

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 [Mitrans](#). 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

TAPE 5

Manjuvajra: *There is another possibility, actually, that if now the sort of Western states in Europe and America, - they've got a lot of the money, the financial wealth and so on - if they started investing in the developing countries, building their factories there - but still taking the profits back for themselves, they could become kind of financial cities(voices speaking at the same time words obscured)*

S: *Well this has happened to some extent, but some of the developing countries are not agreeing to that. This just what they're resisting very strongly, that they strongly object to.*

Nagabodhi: *This is the theory of the multi-national company.*

S: *Multi-national companies in some parts of the Third World are having quite a difficult time.*

Nagabodhi: *It was quite interesting listening to ...he's now the ex-American ambassador to the U.N. talking about theories of aid. He was saying what a fantastic development the multi-national company had been. He said no-one could have foreseen that, as if this was a great kind of positive step towards helping the Third World. There are people who still see them in this way. Certainly most of the stuff I've read about them - they just seem to in fact carry the exploitation a step further. You attract cheap labour from the indigenous workplace so that rather than the developing country kind of just working out its own development, you just attract everyone off the field with promises of good wages or, to them, relatively fabulous wages. They make transistor radios or the parts for transistor radios, that are put together back in America say and then flown back, and the natives who come off the fields, rather than spending their wages on things that will help their own country and their own families, they are working in a kind of western factory so the sort of things they want are the things that they have to buy from America!*

Vessantara: *If they ask for more money, then you just threaten to close that plant.*

[Many people speaking at once]

.....Chrysler

S: *There are some motor car factories in Britain that put together cars out of parts that are manufactured say in Italy.*

Siddhiratna: *The threat was to shift the Ford plant to somewhere like Pakistan or India.*

S: *Yes, right, but supposing Pakistan catches up, then where will they shift to? OK they shift to Indonesia. They catch up and where are they going to shift to then? But there is a sort of possible solution and that is the so-called alternative technology, which is of course just in its infancy. That is to say getting power directed from the sun and things like that. No doubt that will be explored very much in coming decades.*

There is apparently an organisation - I think it's a business organisation - which will install on or in your roof, apparatus for catching the heat of the sun and which will heat your water for you and give you all the heating that you need, and thirty thousand houses in Britain have already been fitted with this. That is a beginning isn't it. So this is something that we could well look into. It costs about £2,000.

Nagabodhi: *I got a lift a few months ago when I was hitching up from Brighton with the man*

who's just developing and marketing these and I got on very well and I'm going to be getting in touch with him.

S: That's a very interesting development, though isn't it. You cease to be dependant on oil. This is what you're using for your central heating and all that. For instance in this place if we're spending say £1,000 a year for heating the place, well spending £2,000 for getting heat from the sun, that's only your cost for oil for two years. So it might be worth considering.

_____ : It's not quite that simple.

S: I'm sure it isn't but...

Nagabodhi: This guy said it took seven years and he reckoned it would pay for itself after seven years. But it can be introduced very gradually.

S: There you are. We ought to look into it.

Lokamitra: If we do have a loss in the standard of living which is happening, then the implications of that as far as discontent and so on are tremendous.

S: Oh yes. Well it means a complete sort of reorientation. Because what is the average chap in the factory working for? Higher wages. We've been conditioned for the last few decades into thinking that the standard of living is going to go up and up and up, but it isn't.

Vessantara: The question arises though whether a drop in the standard of living will mean that most people feeling more insecure will cling on to their jobs and if you look back say to the time of the depression, people didn't seem able to see beyond just being in work and having....

S: Being in work, regular work, was the kingdom of heaven. That was Utopia.

Vessantara: So I wonder whether, if we return to something akin to that situation, it may mean that....I think a lot of the people who have moved into some kind of spiritual movement have been able to do so because that lower level was satisfied. It's easy to get jobs, you could.

_____ : Or even the welfare state...

S: Even ten years ago a youngster could get jobs as frequently as he liked. That is no longer quite the position is it. Some of you even I think in your younger days, you thought nothing of spending just a month in a job and then getting another one. But probably those who are now at the age that you were then can't do that. Or not so easily anyway.

Siddhiratna: I think lowering the standard as well meant that the whole economics of the country become lowered as it were, then it will make things more difficult in terms of shramanas being able to wander around. There won't be the welfare state for instance.

S: Right, even in India it has become difficult for the sadhus to wander around in some areas. In some parts of India they've got notices outside the villages saying that sadhus who beg will be prosecuted. So this is why it becomes important, and this is why I've been saying that the Friends, the Order members, must start their own businesses, and have a source of income which will give you right livelihood, which is the most important thing, and which will not take all your time, and which will give you enough money to live on provided you accept what would be regarded as a lower standard of living. You can't expect support from

the general public, even with regard say to Sukhavati, what have we had from the general public - very little - it's mostly come from within the Movement, from our own Friends.

So you're not going to get support from the public, especially a purely spiritual movement like ours. We can't present ourselves as anything very educational or cultural. At least not very honestly anyway. So we're going to have to earn ourselves, and I think this in a way our great new thinking. That Order members and mitras and other Friends have to get together and found and run their own businesses which will be one, Right Livelihood, two, part time, three, give you enough money for a modest existence to provide the material basis for your life as a human being and your spiritual development. That really is within the limits of our own Movement, what I envisage what will have to happen in the world at large later on anyway. Unless of course it's come the revolution or anything silly like that. We want to get in our own revolution first!

So in that way we become a sort of model, not only from the spiritual point of view, but even from an economic point of view.

