situation, or joins, the first one tends to leave.

Voices: Mm.

S: So you never get the opportunity of building up a high proportion of Order members within that particular business which is what we really need to do. I mean, when there's, say, more than fifty per cent Order members in the business,

well, then perhaps the one who's been there the longest can leave, but not as soon as one other one joins; this has happened time and time again in certain businesses, both men's and women's (Pause)

Dayamegha: It does seem strange. (Pause)

S: But it is certainly a difficult situation and perhaps for some people it is too difficult. But if it's for Order members, well, how can you expect that degree of commitment from mitras! (Chuckling) If Order members find it too tough, well, what about the others? I'm surprised at the extent to which some mitras have carried on. It's certainly very much to their credit that they have.

Ratnamegha: I think we often undervalue that aspect actually - that it requires a high degree of commitment and responsibility. I feel we often, I think in the "Cherry Orchard" talk about hard work, the physical demands of the job, but we don't actually see that other aspect, actually, because sometimes we get blase - but I think we just ah, ... well ... perhaps we just lose touch with it. I don't know.

S: Also, what shall I say, responsibility within a co-op doesn't just mean responsibility for your little job - your little function, it means at the same time, keeping an eye on the co-op as a whole, and being concerned about and concerned for, the co-op as a whole, caring for the co-op as a whole. It means that too. (Pause) Maybe that's difficult perhaps for a part-time member of a co-op, but all full-time members should have that sort of concern and care for the whole business.

Ratnavandana: I think it does take quite a while actually, just to be able to take that in.

S: Mm. Mm.

Ratnavandana: It's quite different to any usual work situation.

S: Yes. Quite.

Ratnavandana: It does demand a high degree of awareness, really.

S: But you have got to induct people gradually, as with the Centre. Someone was saying some time ago that when people come along to a public Centre you've got to get them to feel it's their centre. Well, in a sense, yes, in a sense no. It's their Centre in the sense that they're welcome there and it exists for their sake, but you can't expect people just starting to come along to a Centre to take on part of the responsibility of running it and financing it, because I mean, they don't even know whether they want to involve themselves in that way. So it's the same with people who come to work in a co-op. You can't at once expect them, being quite new to that sort of work, quite new to the FWBO, to take on responsibility for the co-op in the full sense, as a full co-op member, that just isn't possible. Even after a three month trial period, they're probably not in a position to do that.

Voices: Mm.

S: So perhaps one of the reasons for the difficulties that we've had, I think this is quite likely, is that it wasn't realised initially, what a serious business working in a co-op as a full member, was, and what degree of determination and commitment and responsibility it called for. But I think people have a more realistic appreciation now of what it means to work in a co-op and this is why I'm quite optimistic about the long-term future of team-based Right Livelihood.

Dayamegha: Yes, because along with that appreciation is also the appreciation of what you can gain with that.

S: Yes, indeed! (Pause) But this still leaves the question of why people avoid this sort of confrontation. Mm. That is to say avoiding having their ability to communicate and co-operate challenged (Pause)

Ratnamegha: We did find in discussing working in a work situation you're challenged much more directly in the sense of work being the tantric guru.

S: (Chuckles)

Ratnamegha: Whereas in communities as such there's a level of avoidance ...

S: Well, you can go out!

Ratnamegha: Yes. Quite true actually!

S: But if you're working in the same place, in the same room, usually, how can you leave? No! You can't.

Voices: Mm. Mm. (murmurs of agreement)

S: You're brought right up against it, and that, perhaps, is too much for some people.

Voice: There seem to have been ...

Ratnamegha: I was just going to say perhaps we should look at it differently, just show people actually the opportunity of being challenged.

Voice: (Murmurs of agreement) Yes.

S: Right. Not dwell too much on the hardships and difficulties of working in a co-op but the fact that it does represent a tremendous opportunity.

Megha: That's where it's needed - people to have been there longer term who have worked through that know it is possible to change your habitual ways that you relate to others while also working - in order ... it's almost as though you generate your own "masters" ...

S: (Chuckling)

Megha: In a situation to be able to show how others can actually do it.

S: Mm.

Megha: If people have gone so far and then left, that's not actually fed back into it.

S: Yes!

Megha: It's not actually taken ...

S: That, true, right.

Megha: ... as a spiritual practice, very far.

S: Mm.

Megha: Maybe that's what we're up against at the moment.

S: Mm.

Punyamegha: And I think you need to be very skilful in terms of challenging another person, because if you do do it too soon it's like you break the person. It's like forcing a child to walk too soon. It becomes bandy-legged. You weaken something.

S: Mm.

Punyamegha: Maybe damage it for quite some time before it can.....

S: Mm. (Pause)

Ratnamegha: It's a Catch 22, actually.

S: Well, it has been in the past, but perhaps it begins not to be quite like that. (Chuckles)

Dayamegha: It seems we were coming through a period where a lot of people had worked very hard getting the movement to where it was and then had gone off and perhaps done what they felt they needed to do as a counterbalance, and that we, in some sense, are in the aftermath of that. So perhaps now that can start changing.

S: Yes. Right. (Pause) Also I think another factor is - or at least something that is somewhat relevant - I think at the very beginning, when co-ops were started up, perhaps sufficient thought was not given to the question of what businesses would be viable. I mean restaurants are viable, building teams are very viable indeed! Though we don't have one at present, unfortunately. Gardening businesses seem

to be quite viable. So we know that there are certain lines which are successful and perhaps certain other lines that aren't. So I think that needs to be looked at more carefully. Also where the business is situated. So in the case of Croydon, their businesses are situated in a very favourable area indeed.