Siddhiratna: *I think that's partly the nature of chinese communes isn't it, in Mao's China, in that they're pretty well self supporting. There was a film on him because he's just died, which showed that they had their own machine shops, and iron foundries but on very very small scales.*

S: *This is what Mao tried to do with regard to iron production, but that was a disastrous failure, because that was going too far in the other direction and not taking into account the human factor. He wanted that every cottage should have a little furnace to produce iron, instead of having it done in great big ironworks, foundries, but it didn't work. It was a disastrous failure. But the idea was a good one. At least it was in the right direction, however fumbling. And also of course someone else who's thought about these things was Mahatma Gandhi. There's the famous story of Mahatma Gandhi's loincloth - why did he wear the loincloth - does anyone know?*

_____: *Because he wove it.*

S: *He did weave it, yes, but why did he wear a loincloth? What he did was this. He calculated that there were so many people in India, and there's so much cloth available, and that therefore everybody was entitled to so many yards. If you took more than that you were taking more than your fair share. So I think he found that the average was twenty seven yards a year of thin cotton cloth. So he thought I must not use more than my fair share. So that did not permit him a full length dhoti, it only permitted a short dhoti, plus a little bit to put round the shoulders, so hence his short loincloth. That was the philosophy behind it. That I should not take more than my fair share of the cloth which is available in India.*

Siddhiratna: *Did he not outwit the British in some way about salt. There's some story about.....*

S: *No, that was his famous salt march, which marked the real beginning of his influence in India. The British placed a tax on salt because salt is a universal and necessary commodity, so Mahatma Gandhi reflected first that salt was something very basic, which even the poor had to use. When you work hard, when you perspire, you lose a lot of salt with the perspiration, you need to replace it. So the average Indian, especially the villager, and most Indians are villagers, working in the fields, need a lot of salt. They can't possibly do without it. They have to buy it. So salt is taxed. So in this way they have to pay money to the government which is a foreign government. So he wanted to attack the government and he wanted to find an issue which affected everybody, was of concern to everybody. So he*

decided to tackle this.

Now the manufacture of salt was permitted only under license. You couldn't for instance produce salt and sell it cheap or anything like that, or without people paying the tax, no, salt was a monopoly and that was sold by way of license and subject to tax. So he decided that he would defy the local () by illegally manufacturing salt. So he led a march of some thousands of people to the seaside and there they symbolically manufactured salt without government license, and that was the start of his campaign. That's called the famous Salt March. He made salt on the seashore which is the ancient way - I've seen it done - you stretch out a canvas between stakes and you just pour buckets of seawater through until you get a sort of grey sediment, and you dry that in the sun, and in that way you make sea salt.

So they were doing this and of course the leaders got arrested and that was the start of his movement, on a big scale. He was very clever in choosing issues of this sort. So clearly it was something that concerned everybody, even the poorest. In a way the poorest most of all, so he could rely upon mass support. It was an issue that everybody could understand, that why should we have to pay, even the poorest, tax on the very salt that we need to eat our food with? That really hits us in the belly as it were. You have to have salt. You can't even eat the food without it, you can't even live and work without it.

So he sort of dramatised the issue in this way, that this government, this foreign government is taxing even the salt on our...I was going to say table but they don't usually have any tables. The salt in our food, that even the poorest need, and the poorest need more than anybody, because they are working, doing bodily work.

But anyway you see the sort of way in which we are thinking, sort of economically, from all this.

Manjivajra: One thing that's always puzzled me is why societies which have got a higher standard of living are less generous. For example if you go to areas in Europe where there's a lower standard of living, you find that people are far more generous in terms of just feeding you or giving you what they've got and you go to the richer areas and they become less and less generous.

Lokamitra: Maybe they've made their money by being mean.

S: I think less human contact. In the poorer areas which are less industrialised and less modernised, you've still got the old tradition of hospitality and the person to person contact. The guest was someone who was interesting because he came from far away, was a stranger. He brought you news, you were glad to see him, you were accustomed to dealing with people on a sort of person to person basis, which you're not in the modern industrialised society. Anyway time is more than up, so we'll just carry on with the "Monarchy, the City and Individualism" - a very important topic - in the afternoon.

S: "Monarchy, the City and Individualism".

Text "REPUBLICS IN DECLINE

At the time of Gotama's birth, two types of government were in competition with one another in northern India: republican and monarchical. Not only were the republics engaged in a struggle for survival in the face of the expansion of the monarchies; there were also minor feuds between different tribal republics, as well as major struggles between one monarchy and another. The general result of all this was a trend towards an increase in the size and power of the monarchies at the expense of the republics."

S: That's the key sentence as it were. "The trend towards an increase in the size and power of the monarchies at the expense of the republics." That was a general political trend at the time of the Buddha, throughout the Buddha's lifetime after. Carry on reading. Let's go round the circle, a paragraph at a time.

Text "The republics occupied a belt of territory which ran across the middle of the Gangetic plain in a roughly north-west to south-east direction from the Himalayas to the Ganges. The most northerly of them was the Shakyian republic, in which Gotama himself was born. Adjoining its territory, to the south-east, was the Koliyan republic, and beyond this the Moriyan. To the east of these three was the territory of the Mallas, whose capital was Kushinara, where the Buddha's decease occurred. The republic of the Mallas, together with some other republics - the Licchavis, the Videhas, the Nayas, and the Vajjis - appear to have formed themselves into a loose confederation for joint action against common enemies; this was known by the name of the last one in the list, the Vajjis. It is unlikely that it was a federation in any permanent and formal sense. Government by discussion was the keynote of the republics; that is to say, within these tribal groups the common life was regulated by discussion among the elders or noblemen of the tribe meeting in a regular assembly. These assemblies were known as **sanghas**, and since this institution was the most characteristic feature of the republics, this is the general term by which the republics themselves were known. Earlier in Indian history, in the Vedic period, there appears to have been a somewhat different practice, namely, the assembly of all the members of the tribe to discuss matters of importance. The republican assemblies of the Buddha's day differed from these older folk-assemblies in that it was the elders only who assembled to discuss the affairs of the republic. They were not elected by the rest of the people; rather, they were leading men of the tribe, men belonging to the Kshatriya clan. The form of government was aristocratic rather than democratic, Final authority in all important matters lay with the assembly of the 'fully qualified members of this aristocracy'."

S: Is that clear?

***Lokamitra:** One question. Would tribe run across the caste divisions or would there be tribes which consisted only of Brahmins, only of Kshatriyas and so on?*

S: In a way the tribal system antedates the caste system, because these people are all people towards the eastern side of India and the Aryans, the Vedic system, the Brahmans came down from the North West, and the caste system, the caste pattern was sort of imposed or superimposed only gradually and in some areas quite lightly. We find in the Pali texts that the Kshatriyas strongly resisted the attempts of the Brahmans to relegate them, the Kshatriyas to even second place. In fact we find in the Pali scriptures that when the four castes are enumerated, the Kshatriyas come first. Later Buddhist commentators explain that as being due to respect to the Buddha, in as much as he was born in a Kshatriya family, so the Kshatriyas were enumerated first, but it's quite clear, apart from that consideration, that in many of these territories, the Kshatriyas considered themselves superior to the Brahmans, but we're not to think of the Kshatriyas as a sort of caste quite in the later Brahmanical and Hindu sense. The Kshatriyas were more like the big landowners, the rulers, the administrative caste, and so on.

Maybe 'tribe' is used here rather loosely. It is a sort of anthropological term. Certainly if you speak of the Shakyans as a tribe, they certainly were not all drawn from the same caste. For instance the leading men were all what could be called Kshatriyas, but there is for instance a story in the Pali scriptures to this effect - that a number of young Shakyans who were apparently Kshatriyas, became followers of the Buddha, became bhikkhus, along with an attendant who was a barber. And he was of low caste. So when they were ordained,

aware of this sort of possibility of him being automatically relegated to a lower position, they themselves requested that he should be ordained first, so that he would be senior to them in ordination, so as almost to counteract any tendency on their part to look down on him because formerly he had been their barber.

So this suggests that among the Shakyas there were these sort of distinctions, and that the Kshatriyas were the sort of leading and the most powerful part of the tribe. But there was certainly nothing like the very rigid caste structure of later times. So we can probably say that the Shakyas consisted of a number of different social groups, what later on came to be identified as castes, but the Kshatriyas were definitely the leaders and predominated and influenced.

Again, if you look at present day Indian castes, these are usually classified into two groups. I forget what they're called. There are castes which represent one particular occupational group or class. For instance the barbers all make up a separate caste, the washermen are a separate caste, the Brahmans are a separate caste, but then you've got what are called tribal castes, that is whole tribes with people following all sorts of occupations which have been incorporated into the Hindu caste system, and all regarded as belonging to the same caste, even though they're of different occupations. So within that one caste they've got their own priests, their own washermen, their own bakers, but they all belong to the same caste. So when the Shakyans came to be incorporated virtually within the whole Hindu caste system, you could say they would be regarded as sort of Kshatriyas. The leading men were big landowners and rulers and so on. But within the Shakyans there would be different occupations. So they would then be what is called a tribal caste, not an occupational caste. So there are these two kinds of caste in present day India on the whole.

But in the Buddhas day the whole system was not nearly as rigid as it subsequently became. So if you want to regard the Shakyans as a caste at all, then in later terms, or in terms of later classification, they'd be very much a tribal caste. Not a caste, all of whose members followed a single occupation.

The word 'tribe' seems to be applied to the Shakyans very loosely, doesn't it? I don't know whether it's a very precise sort of designation.

_____ : Would that mean a person has two castes - his tribal caste and his occupational.....

S: Not really. Nowadays it's the overall position you have within the Hindu caste system that counts. For instance among the Nepalese who were included in this system, say for instance Kanis, the Nepalese Hindu caste called the Kani caste, they are regarded as quite low caste by the other caste Hindu Nepalese. They have got their own priests, their own - they're called Kani Brahmans in fact - but they are regarded as Brahmans only within their own caste. Only members of that caste will regard them as deserving any respect as priests. To everybody else they're just Kanis, they're just low caste people. It's only within their own caste, that they have the position of priest.

Lokamitra: Isn't there - is it the Ambata or Ambala Sutta in which the Brahman who the Buddha speaks to then, is a Shakyan? So....

S: Yes, they had their own priests attached to them, but he would seem to be a Brahman in the Vedic sense, sort of loosely attached to the Shakyans, and performing Brahmanical Vedic ceremonies, rites and sacrifices for them, like a sort of chaplain almost. Whether he was an immigrant or the descendent of an immigrant, someone who'd come down from North Western India, or whether the Brahmans had as it were, ()atised a bit we don't really

know. Brahman () all claimed to be descended from Vedic Rishis, and would reject the idea that any Brahmans were the result of intermarriage with people that they'd ()tised. They completely reject that idea officially, but that may well have happened in some cases. In theory all Brahmans claim descent from one or another of the Rishis who were the original authors, as we would say, of the hymns of the Vedas. All Brahmans are therefore descended from a limited number of what are called Gotas. All present day Indian Brahmans trace their descent back to one or another of these lines. But very often it happened, we know, that some of the priests of some of these tribes that were incorporated into the caste system, were sort of given the rank of Brahmans as it were, or regarded as Brahmans, and also there were Brahmans and Brahmans.

There were some Brahmans who looked down on other Brahmans and thing that they may not be really truly descended from original Vedic Brahmans. They may just be sort of () of different tribes that were made Brahmans a mere thousand or two thousand years ago! It's a very complex picture, and probably the anthropological and sociological facts don't exactly correspond to the official Brahman doctrine as it were.

It's like for instance you get many Indian Muslims who claim to be descended from Arab invaders of India, but clearly they have no Arab blood in their veins at all. Similarly, very likely many present day Indian Brahmans are not descended from Vedic Rishis at all. No connection with them whatever.

So the application of this word tribe to the Shakyans as a whole may be questioned, but on the whole it's quite clear what the Shakyans were. We might say that they were a people rather than a tribe.

Lokamitra: Can I just make it finally clear to myself. So the Shakyans would on the whole be Kshatriyas but within that there would be sub-castes...

S: Well don't forget the whole caste system wasn't so rigidly organised then. People like the Shakyans resisted the claims of the Brahmans anyway, but no doubt within the Shakyans territory, among the people collectively called Shakyans, there were people following all sorts of trades and occupations, all of whom were referred to as Shakyans, and that the Kshatriyas or what the Brahmans would have classified as Kshatriyas, occupied the leading position, and possibly quite a high percentage of the population fell into that category. We don't really know. But certainly the majority of the people who became followers of the Buddha from among the Shakyans seemed to have been Kshatriyas, seemed to have come from leading or relatively leading families, including even many relations of the Buddha himself.

I'm a bit reminded of the Venetian republic which was an aristocracy come oligarchy. Or maybe the city republics of medieval and early Renaissance Italy. The ancient Indian Kings were often very much more like the Doge or some of the dukes of these Italian city states, some of whom originally were prominent men who just made their sort of office of head of the state hereditary, like the Medicis for instance, who were originally merchant bankers that founded a sort of princely dynasty. There is a book by the way. It should be at Aryatara in the library on the Kshatriyas of Northern India by B.C.Law. You'll find some information in that. Let's go on then.