Punyamegha: You made the point, Aniketa, didn't you, that you can have your Centre where there's a good place for Centre, you did not actually have to have your business there. Your business could be somewhere else.

S: Yes! Yes! Mm.

Ratnavandana: And though those sort of businesses are quite viable, but they are very labour intensive for the yield.

S: When I say 'viable' I mean producing substantial profits too. That is the case with Hockneys and also with Windhorse Trading. They are producing substantial profits. (Pause) Again, perhaps we need to make a survey, and find out in the case of, say, every business how many people they employ full-time and part-time, and what their profits are, and therefore within each business what profit is made per head.

Dayamegha: Ah-ha. That would be interesting.

S: You may well find. I'm only guessing here. You may well find that from that point of view, the most successful business is the Birmingham-based computer business, where they've got three people working, but in that particular line, you might find that per head, they are individually, the most productive.

Dayamegha: But then there comes the aspect of using say, "The Cherry Orchard" as a way of introducing people to the Movement.

S: Yes! Indeed! That weighs also very heavily in the balance. In the case of their Right Livelihood business, well, it's good from the point of earning money, but I don't know, that it's going to - well, I don't know, it hasn't happened so far. Let's see whether in fact anyone does join them just through that. Whether any fellow computer programmer becomes interested in the FWBO through, say, joining their business. It's not impossible but say a business like 'The Cherry Orchard', would seem more accessible, more open.

Megha: So actually, really people do need to have contact with a centre, with the FWBO, because we have had people come in, and it's their main contact, and it doesn't really work. They need to have some grounding in the FWBO.

S: Mm. But, I mean the people, though, in contact individually within the business can take them on as a personal responsibility even give them tuition, that's also possible if they've got time. But usually people take the whole package, at once, don't they? Centre, community, co-op.

Dayamegha: I came in through "Sunrise".

S: I mean, the easy way, the gradual way, the path of regular steps is come along to a centre, get interested in meditation and the Dharma, and Yoga, and go on retreats, and enjoy the retreats and then start thinking of joining a community, usually a single-sex community and then you get fed-up with your job, you want to work with the kind of people you live with, and so you join a co-op. That's the usual progression. Or has been so far. But of course even those people who've taken courses to qualify themselves professionally in one way or another are also thinking in terms of banding together into something like a team-based Right Livelihood project: the health people, for instance, or the doctors are thinking of that, and therapists, and Bodywise - they're doing something like that, aren't they?

Voices: Mm.

Megha: It'll be good once that actually really gets going I think perhaps more people with more professional skills ...

S: Yes.

Megha: ... are able to do that, because there seem to be more and more professional people coming through the FWBO, but there's not quite an alternative to show them that you could ... or there's not enough pooling of skills to be able to create a situation like that.

S: Yes. Right.

Dayamegha: Because you were giving the example of the lawyer.

Voice: (murmuring)

Ratnavandana: Christopher ?. He found that it was very difficult around the LBC to make use of his professional ... to know how he could actually utilise his skills in the movement.

S: We have two or three lawyers around. (Chuckles) Huh, well, Subhuti and I have been talking about this very thing recently. We need a sort of Law Office, because there are so many questions that we're involved in where we really need full-time lawyers. Or we need full-time lawyers because there are legal aspect to so many of the things that we do. For instance there's the whole question of visas for people coming from overseas. Subhuti, so far, has handled that, and then there are questions to do with conveyancing and acquiring properties and legal questions arising in connection with our charitable status.

Dayamegha: Who would it be best to direct him to then?

S: To Subhuti.

Ratnavandana: Subhuti. Mm. (Pause)

S: I mean sometimes we have had to sue debtors, well, there also a lawyer is

helpful. Anyway let's pass on to question four.

"Can you clarify the situation for mitras nearing ordination and the advisability of them having a major role in the running of a business?"

Mm. It depends on various factors. I don't think it is advisable for a mitra nearing ordination to have a major role in the running of a business which he or she cannot quite easily hand over, so as to allow him, or to allow her, to take part in the pre-ordination course. They shouldn't feel the pressure of having to think: Well, if I go on the ordination course what on earth is going to happen to the business. They shouldn't ever be put into that position which has occasionally happened. I mean if a mitra is very capable I think there's no harm if they have a major role in the running of a business if it's possible for them to hand that over easily as soon as they have to go on a pre-ordination course, otherwise you are putting them in an impossibly difficult situation. And of course - no doubt, it goes without saying - that they shouldn't have a major role in the running of a business unless they're very psychologically and spiritually equipped for that, as they may be as they come closer to ordination. (Pause)

Megha: (?? management)

Ratnavandana: Well, it was out of the situation with ***** and ***** , that that being interpreted as maybe it wasn't a good idea for mitras to take on too much responsibility anyway.

S: It has happened with some of the men mitras, that they've not been able to go on at least two occasions, I think, ... been able to go on the pre-ordination course because they have been needed within their particular co-op. That wasn't good.

Ratnavandana: To a certain ...

Ratnamegha: Typesetters are a case in point - a business, which is fluctuating all the time, with three women mitras. Well, it does seem to be quite a (?) situation where, well, if one of them, let's say, one of them perhaps is going go on a pre-ordination course, and leaving only two who have to cope with the situation and perhaps not being able to ...

S: Of course it's a small business. If there were twenty people working there, well, if one left to go on the pre-ordination course it wouldn't matter very much, but if you've only got three and one of them goes, well, that is a third of the workforce, and that makes a big difference. So numbers do count here. Numbers are relevant.