Text“The case of the Shakyans republic is particularly interesting. Here the form of government seems to have been a mixture if the kind of republicanism which has just been described, with features of monarchy. The Shakyas, probably for this reason, are not found in many of the lists of typical sanghas (republics) found in the texts of this period; the Shakyas republic was recognized as being of a somewhat different constitution. The case of the Shakyas is interesting because of its possible bearing on the question of what stage of

political evolution the **sanghas** may be taken to represent. It has been suggested that their aristocratic form of government was derived from monarchy, through the emergence of royal, princely groups among whom power was shared. On the other hand, the **sanghas** might be seen as an intermediate stage between the earlier collectivism of fully popular tribal assemblies, and the later, fully developed autocracy of the monarchical state. On one view of the matter, the constitution of the Shakyas could be interpreted as a sign that they had not yet progressed as far as the other **sanghas** from monarchy to republicanism, and that they still retained traces of monarchy; on the other view, it might be held that they were ahead of the others in their progress from some sort of collective tribal rule towards a fully established monarchy. The case is all the more interesting in that it was to the Shakyas that Gotama belonged, and one of his most common titles serves as a reminder of this: Shakya-muni, 'the sage of the Shakyas'. It is significant that in the Pali canonical texts both republican government and kingship are represented as subjects on which the Buddha had something relevant to say, as we shall see in more detail later (see chapter 8, p.172)."

S: Any query on this?

Siddhiratna: Why does he actually think it's important to establish whether the republican sanghas were coming from the monarchical set up or coming from the collective set up?

S: I don't think he regards it as important to establish either of these two views. But on either view the Shakyas constitution was intermediate between the two. Whether it was tribal collectivism developing into monarchy or monarchy developing into aristocracy, the Shakyas constitution was in the middle. It had some republican features and some monarchical features, and it's interesting he says that the Buddha came from that sort of background, and that the Buddha had something to say about republics, something to say about monarchies.

He seems to be simply making the point that whichever way you look at it, the Shakyas constitution represented something intermediate. Neither fully republican and tribal as it were, nor fully monarchical.

Text "The weakness of the republics is demonstrated by the fact that their collapse followed within a few years of the Buddhas's decease, that is, by about the middle of the fifth century BC. While this was due partly to the aggression of the monarchies, it was also due in fairly large measure to internal disagreements among the republican nobles or elders, and to moral indolence,

lack of discipline and justice, and an ill-founded pride. In general, therefore, the collapse of the republics may be said to have been due to the prevalence of an **undisciplined individualism.**"

S: That's a very big jump actually. All this is somewhat hypothetical. Let's see who is the source he quotes for that footnote four. Let's have a look at that. Ghoshal, hmm. "While this was due partly to the aggression of the monarchies, it was also due in fairly large measure to internal disagreement among the republican nobles or elders, and to moral indolence, lack of discipline and justice, and in ill-founded pride. In general therefore the collapse of the republics may be said to have been due to the prevalence of an undisciplined individualism." There seems to be no basis for saying that in fact at all. Because the best you could say was that there was a breakdown due to the rival interests of different groups. This is in fact what he said. But to go from there to undisciplined individualism, that's much too much of a jump.

It's the rival interests of different smaller groups. That is quite a different thing from the rival interests of undisciplined individuals. Do you see what I mean?

Siddhiratna: Why do you think he's trying to make that jump?

S: Well he's trying to find some reason for the emergence of the Buddhist movement as a sociological phenomena.

Siddhiratna: *Which is partly based on the current of individualism.....*

S: Right.

Siddhiratna: *....as opposed to collective tribal constitutions.*

Vessantara: *What about 'moral indolence, lack of discipline and justice and an ill-founded pride'?*

S: Well her refers to Ghoshal as his authority. It's quite possible. But whether the republics had a monopoly of moral indolence, it's difficult to say. But what does seem clear is that you can't, just because the republic has split up, or seems to have split up into a number of rival aristocratic groups, that that is tantamount to an outbreak of undisciplined individualism. Usually we find, if we look at some sort of parallel situations elsewhere in the world, that it's the families that clash, and maybe there are leading individuals in different families, and maybe the individuals eventually put themselves forward. As far as I know there's no actual evidence for that with regard to the Indian republics.

There's certainly a clash of groups within each republic. Anyway let's go on and see whether there's any more light shed.

Text *"Whether monarchy was a type of government superior to the republicanism of the Buddha's day is a question whose answer will depend on how other, prior questions are answered."*

S: Just a minute. To go back a bit to what we were talking about. It seems to me that any difficulties that arose with regard to the republics, are more likely to have been as it were organisational or administrative. You notice that he refers to two possible stages. First of all, a stage in which all the members of the tribe participated in discussions as originally in Greece, when there was an assembly of all the adult male citizens. In Athens there were at the height of the power of Athens, as far as I remember 20,000 such who could assemble. So that was all right if you had a relatively small tribe, but supposing the tribe grew, and we've seen from the previous chapter, the population did grow, presumably among the Shakyans as elsewhere, well then you just had to have a smaller number of people. You had to have representatives; and who more suitable than the elders. Supposing population grew to such an extent that there couldn't even be a proper discussion among the elders. It's all right if you've got a dozen elders, even twenty elders but suppose you've got 500 elders, how could you have a proper discussion, and therefore it would seem that the administrative set up of the tribe tended to break down, and there tended perhaps to be an inclination just to invest one person more and more with power. That seems to have happened in the case of the Shakyans because we are told that the Buddha's father was the president of the assembly, and maybe the tendency developed just to leave things to the president of the assembly who then would start doing things more and more off his own bat, and became in that way a sort of semi-monarch.

So I think the difficulties that gave rise to the break up of the republic and the transition from republic to monarchy or in the direction of monarchy - if that is in fact what happened - are more likely to have been due to administrative and organisational reasons.

So what he is saying here is a bit speculative. Anyway he wants to get his connection, wants

to get his undisciplined individualism emerging. That's a quite important point as we shall see later on.

Also, there is the point that undisciplined individualism or individualism of a sort could emerge because supposing originally everyone in the republic, in the tribe, has a voice, has a say, is present, can make his views felt, well you do feel as it were that you matter, but suppose then the elders decide everything and then maybe just a few people among the elders, well the majority are left without much voice, without much say. They might feel a bit frustrated. They might sort of break out in various ways, become a bit undisciplined and then you get the undisciplined individualism coming in as it were. That is quite a possibility. All right let's carry on.

Text "Whether monarchy was a type of government superior to the republicanism of the Buddha's day is a question whose answer will depend on how other, prior questions are answered. For one must first ask, 'superior in whose view and for what purposes?' One needs to know how widely the effects of one form of government as distinct from another were actually felt throughout the societies concerned, and whether monarchy had more unpleasant and uncomfortable consequences for a greater number of people than republican rule. Was the condition of the people as a whole worse or better under a monarchy from the point of view of personal security, economic prosperity, social freedom, and spiritual satisfaction? To say that the aim of good government is the greatest good of the greatest number is simply to beg two questions: what **is** the greatest good, and how is agreement on this issue reached? Some forms of government are based on the claim that the governing elite knows what is best for the people; monarchical government may even be based on the claim of a totalitarian ruler that he possesses superior wisdom and insight, vouchsafed to him from some divine source. On the other hand it may be that all such theoretical niceties are beside the point, that power belongs to him who is successful in seizing it and keeping it, In this view of the matter people merely acquiesce in whatever form of government is thrust upon until it becomes acutely intolerable, when they may be driven to rebel and overthrow the tyrant, hoping that out of the new situation will emerge a more agreeable alternative. Such observations as these are, at best, only attempts to simplify what are, in actual historical situations, extremely complex mixtures of conscious evaluation and choice on the one hand, and environmental, economic and social determinants on the other. With regard to India at the time of Gotama's birth, the kinds of considerations which have just been mentioned are very appropriate. How far the growth of a great monarchy such as Koshala or Magadha was accepted as an evil necessity, or perhaps a **fait accompli**, in the face of which the common people were powerless, and how far it was accepted for its own sake as providing more satisfactory solutions to problems connected with the common life than republicanism was able to offer, are questions to which no clear answers can be given. Such issues were certainly discussed in the Buddha's day, and various views were taken of the origins and respective merits of different systems of political organization."

S: It seems fairly clear. In a way not all that relevant but anyway let's go on and see.

Text "THEORIES OF KINGSHIP

One view of the origin of monarchy is found in the Buddhist Pali canon. The Agganna Sutta, or 'Discourse on Genesis', said to have been delivered by the Buddha at Shravasti, describes how the first king came to be instituted, in the early days of the human race. Men had become greedy, dishonest, quarrelsome and violent (for reasons which are set out at length in the early part of the sutta). Recognizing this, they came together, and, bewailing the situation, reasoned in this way: 'What if we were to select a certain being, who should be wrathful when indignation is right, who should censure that which should rightly be censured, and should banish him who deserves to be banished?' In recognition of the role which such a being

would play in the interests of the common good, they decided to 'give him in return a proportion of the rice'. Thereupon, we are told, they 'went to the being among them who was the handsomest, the best favoured, the most attractive, the most capable' and put to him their proposal. He accepted it, and, chosen by the whole people, became their **raja**, or ruler. The text emphasizes that he and his like (that is, other rulers among men) were in origin of the same blood as other men: 'their origin was from among those very beings, and no others; like unto themselves, not unlike; and it took place according to what ought to be, justly, and not unfittingly.' It was assumed that there was a 'norm' or ideal, of a ruler, and that actual rulers were selected according to their fitness in terms of this ideal."

S: Is that clear? you notice the basis on which they select the king. Don't you think it's rather odd. "Thereupon", we are told, "they 'went to the being among them who was the handsomest, the best favoured, the most attractive, the most capable' and put to him their proposal." What do you make of this?

Siddhiratna: They've got a good idea about advertising really.

S: It also reminds me of the Greeks, that is to say the Athenians and their devotion to Alcibiades. Alcibiades got away with so much and with so many mistakes and was forgiven because he was the tallest and handsomest of all the Athenians. He was apparently a head taller than anybody else and was well known as the most handsome Athenian of his day, so he got away with it again and again.

So this is quite interesting, isn't it, in view of what is said here.

Ratnaguna: Is it something to do with karma?

S: There's also that. Though that doctrine isn't perhaps brought in at this stage, or known at that time. But it's also as though the king must be a sort of superior kind of man, sort of simply as a human being. He must be superior in appearance, be superior in well even size, and so on. In other words he should be the sort of person that each individual member of the tribe, and don't forget at that time women took no part in the administration, could sort of look up to and regard as of the same type as himself but the best example, as it were, in every respect.

_____ : This is rather naive isn't it, the whole reasoning.

S: In what way?

_____ : Well it assumes that people - the masses if you like - are fairly rational and sort of fairly sensible, and are basically driven by good. It completely ignores.... My own particular theory of things is that it was very much a strongarm man theory. The strongest guy around made the others do what he felt was right, either for his own gain or because of some ideal.

S: Well this depends upon the period of history. If it's the small tribe, yes, but when larger numbers of people are involved, and when there's been a sort of breakdown due to that larger number, one man certainly can't just control things with his strong right arm. You need then other qualities. Perhaps you need to be acceptable to a lot of people and this is where the handsomeness and the other such qualities come in; the most attractive. In other words he has to be someone that commands the general acceptance on grounds other than those of brute physical strength. If these larger numbers are involved.

_____ : When the small tribes get bigger, they then start to have armies don't they?

S: Well we don't find this in India. You notice a remarkable lack of military development. A remarkable lack in a way of political interest. The armies seem to have come much later with the monarchies. As far as I remember in the Pali Canon, there's no reference to any battle between armies, except in a purely illustrative fashion, to illustrate some other point, but no reference to any actual battle, apart from the battles between the Asuras and the Devas, which is perhaps rather interesting. The whole sort of tone of Indian life seems to be much more pacific. You've got the ancient battles described in the Mahabharata. The Bharata is just mentioned in the Pali texts as a story, but there's no reference to actual war itself, even to that.

You get the impression of a very civilian sort of set up.

 : *By the time of Ashoka they kept armies.*

S: Then of course there's Alexander the Great's invasion and the references to battle between Alexander and his forces and the Indian forces.