Dayamegha: I think it was just that, um, some comments you made to Megha a year or so ago had got interpreted as: mitras not taking that sort of role in the business because it wasn't good preparation for 'Going for Refuge', but it ...

S: I'm not saying it's not good preparation. I'm not saying that at all! But I'm only saying they shouldn't be put in a situation where they become indispensable, so that when they are invited on a pre-ordination course they experience a lot of

conflict. I mean, they can take on as much responsibility as they are able, provided it isn't a responsibility which only they are able to discharge - so that they are not easily replaceable. (Pause)

Anyway question five.

"We've heard from Dhammarati that you have expressed concern about the tendency of women to become dependent collectively on men, collectively - i.e. 'the damsel in distress syndrome'."

Mm! I expressed this concern several years ago, actually, in these very terms, but I have repeated it more recently to Dhammarati.

"Also that you are expressing concern about women working on their own creating a circle of dependants about them. Could you say more about this?"

Presumably the question refers to the second, or to both?

Dayamegha: To both.

S: Let me deal ... Well, I think the first is pretty obvious isn't it? Mm? (Pause) That there may be a tendency for women to become dependent collectively on men collectively. Do you see what I mean? I mean, leave aside for the moment whether you agree with it or not - (Laughter) You see what I mean?

Ratnavandana: The thing is we don't!

Ratnamegha: No. Is it the herding instinct? (Loud laughter)

S: No it's not quite like that. (Chuckling) You know how it happens ... Well, maybe you don't know, in which case it will come as news to you, that some women unfortunately depend a lot upon the man in their lives, don't they? I mean there are certain things that he does, or that they rely upon him to do, they think that they can't do them, or they shouldn't do them - you understand the sort of situation, yes?

Voices: Yes.

S: But I think it is possible to repeat this sort of pattern almost on a group level, where the women collectively leave certain responsibilities to the men, thinking, consciously or unconsciously, well, those are the men's responsibilities. They can get on with those. For instance, running the centre. That's the responsibility of the men, so the women are happy to make use of the Centre's facilities but they regard the maintenance of the centre as being more the responsibility of the men. So it's this sort of tendency that I've been concerned about, yes?

Dayamegha: Historically, that is not how it happened, because it was like the women got asked to leave because they wanted to make it a male team, so it wasn't

that the women felt not wanting to have a say in the running of it or be involved in it, it was that it became a male team and we didn't have ...

S: You mean with regard to the LBC.

Voices: LBC, yes.

S: Well, was there a conscious decision taken that there should be a male team running the Centre?

Megha: Yes

S: But not taking all the classes surely?

Ratnavandana: Not taking all the classes, no, but the administration and maintenance is ...

S: But then there is at least one woman member of the Council ...

Ratnavandana: Yes. Two. Vidyasri and Varabhadri.

S: So that's where the responsibility for the Centre really rests. I mean...

Megha: Well that had a historical thing also ... in terms of Kulamitra ... it was a big council and when he became Chairman he decided to have a smaller group of people that he worked with and there was just Vidyasri on that Council meeting and then Varabhadri, later, joined. So there's a bit of a historical thing in terms of who Kulamitra wanted to work with.

S: Mm. Mm.

Megha: And maybe it will change now that there's a different Chairman.

S: Within say a complex like the LBC, including the Centre itself, you can have teams doing particular jobs which are teams of just men, or teams of just women, but you can't have the Centre as such, or the Mandala as such, run either by just men or just women, because it is essentially a mixed situation. Do you see what I mean.

Voice: Yes.

S: So this is why the Council at least must be mixed, as it is, but perhaps there should be a greater participation on the part of women on that level.

Megha: So were you thinking further, more than just the LBC? Were you thinking just generally round the Movement?

S: Yes, I wasn't thinking just of the LBC.

Voice: I mean, there is the statement that women depend either individually or collectively on men. I'm not sure that I agree with that. I've tended to find them useless in a crisis! (Laughter)

S: It depends what sort of crisis. (Chuckling)

Megha: Are you thinking more in terms of like there tends to be ... like you've got different situations set up and there are just men running them. Running centres like Bristol and Brighton and Manchester ... there's ...

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S: I'm not thinking so much in those terms because there's just a shortage of women Order members ...

Megha: Right.

S: I mean if there were the same number of women Order members around as men and still men only were running the Centres then I'd wonder why that was, but at present there's no alternative, because, well in the case of some centres, just because there are no women Order members around. But one would expect the situation to change as soon as there were women Order members around. In the case of a Council one would expect that the women Order members in the area, that they also would serve on the Council. (Pause).

Dayamegha: I suppose, more where I've seen it happen, more in my experience has been when we were they were trying to make a decision whether to go ahead with the Cherry Orchard plans or not, and I know I felt a bit of a tendency in myself to assume that the men would make ... I mean, I tried not to, I certainly tried against it, but I did want someone else to make the decision.

S: Mm. (Chuckle). Mm.

Dayamegha: So perhaps that ...

S: I did use the expression "tendency". I'm not saying that is a hard and fast, concrete situation. But I think there is that tendency on the part of women, very often, to depend on men, or to let men get on with the running of things. But I think in the case of women Order members, where there are women Order members, they must equally participate. But it could be that in the case of the LBC there has been some confusion, but as I said I mean if there is a men's team responsible for the cleaning that's fine, if there's a women's team responsible for running the Bookshop, that's fine. Again, if there's a men's team responsible for publicity that's fine; but when it comes to the overall running of the Centre and the running of the Centre is by the Council, then that must be a mixed team. I don't see how it can be otherwise. And obviously classes are run by both men and women, either separately or working together. (Pause) But I think it's at least something that needs to be watched even if it doesn't show itself very noticeably at present. But you know what I mean by the "damsel in distress" syndrome, yes? (Chuckle)

Dayamegha: The 'Cinderella complex' is the other name.