Vessantara: () *sending to the Buddha to ask whether he should go and sort out the (Vajjins).....*

S: This is true, yes, this is the monarchy developing. Right.

 : *This good looking thing is very common, isn't it because in Buddhist literature, sometimes you get the idea that the more spiritually advanced one is, the better one is supposed to glow and be beautiful looking and so on. In a way, and then you have the connection between the Chakravartin and the Buddha, and so there seems to be a connection there to. The more fit you are to rule, the better you'll look and so on.*

 : *It sounds a bit like how the Americans choose their presidents! (Laughter)*

S: Doesn't it, yes. And there also it's public nations.

Siddhiratna: *I was going to say it's a PR job isn't it.*

S: Right, so maybe that is important. When you can no longer control people by force, whether it's your own personal force or the force of your army, when there's too many of them, you have to control in other ways. So this account isn't necessarily very historical but it's certainly the early Buddhist reading of the early history of the human race. To what extent it is actually historical or reflects facts, that's quite another matter, but it's interesting that the early Buddhists looked at the matter like this.

Well perhaps it isn't as naive as it looks on the surface. It means you've reached a sort of stage of development, a stage of civilization if you like, where you've got to find some other way of getting people's co-operation, and making them function as a single unified society, without just force. Anyway this sutta, the Aganiya Sutta, is quite an important

one, and it gives this reading of the early history of humanity, not necessarily according to the facts as established by modern scientific disciplines. Let's go on then.

Text "The theory of kingship which is set out here is well known in other contexts, where it occurs in roughly the same form: it is the theory which sees the origin of kingship in a social contract. The way in which it is presented in this early Buddhist text suggests that it was at that time a commonly accepted view of the origin and proper function of the political ruler."

S: That is to say a commonly accepted view at that time.

Text "In his discourse on this occasion, the Buddha is represented as having gone on to describe the origin of the four social classes - they were in ancient India believed once to have existed in separation - namely, the landed ruling class, the priestly class, the trading class and the hunters (the lowest class of all). What is of interest at this point is a view of kingship which, as Ghoshal says, 'imposes upon the ruler the obligation of punishing wrongdoers in return for the payment of the customary dues by the people', and the conception of 'the temporal ruler's quasi-contractual obligation of protecting his subjects'. The relation of the Buddhist monk to such a ruler, and to the other classes of society, is the real crux of this discourse, but with that we shall be concerned at a later stage (see chapter 8)."

S: He doesn't of course go into the historicity of the discourse as a discourse of the Buddha, but maybe that isn't very relevant anyway.

Text "Monarchy was, it seems, recognized as being preferable to anarchy, and the monarch was a mortal man as other men: that much can safely be affirmed on the basis of these words of the Buddha. In the theory of kingship found in the brahmanical writings, however, the king was a noble, semi-divine, and beneficent being, promoting the welfare of his people, who were his subjects by right. This was a somewhat different, and certainly more exalted view of kingship from that set forth in the Buddhist texts. In the brahmanical writings the king is represented as being in origin closely associated with the gods; from this fact some, at least, of his authority is derived."

S: Trevor Ling overlooks one fact. When the Buddha addresses kings he regularly addresses them as 'Deva', which is translated in the English translations as 'Your Majesty'. But in the Pali it's 'Deva'. This was the customary mode of address for a king, and the Buddha himself uses it. That may well be...The explanation may be the Buddha simply uses the customary mode of address. He does not necessarily subscribe to the view that the king is a Deva, but if the Buddha uses this, and the Buddha himself brought up in a republican state, it shows that this way of looking at the king or regarding the king or addressing the king, was pretty widespread. This is where it's a bit useful to know what the original says, and this is the regular mode of address - 'Deva' to the king. So wherever in English it's 'Your Majesty', in the original it's just 'Deva', divine one, divine being. However you could translate 'Your Sacred Majesty' - this was the way in which Charles the First was addressed, and I think Charles the Second. But they, the Stuarts were very strong of course on the divine right of kings.

Lokamitra: Kings, I suppose until recently, fitted much more into sort of ethnic religion or into that field and they were much more recognised as part of the order of things, and I suppose this is why they're given this place.

S: In the same book I was reading about the Tudor period, it remarked that King Henry the Eighth, after defeating the Catholic rebellion in the North was regarded as a sort of semi-divine being, which I thought quite interesting.

Lokamitra: *It's very hard for us to appreciate that.*

S: *Also there is some comment on the fact that the French especially were rather surprised at the way in which the English treated their king. This was in the time of Edward the Sixth, and the sort of honour that they paid him. Apparently at the French Court it was enough if you bowed to the king on entering and just kept your cap off, but that was not nearly enough for the English Court. The ritual and the etiquette was much more elaborate..... [END OF SIDE SIDE TWO] ...and with all sorts of religious overtones which quite struck the French, even at that time.*

It's the same with the Byzantine monarchy. That was the great, and the Russian down to the present almost. The king was almost a semi-divine being.

Anyway, by the way, just to refer to this, in The Sutra of Golden Light there is a whole chapter which clearly shows a Buddhist text adopting what here Trevor Ling regards as the Brahmanical view of kingship. It starts from this point. The Buddha or whoever is speaking raises this question, "Why is the king addressed as 'deva'", and then it goes on to say well he is addressed as 'deva' because he is in fact a god and it explains exactly how he comes to be a god, and so on. Why he has come into the world, so quite clearly here, if that was the Brahmanical view of kingship, it has been incorporated into the Buddhist tradition, via this particular sutra. Trevor Ling might regard that as an example of Brahmanical influence creeping into Buddhism via the Mahayana. But still there is a fact, as I said, that the Buddha himself, in the Pali Canon, is shown addressing kings in this way, as 'deva'.