S: Mm. Ye-e-es. (doubtfully spoken). I suppose - yes, that's another aspect of it I suppose. Yes.

"Also that you express concern about women working on their own creating a circle of dependants about them".

What I meant about this was, women especially, taking up therapies, psycho-therapies. I've certainly noticed this in certain cases, because, in a way, it's inherent in the therapeutic situation. You can become very dependent on the person from whom you are receiving therapy; not just dependent in respect of the therapy, but dependent psychologically. So it can happen that if you are a therapist you can gather around you these people who tend to become dependent on you. So inasmuch as it seems to be more women than men who have taken up therapies - or doing courses in this or that therapy, that they may be more exposed to this sort of danger.

Ratnavandana: Would you include the health orientated things like acupuncture and homeopathy and that sort of thing?

S: Oh yes, certainly - because I noticed that very often, well, the boundaries aren't fixed, because most of these alternative therapies profess to deal with the whole person. I think this is, in a way, quite dangerous. One can agree with the principle but supposing someone comes to you with a cold, comes to you as perhaps an acupuncturist or a homoeopath, then you say - "It's not just a question of treating the cold, I've got to treat the whole person. How are you leading your life? What is your psychological state? They adopt an almost guru-like attitude towards you.

Punyamegha: Well you do ... There is a difference between an acute and chronic things, so you could just treat the cold separately and let that go and then if you want to take on the person, well that is a different thing...

S: (coming in) But the point I'm making is that if you have this tendency to gather the group of dependants, you won't just be satisfied to treat the cold, that's an excuse almost for treating the whole person. You see, and therefore of adopting that guru-like attitude. And I've certainly found this happening with regards to some of the people in our movement, both those who are acting as therapists and those who are acting as patients. I think this is quite dangerous. I think it extends also into other areas like mediums, astrologers. You sort of go to them for some more or less specific purpose but they take on a directing and guiding role, very often because this is what they want to do. And I think this is very dangerous.

Punyamegha: I think that is there a fault in the particular therapist because in lots of these things anyway it is that the person you are treating takes responsibility for themselves.

S: Yes.

Punyamegha: And particularly in homeopathy it's like, I know many homoeopaths that won't take on a person unless that person agrees to take responsibility for themselves. They just won't treat them.

S: (coming in) Mm. Well, that's fine in theory and obviously one agrees with that, but it is easy to say those words but to live up to that is quite another matter! Very often the therapist may not know themselves sufficiently to know what they are doing. I mean, recently I had a case, not from around the LBC, but from another Centre, where a woman mitra had been given this sort of guru-like guidance by a therapist she went to, and that therapist was congratulating her on her breaking away a bit from the FWBO, and saying it was a very positive step, but in the end the woman really asserted her independence and disagreed with the therapist and remained with the FWBO; but he was doing his best to get her away from the FWBO. Why, one doesn't know, but this is what he was doing, and eventually she wrote and told me all about it.

So a therapist I think is under the temptation very often to set himself or herself up as a sort of mini guru and to give advice of a very far-reaching nature just as the medium does.

Punyamegha: Yes. I do take your point. There is a danger. You do have to be very careful. Yeah.

S: Yes. So this is why I did express concern that women working as therapists within the Movement shouldn't sort of gather around themselves this sort of group of rather dependent people. Maybe there's a sort of maternal instinct mixed up with it at the same time in some cases. This is possible.

Ratnamegha: It's a quite difficult area, actually, to ...

S: Yes.

Ratnamegha: ... because I do massage and ...

S: Yes, and what makes the difficulty is this holistic, this allegedly holistic approach that you need to treat the whole person. Well, can you treat the whole person without knowing the whole person. Is it easy to know the whole person? Is it so easy? Well, we find it difficult enough, don't we? Within the context of the Order or when you live with someone. How easy it is to know the whole person? I mean if you take that at all seriously if you can't treat anyone without treating the whole person well, you really would never treat them! You have to stop somewhere.

Ratnamegha: You have got to be quite clear actually. I think there is this level of expectation from people who actually come for treatment, to actually sort of be given an answer.

S: Yes. I mean, it's the sort of magician that they go to, it's the magic guru who will wave his wand and make everything right. I must say I sometimes get the

impression that because I myself refuse to do this some people tend a bit unconsciously to look for that somewhere else. I know this happens with some people. They may go to a medium, or they ... they may not actually even go to an acupuncturist or someone of that sort for that purpose but they find themselves needing medical treatment so they go along to an acupuncturist or whoever they happen to favour, and then they start feeling that need being fulfilled, which is basically a neurotic need for that sort of reassurance and that type of guidance: being told what to do. So this is something that has concerned me over the last few years quite a bit. I'm getting away from the actual questions now.

Because I think it's rather sad if, say within the FWBO your official attitude is yes, we must accept responsibility for ourselves, but the minute you go to a doctor of one kind or another to a great extent you surrender your responsibility without always realising that.

Punyamegha: I think that is inherent in an ordinary sort of doctor but I think, for instance, say, like homeopathy, I've been having treatment, never once has my homoeopath tried to give me any advice, and I think a competent homoeopath wouldn't do that. I do take your point that there is a danger inherent in some people ...

S: Because we also get nowadays, I'm not talking just about the FWBO - we get around the country all sorts of people who've set up as healers and therapists of various kinds, some of them with only week's or a few days' training in this or that discipline. You can see their advertisements in all sorts of magazines. So I think we need to exercise great caution here, both with regard to therapists inside, and, perhaps even more so, outside the Movement, whom they happen to go to.

It's as though sometimes people get a bit desperate, especially if they have some illness which is not clearing up, or they have some problem which is not being sorted out by meditation. They do tend to look for some sort of magical solution. (Pause) And they are very exposed then to anyone who offers the possibility of some sort of magical solution to whatever difficulty there is. A few years ago I was really surprised how many people in the Movement, even in the Order, were going to a medium, or going to an astrologer. What on earth did they want to do that for? It seemed very odd. I think it's stopped now but it was quite prevalent at one time. (Chuckling) (Pause)

Ratnamegha: Are you saying then, to take the medicine but not the guru?

S: No. I'm not really saying that. Mm. Because I accept that you can't just give medicine, you have to consider if you can, to the extent that you can, the whole person, but what I'm saying is that under the guise of treating you someone shouldn't try to smuggle himself into your life as a sort of guru ...

Voice: Right!

S: ... as a guide.

Ratnamegha: That was the point I ...

S: And I know the way in which people sometimes take the advice which they are given by some kind of therapist or doctor. They take it quite uncritically.

Voices: Mm. Yeah.

Punyamegha: Sometimes we have to be very careful about what we say to our patients.

S: Yes. Yes. And also in selecting a doctor or a therapist; one needs to be quite careful. (Pause) Be a bit on one's guard if someone seems to want to take over direction of your life. (Pause) Anyway, perhaps that's enough about that.

Oh dear? Question six:

"How would you define somebody who knows how to work well?"

I don't know that I'd care to define it. Work well. Well, work hard, work happily, enthusiastically, competently, co-operatively, (Laughter), without getting discouraged by set-backs, innovatively, taking initiative. (Chuckles)

Ratnamegha: This came out of a question I think Ratnavandana had mentioned it earlier, it was before people ...

Ratnavandana: You said that you didn't think very many people did know how to work well.

S: Well, in the light of my definition that is probably true. (Chuckling) (Loud laughter)

Ratnavandana: (Low murmur - inaudible).

S: I'm surprised sometimes myself at the low level of competence among the people that I sometimes come into contact with, and I often feel I have to check everything, I can't be quite sure that they've really done it right. This is really quite unfortunate.

Dayamegha: We often notice when people come into the situation they're quite competent and then they seem to go to bits, and then they come out the other end.

S: Well sometimes the competence is a false competence. Well, competence cannot be false, but confidence can.

Voices: Yeah.

S: If you do a thing capably, well, you do it capably, but that may be the result of a false confidence or a genuine confidence, and sometimes, if your false confidence is undermined you cease to be able to do competently, what in fact you

are objectively quite capable of doing competently.

Voices: Yes. Mm.

S: Anyway, the question to end all questions. (Laughter) Question seven:-

"What would you think about alternative means of support for Centres including teams of people, say two Order members and a mitra, going out to neighbouring areas, i.e. in the case of LBC, Hackney, Stoke Newington, Stepney, etc., where they could hire a room and teach meditation and the Dharma, possibly including yoga and massage, giving talks etc., advertising in the locality and charging sufficient to cover the costs of hiring the room and expenses and support for themselves?"

Mm. I think even if it were desirable in principle I think you would have to charge a prohibitive fee. Supposing you got along say, to begin with, ten people, all right, you're talking in terms of a team of two Order members and a mitra, so you've got the hire of the hall, the advertising and your support of four people for a week. If you have a class, say, once a week, so if you've got ten people coming along every week, how much per head would you have to charge to cover all those expenses?

Ratnavandana: You'd actually have different ones every night of the week. You'd have once a week in one particular locality and then you'd have another one the next night in Stoke Newington, and the next night somewhere else, and possibly have lunchtime as well ...

S: So then you'd have seventy people in that case? If you had say ten coming along each evening. Seventy people? So how much would you charge? Ten pounds a head? Five pounds?

Megha: Probably not as much as ...

Ratnavandana: Less than that ... Probably more like five pounds a head.

Dayamegha: That's too much.

S: Five pounds a head is quite a lot, isn't it? Especially in Hackney and Stoke Newington.

Voice: Well, people pay. What do they pay to come to the Centre now?

Megha: Three.

S: I don't think it would be not in accordance with the Dharma to do it, but I'm not sure about the practicalities of it. Because you would also have to include expenses for retreats and holidays presumably, so there would be certain weeks when you were not actually taking the classes. But it might be possible. One could certainly explore the possibility in a limited way, as a pilot project to begin with. It would need quite a bit of setting up initially, wouldn't it?

Ratnavandana: It would, yes.

S: In the way of finding venues and advertising, and of course, it may be that, for several weeks you only got two or three people coming along. You couldn't reckon on - couldn't guarantee even ten every time, though you might.

Dayamegha: So it's definitely not, um, ... it's fine to earn your living by teaching the Dharma directly like that?

S: Well, this raises a problem, in the sense that if you want to work for the Dharma full-time, it means you can't support yourself, so alright, then there are only two ways you can be supported: either you are supported by those who are not working for the Dharma, or you charge, so-to-speak, not for the Dharma itself, but for the expenses involved in teaching it, including your own maintenance. The first is the method of the Theravada countries where a working laity that is not concerned with the, ... even the full-time practice of the Dharma supports bhikkhus, who in principle are concerned just with the practice of the Dharma, and the other alternative is represented you could say, by some forms of the Mahayana - say, in Tibet, where monks work in various ways for the laity which are not entirely spiritual. Well this happens in Theravada countries too, like giving them medical treatment, or chanting sutras, reading the Scriptures and things of that sort. So you've really - if you're not supported by a laity, so to speak, well, either you support yourself from the Dharma or you just have to get some sponsor.