Siddhiratna: *Does that mean that the Buddha thinks of them as semi-divine spiritual ...*

S: *No, as I said, not necessarily. He may just be conforming to the customary usage, just as he used the term self, 'atta', as he says quite clearly, without necessarily accepting that there is any such real 'atta'. Otherwise you might, or you used to sign a letter, 'your obedient humble servant', but not feel that way at all. It was just the way of form. So the Buddha might well have addressed the king as 'deva' just because it was customary. Anyway that's just by the way.*

Text *"The Vedic hymns, and the slightly later writings known as the **Brahmanas**, which all belong to the pre-Buddhist period, set out a double theory of the origin of kingly authority: 'one theory is based upon his creation and endowment by the Highest Deity, and the other is founded upon his election by the gods in the interest of their external security.' From this there developed the principle that it was his subjects' **duty** to honour and obey him. This idea is clearly affirmed in the **Law of Manu**, a treatise which, in its present form, is perhaps of roughly the same date as the Buddhist Pali texts, but may have existed in an earlier form. There the divine origin of kingship is quite explicitly affirmed: 'When creatures, being without a king, were through fear dispersed in all directions, the Lord [i.e., Bhagavan, or God] created a king for the protection of this whole creation.' 'Even an infant King must not be despised, from an idea that he is a mere mortal; for he is a great deity in human form. Let no man, therefore, transgress that law which the king decrees with respect to those in his favour, nor his orders which inflict pain on those in disfavour.'"*

S: *There is a verse in the Buddhist scriptures, I think attributed to the Buddha, where he says a Bhikkhu should not be despised because he is young, and in the same way, a king should not be despised because he is young, nor a serpent and I think a fourth being that I can't remember. So this is a little bit like this. Even an infant king must not be despised.*

Text *"In its ancient Indian form the theory of kingship had another aspect: the kingly office carried with it an obligation to act in accordance with the highest moral principles, the king's*

connection with the gods giving him no right to act arbitrarily or despotically.”

S: Don't forget the gods had won their place due to the force of good karma.

Text “The great epic, the **Mahabharata**, contains a section called **Shantiparvan** (the Book on Peace), which sets out, among other things, the principle of the king's protectorship: 'One becomes a king for acting in the interests of righteousness and not for conducting himself capriciously. The king is, indeed, the protector of the world.' The famous treatise of Indian statecraft, the **Arthashastra** of Kautilya places the emphasis somewhat differently. Its author was a brahman priest and minister of state whose function was to instruct the secular ruler in his proper **dharma** or duty, and while in the course of doing so he makes formal acknowledgement of the idea of **righteous** rule, nevertheless, the real concern of this work is with the successful exercise of political power, the continuous aggrandizement of the state, and the extension of its territorial empire. The tone of the work has been variously characterized as that of political realism, cynicism and Machiavellianism. It is perhaps significant that this treatise is more firmly connected with an historical person (Kautilya, or Chanakya, its brahman author) than either the **Law of Manu** or the **Mahabharata**. It is significant, too, that its prescriptions are known to have been closely related to the actual policy of the Mauryan empire (which grew out of the Magadhan Kingdom shortly after the lifetime of the Buddha). In other words, we may, in the severely practical aspect of this treatise of statecraft, have a more realistic picture of the actual policies and procedures of ancient Indian monarchical rule than is to be found in the somewhat idealistic accounts given in **Manu** and the **Mahabharata**. These, however, may come nearer to the actualities of monarchical rule in India when they dwell on the shortcomings of kingship rather than when they describe its ideal merits. For the criticisms of kingly rule found in the ancient literature are more likely to have been prompted by real experience, than conceived in the abstract, as possibilities which might arise.”

S: All right let's go onto "the disadvantages and advantages of monarchy" because after that we get onto individualism which I think is the real topic of interest in this chapter.

Text “THE DISADVANTAGES AND ADVANTAGES OF MONARCHY

The malfunctioning of the monarchical system is again and again acknowledged. A Buddhist text makes the point that when a king becomes unrighteous, the fault soon spread to the king's ministers, from them to the brahmins, and from them to the householders, townsmen and villagers. Before long even the environment is affected; the times are out of joint, the winds blow out of season, the rains fail, and the whole kingdom grows weak and sickly. Conversely, when a king acts righteously, benefits follow in the same sequence. Unrighteousness in a king shows itself chiefly in pride, asserts the **Shantiparvan**, and this led many kings to ruin. He who succeeds in conquering pride becomes a real king. Frequently mentioned among the snares to be avoided by a king are overindulgence in drink, gambling, hunting, women and music. In brahmanical theory of the seventh and sixth centuries BC, the king's **authority** was, as we have seen, vested in him by the gods and was exercised, in part at least, by virtue of his quasi-divine nature, but it is very clear, too, that he had no inalienable right to this kingly authority, should he by unrighteousness disgrace his office. Warnings against unrighteous conduct are too frequent for us to assume that real examples of kingly misrule were unknown. The act that in the **Law of Manu** string emphasis is placed on the need for the king to rule his own passions successfully if he is to be a successful ruler of his kingdom suggests that, by the time **Manu** was composed, the necessity had been very clearly seen from historical examples. 'Day and night he must strenuously exert himself to conquer his senses, for he alone who has

conquered his own senses can keep his subjects in obedience.' **Manu** also lists certain vices which kings must shun: hunting, gambling, sleeping by day, inordinate love of dancing, singing and music, and useless travel. Another disadvantage of monarchy is that it means the concentration of power in the hands of one individual, for an individual is more acutely vulnerable to violence, disease or some form of fatality than is a company of men such as a republican assembly. It was fully recognized in ancient India that this constituted a peculiar weakness of monarchy. In a hereditary system of monarchy, the king, especially as he grew older and his sons came to manhood, was always at risk from the latter's jealousy. Various safeguards against this danger were set out in the Indian manuals of kingship. One of them declared cynically that any prince for whom his father felt no affection should be secretly killed in infancy. Another recommended that the king should deliberately encourage his sons to indulge in sensual pleasures, for in that way they would be too preoccupied to plot against their father. Yet another advises the king to engage spies to instigate the princes to commit treason, and other spies to dissuade them from doing so. These and other similar prescriptions indicate a general agreement that the ambition of princes constituted a perennial danger to the security of the king, and that the protection of the king's person must be a fundamental aim of royal policy, for upon this rested the whole security of the state."

S: That also applies in modern times doesn't it. The protection of the president's person.

Vessantara: I wondered a bit reading about the text 'recommending that the king should deliberately encourage his sons to indulge in sensual pleasures', if that might not have been a possible reason for Gotama's father...

S: Yes, I wondered that. It is a possibility isn't it. If one wants to look for a political explanation, the Pali texts attribute it to the king's over fondness for his son and his wish to distract him from a spiritual path, but there is this other possibility. All right let's go on then.