So in a way there is a genuine sort of difficulty here, and it arises in the case of the FWBO, where people are neither - in the case of Order members - neither monks nor lay people so you don't get supported automatically by, as it were, a laity when you get ordained but you are expected to devote yourself entirely to the Dharma so some of your dharmic activities, at least, have to be activities that also bring you in money. I think this is one of the reasons why some people want to be therapists because they can support themselves, and therapy, rightly considered inasmuch as it involves healing people, well, is in accordance with the Dharma. But if you are a full-time therapist you are not able to do very much for the Dharma directly. If you are a part time therapist, well, that's another matter. So I think yes, if Centres aren't able to support Order members out of their general funds, - support them to teach the Dharma, well, one might consider setting up some kind of scheme which would make it possible for people to support themselves, in a way, by teaching the Dharma. Yes, one thing that just occurs to me, it is possible to some extent already, if one gets involved with something like the City Lit, in London. Because if you get together a sufficient number of people - I think it's twelve or fourteen is the minimum, the City Lit - or the Inner London Education Authority will pay you to take that class. So it's not that you are supporting yourself from the Dharma, but you are getting paid for something that you would want to do anyway. I think it has been found that you can support yourself in that way from just two or three evening classes a week. So I think that is something people should look into much more than they have done. I mean, a big city like London where there are hundreds of evening classes of various kinds going on all the time, well, you can function in this way.

Ratnavandana: There might also be a possibility of extending that idea out into the world of business, for a start, as part of a stress management ...

S: Well, yes, people are looking into that, and even exploring that - but that isn't directly teaching the Dharma.

Ratnavandana: ... something else, and teaching meditation.

S: Mm.

Ratnavandana: ... (in certain situations?)

S: But in the case of the sort of classes I'm thinking of, well, you can have a class on Buddhism, because The City Lit will have classes on anything that people want to have classes on. So I think there are arrangements, if you are suitably qualified - there are arrangements under which you can get together your own pupils and sort of register them as a class and be supported to teach them. I think you need some kind of qualification. I'm not sure what it is, but I don't think it's very strict or rigorous. I have talked about this, years and years ago, several times, but it hasn't been taken all that seriously. I think a few people have done it for short periods. It's evening classes - two or three classes. Vangisa was very keen on this. He used that to some extent as a means of support.

Voice: And Vajradipa.

S: Vajradipa. Yes.

Ratnavandana: So perhaps one could even in a, I don't know, adult education authorities in different areas, perhaps you could see whether we could interest them in putting on classes, either Buddhism or meditation or

S: Well, you could make it as general as you like. It is a question of whether you are able to involve say, fourteen people or whatever it is. It can be "Eastern Thought", something as broad as that. Or it can be "Indian philosophy", or it can be "The Mysteries of the East". You can make it anything you like. You've just have to be able to get people to enrol for it ... (Laughter)

Voices: Mm. Yeah.

S: The authorities don't mind (Pause) Anyway that's just my thoughts on that first paragraph.

Ratnavandana: It just goes on (inaudible)

S: *"The idea being that there were a number of different teams covering different areas having made a commitment to carrying their project through for a specific period of time - at least one year - but more likely two, as a way of engaging people in teaching the Dharma to a wider public than*

might come to the Centre itself, but being able to use the Centre's facilities as a back-up, all the groups being a part of an overall Centre team, and the money accruing from each individual area being pooled to finance the operation as a whole including the Centre."

Well, this would logically follow. This is a more systematic way of doing the same thing.

"This wouldn't be an alternative to commercially based Right Livelihood, because you certainly wouldn't make a lot of money out of it, you'd just be able to support yourself at the most, but an additional activity that would generate more income and people, in the long term could feed into Right Livelihood businesses through the people it attracts,...."

Because people who go to evening classes are very often older people. I remember Vangisa saying they weren't necessarily the most brilliant members of the community, their level of interest was in a way quite low, and it was up to you to develop that and encourage them.

"...but that it might be an attractive alternative for Order members giving them an opportunity to work together creatively."

Well, that is certainly true.

"... this could be extending out much further to include teaching meditation in Colleges of Education, big companies, as a means of stress control, and also could be set up as a separate charity/co-op and the funds generated be used to support the teachers."

Yes, I think this certainly could be done. But then you say,

"In the main what do you in principle feel about charging to teach the Dharma?"

I don't think one, ever thinks in terms of 'charging for the Dharma'. But I think people who devote all of their time to teaching the Dharma deserve to be supported. Even in the case of, say, bhikkhus in the East, you could say that they are paid for teaching the Dharma, because on the one hand they teach the Dharma, and on the other hand they are supported. It may not be with cash, but in kind, they get everything that they need, so (chuckling) it would be a pity if you couldn't ever have a full-time teacher of the Dharma (Chuckle) because he wasn't supposed to charge for the Dharma, whether you call it a charge or not, well, if you're not actually working and are teaching full-time you must in effect charge for teaching the Dharma. But of course, in the case of teaching the Dharma, you shouldn't expect to charge more than you require for your reasonable needs. You certainly shouldn't expect to amass wealth in that way, as occasionally does happen in the East. Whatever you manage to bring in over and above your reasonable needs should go to some kind of central pool.

Ratnamegha: That's a good way of looking at it, because I think some people perhaps they only see it's a case of "Should we charge for the Dharma?", but actually looking at it like that, it's a different emphasis, yeah.

S: I mean, sometimes you hear Theravada bhikkhus saying very virtuously, "We don't charge for the Dharma, we give it for free." But that isn't the case because they have to be supported.

Voices: (Murmurs of agreement)

Megha: Was Sanghadevi also asking something about structure - that she ...

Ratnavandana: Well, she was suggesting - because both Sanghadevi and I came at this same thing from slightly different angles - she was suggesting that a separate structure be set up as an independent co-op or ...

S: Charity. This is quite possible.

Ratnavandana: ... that people that were interested in working in this way could work together like that, and ...

S: Well, there's no reason why that sort of structure shouldn't be set up.

Ratnavandana: ... and then they would run courses or whatever, and the money charged would pass through the charity and be just used to support them for any other things.

S: Mm. Mm.

Ratnavandana: I think the point which she makes which is very good is the fact that, well, so many Order members are choosing alternative means of support because they don't feel they can be supported directly.

Megha: ... that there should be a more creative way of doing it.

S: But of course in the case of those who don't work in co-ops for that reason, to some extent I suspect, is due to a lack of faith in co-ops, and to some extent therefore, a lack of faith in themselves, a lack of faith in their ability to make a co-op succeed.

Dayamegha: And trust that their needs will be met.

S: Yes. Yes.

Dayamegha: It takes a while for that, though. People have had years of having to cope for yourself.

Megha: There's one question we haven't asked?

Dayamegha: Yes, I was wondering about that.

Megha: ... and that was to do with the nature of business itself as it grows, like Windhorse Trading.

Punyamegha: (Murmurs) ... let me see if I can find it.

Megha: ... as it accelerates, the business has its own needs in order to expand and it demands a lot from the people actually working there and is that ... it gets to a certain point - partly it's due to a lack of people involved - but it gets to a certain point, well how long can actually somebody keep at that rate, and it also be compatible with one's spiritual development.

S: I'm not quite clear what the question is.

Punyamegha: Shall I find it underneath the scribbles because I'm rewriting the note. It says here,

"Is it realistic to expect that a highly successful business in which the participants work under extreme pressure, for example - Windhorse Trading - can be compatible with spiritual growth in the long term?"

S: I think there're all sorts of assumptions here.

Punyamegha: - as the business expands - Right - as the business expands pressures can be very great because very often it reaches a certain point when it gets larger and larger very quickly so a lot is demanded of the people in it.

S: Read the question again, because I'm going to question some assumptions.

Punyamegha: Right.

"Is it realistic to expect that highly successful businesses in which the participants work under extreme pressure ..."

S: Ah! I mean - is a successful business necessarily one in which the participants work under extreme pressure? Do the two necessarily go together? And that involves asking what constitutes the pressure? Is it actual volume of work? Or is it worry? Is it lack of confidence?

Ratnavandana: There is the case though, in business, when it gains a certain momentum. I used an analogy when talking about it, of the steam train. It's going quite slowly and you're shovelling on the fuel quite slowly but as it speeds up you have to put more and more on more and more quickly and business is actually is very like that, as it gets its own momentum the demands grow enormously.

S: You are using the word "demands", in the question there is the word "pressure" and they are rather different words. Yes. The demands will increase. I mean, this

is obvious, but there can be demands, or even increasing demands, without there being pressure in a negative psychological sense.

Ratnavandana: Yes, but even so, if those demands are very consistent and increasing the whole time, how conducive is working in that sort of situation to spiritual practice?

S: Well, it depends what one means by spiritual practice? It depends on one's assessment of the value of pressure as bringing out the best in people. You mention the case of Windhorse Trading but I mean, it has been very successful, but perhaps it is significant that Kulananda who set the whole thing going is now withdrawing and going into other spheres of activity and handing over, already started handing over, all his responsibilities. So perhaps that is the solution. Perhaps there should be sufficient people in the business to enable everybody to have time off periodically. This is all to do with the general structure of management and so on.

Ratnavandana: It's just that at the level that one reaches, and Windhorse Trading is only starting to reach it - when you are in very big business the level of decision making in things affects the business quite drastically - everything is just geared up at quite a different level and in order for people to be able to take time off and to have their areas covered, it all becomes much more skilled, much more difficult. So I just wondered, well, I just didn't feel people could work in that kind of situation for very long - maybe five years or so.

S: Oh, well! After five years they should be thinking of turning to something else. I don't know how long Kulananda has been with Windhorse Trading - it's probably about five years or six at the most. But I'm not so sure that it's necessarily bad for people to work under pressure to some extent.

Ratnamegha: Why not? Why do you feel that?

S: Well, I think it prevents them from being lazy. (Laughter) I mean a lot of people are slothful and apathetic and they need to be stirred up a bit. (Pause) I mean, you could in a way look at the whole movement, in a sense or from one point of view, as a business, at least as a structure. So how much bigger is the movement now say than it was at the very beginning, the first year. Is it ten times bigger? No. Is it a hundred times bigger? Probably more than that but I certainly can't say that I feel a hundred times more pressure now than I did then, though if I was the worrying type I might. A lot depends on activity and our mental attitude. I feel for instance that I don't have enough time, just because there are a lot of things to do but that is quite another matter. I don't feel that as a pressure. I think one can develop this attitude even within the business situation. There are obviously physical limits which one can't go beyond and shouldn't even try to, but I think a lot of this so-called pressure springs from a wrong mental attitude, and that one's mental attitude is within one's power to control.

Punyamegha: Could you say specifically how you cope with the problem of time?

S: Well, in a way, you can't cope with it. If you've got work that requires two hours and you've only got one hour, well, you can't cope. You have to sacrifice some of the work.

Punyamegha: And just accept that.

S: And accept that. Mm. You have to sharpen your sense of priorities and you have to take time off. One of the things I've done in the past is if there's a lot to do and so many things to do and one hasn't got time to do all of them, (chuckling) what I've done in the past is very often, I've just taken a holiday. (Loud laughter of surprise) and not done any of them! (Chuckling)

Ratnamegha: Would you say ... don't accept their limitations actually.

S: Well, I'm well aware of mine and I think I accept them. Yes. Where you have limitations you must accept them, you have really no choice in the end, so don't fuss and worry about them, accept them. But where you are capable of making a greater effort, well, make that greater effort.

Dayamegha: Are you also partly saying that perhaps it isn't necessary to look at a long term plan of doing the one thing for the rest of your life sort of thing. Say perhaps five years is enough.

S: Yes. Yes. I don't think it would be a good idea for anyone to be in the same team-based Right Livelihood project all their life, or connected with the same centre all their life even, or in the same community all their life.

(?): You're not thinking of moving next.

Dayamegha: (Laughing) No.

S: I mean in the course of five years you should have trained up your successor.

Dayamegha: I suppose it's partly I've wondered if people sometimes haven't come into Right Livelihood because they've had the thought that they must have a career, which they don't think that can provide.

S: Well if you have to think in terms of a career, well think of it as a career within the Movement as a whole. In the outside world if you joined a multinational company, you'd expect to be posted abroad sometime, so all right, if you have to think in terms of career structure think in terms of the whole Movement, and that you might be, as it were, posted to Australia, or posted to Germany, or posted to India, think in those terms. Maybe it isn't a completely positive way of thinking but some people can't help thinking in that way. I mean, you have committed yourself to the Three Jewels so that's where your career lies, within the Movement.

Voices: Yes.

Megha: There is still the question of support.

S: Mm. Mm.

Megha: You still need support.

S: It seems - but in comparison say with India - it seems so easy. I know the dole is not a good thing, in a way, but you can always fall back on that in case of need. You're never going to starve. A community will always take you in, I hope, and feed you for a few days or a few weeks if need be, or a friend. Is there any serious possibility of your starving? I mean hopefully, one will go on working up to the time of one's death in one way or another. Hopefully one will die in harness. (Laughter) I include full-time meditation in that.

Megha: I was just thinking in terms of if you have to work in a particular situation, a Right Livelihood situation, then you leave, and you go to another part of the world you don't necessarily actually have your means of support because there just might not be the facilities there. You might not be able to be on the dole.

S: Well, you're part of the wider structure. You can start with your spiritual friends, you ask some of them if they can support you for a year until you get established in a new place. Or if you are in a position to do so you earn some money and take that with you, or perhaps the co-op in which you've been working sponsors you. I believe that the co-op in Croydon has been financing Padmavajra - at least to some extent - for his trip to India. (Pause)

Ratnamegha: So one should ask sometimes?

S: Make one's need known, perhaps one doesn't even need to ask. Just make one's need known to other people. I think when needs are made known people are usually very generous (Pause)

Dayamegha: Yes, we certainly get around. (Inaudible)

S: (Laughing) I've been amazed, this last year or two the number of people who've had holidays in Italy and Greece and all that as well as their retreats and so on. On the whole people don't do too badly (Chuckles) (Pause) They have far more holidays than I do. Usually I have a holiday, if one can call it that, just at the end of Tuscany. This is what I used to do, two, three or at the most, four days travelling around and sightseeing. I don't feel any need for more than that really. It would be nice to see a few more places, but I don't feel the need of a holiday as such. I'm an old man now.

Dayamegha: Do you take a day off a week, Bhante?

S: No! I work a seven day week. Always have done. It seems to me quite absurd to stop work on Sunday.

Dayamegha: What about Tuesday?

Ratnamegha: When do you take your rest?

S: What I do insist on though, is having some part of each day to myself. This I find essential. It's usually the very early part of the day because I get up, usually, leaving aside the last few months when I've been ill, long before anybody else in the Community. I'm usually up for two, if not three hours before anybody else and I just enjoy that solitary period. Either just sitting quietly and/or doing a little Dharma study. That or nothing at all. So this I like to have every day. This is usually before breakfast. Then after breakfast I can start my work, and when I've been working for an hour or so, then other people start circulating (chuckles) and I go to bed, not early, but at a decent hour every evening. I very rarely stay up late. I'm usually in bed by 10.30 - quarter to eleven.

Megha: So what time do you rise? About five?

S: I like to rise by about five, especially in summer. I quite often, even this year when I've been ill, it's been four o'clock, once or twice it was quarter-to-four because it was light. I usually just can't sleep when it's light. I don't even feel like staying in bed. But my illness made quite a difference. I did sleep quite a bit more after the two operations. But yes, in a sense you could say I have a little holiday every day early every morning, and I find I can certainly manage in that way. I don't think in terms of an annual holiday or anything of that sort. I just wish I could do more work, not less. I think it's partly constitutional. (Chuckles) I don't work in a hectic way. I work steadily. I don't think I ever overdo it, or very, very rarely, and then quite deliberately.

Voice: (Inaudible)

S: We've probably run out of time.

END OF TAPE