Text "However, the concentration of power in the hands of one individual was seen to have compensating advantages too. One of the chief of these was the greater likelihood of uniform punishment for crime, since this was administered entirely by the king. The fact that punishment was meted out by one individual rather than by a number of different men was a guarantee of equity. The citizens of the state could depend on it that all would receive roughly the same treatment - assuming that the king administered justice impartially: so this, too, was a matter on which great emphasis had to be laid. Originally, the function of law enforcement was part of the king's military role. It was his duty to defend his territory and people by force of arms, and by the same kind of force to inflict punishment on wrongdoers; to restrain those who did not restrain themselves, to punish those who violated their prescribed duties. No one was exempt from the performance of his own special duty. The context of thought is of a strongly military kind. The stability and integration of the kingdom depended to a large extent on the manner in which justice was administered. Kautilya's manual of statecraft, the **Arthashastra**, though it may have been composed a century or so after the Buddha's death, nevertheless reflects the experiences of kings and their subjects in the earlier period when it declares that the king who is too harsh in administering punishment depresses and damages the whole realm, that the king who is too mild loses authority and may be overthrown, while the one who inflicts punishment justly gains the respect and support of all his subjects. The great epic, the **Mahabharata**, makes the same point: if the king is too gentle and forgives too frequently, the ordinary people will overpower him, like the little elephant driver who climbs up on the head of that great and noble animal and makes it subservient; the king should be neither too severe nor too mild, but like the spring sunshine, in whose rays one experiences neither excessive cold nor excessive heat. In general the manner of inflicting punishment seems to have been one of the major criteria by which a king's rule was evaluated. If punishment was well-judged, then, it was said, the people became wise and happy; when it was ill-judged and prompted by anger or desire, people were afflicted by a sense of injustice;

when it was neglected altogether the whole realm fell into anarchy. In India this was described as the state of affairs in which the larger fishes devour the smaller.”

S: Again this is something that's touched upon in the Sutra of Golden Light where it is said that the function of the king is to administer justice in such a way that people learn, as it were, that unskilful actions are followed by suffering, and skilful actions are followed by good. So that the administration of justice becomes a sort of mirror for the understanding or the seeing of the truth of the law of karma, and that if therefore justice fails, if the king is not severe enough, if the king is over lenient, and if people who perform unskilful actions aren't punished by the law, by the king, then people sort of lose their faith virtually in the law of karma itself. I wonder whether something like this isn't happening in some countries today.

Nagabodhi: Which countries do you mean?

S: Well this country to begin with. Do you see what I mean.

Nagabodhi: Not quite, no.

S: Well when you can get away with anything, virtually. Then you cease to have any sort of sense of justice, or any sense of karma. So it's as though it's a king's duty, according to the Sutra of Golden Light to make people realise that actions are followed by consequences, that you are accountable for your actions, and that is a sort of means of educating you in the truth or educating you in an understanding of the truths of the law of karma.

Siddhiratna: Do you mean in terms of criminality?

S: Yes, in terms of the criminal law, yes.

Nagabodhi: But doesn't this lead to a rather mechanistic view of karma?

S: Well perhaps that is the only view which ordinary people can have. That if you do something unskilful, well they'll be an unpleasant consequence sooner or later. So in other words, social life in this world, on earth, should, as it were, mirror the operation of the law of karma.

_____ : Could you say more about how you think that has broken down in this country.

S: You can get away with an awful lot, can't you. Sometimes very disparate offenses are punished by the same punishment.

_____ : But on the other hand very minor offenses you get clamped down on immediately.

S: With a severe punishment?

_____ : Well if you disobey a minor regulation, then you get fined, which is sometimes relatively severe.

S: But what about imprisonment, what about death? The death penalty is abolished to begin with. And in many cases there's no such thing even as life imprisonment any more, and you can get away with murder, in that you know you won't have to forfeit your life, and you may get away with.....apparently the average life sentence works out at about twelve years. So there's not even a life sentence any more. So you can get the same punishment for say

burglary, as you get for murder. The punishment for murder is not, in some cases, more severe than the punishment for say robbery.

Siddhiratna: *The Train Robbers are a good example of that.*

S: *So that suggests that robbing a bank is of equal seriousness as murder, therefore murder is no more serious than robbing a bank. So from the standpoint of ancient Indian thought, this is all wrong. In other words, the more serious offence should call for the more serious penalty, but we don't nowadays find that that is always the case. And if of course very trivial offenses are heavily punished at the same time, well that makes it even worse. No sense of justice.*

Sometimes you get really anomalous cases of someone stealing a handbag and he gets two years, just snatching a handbag; another man rapes a woman and severely injures her and he also gets two years. Or, you can do something really bad, and if you get a really clever lawyer - everyone knows you're guilty, but you get off, completely.

Siddhiratna: *Why do you think that's occurred then? Is it something to do with the way that society has changed from the days when the king had more power?*

S: *It's very difficult to say, but don't forget at the beginning of the last century, there were more than two hundred offenses for which you could be hung. If you stole a leg of mutton, that was as serious as murdering a man.*

Siddhiratna: *Or a handkerchief.*

S: *So things aren't as bad as that now, by a long chalk, but they were very much worse in those days.*

Nagabodhi: *Maybe the effect was the same....*

S: *Yes, there was a lack of respect for the law.*

Nagabodhi: *Because juries would*

S: *(interrupts) and they're doing the same sort of thing sometimes now. If they feel that the punishment which will be incurred, if they find the person guilty, is too severe, even though they are convinced he's guilty, they won't find him guilty.*

And also another factor is this diminishing of the idea of responsibility. This I think is very important and has become really overworked, that if you commit a crime, you're sick. Therefore you're not a responsible individual - this is what it boils down to - the idea is encouraged, you're not a responsible individual, you're at the sort of mercy virtually of your instincts, and if you can show that you are not very well or you weren't really responsible, well you get away with it.

Siddhiratna: *Either that or society itself gets blamed.*

S: *Or society gets blamed, so no one is to blame, therefore nobody should be punished. So no doubt there are certain cases where somebody wasn't responsible. For instance it's interesting that within the context of the Vinaya, a bhikkhu who breaks a rule, according to the Theravada tradition, can plead that he was not in his right sense at the time, and he is not punished for that breaking of the rule. This is quite interesting. I don't know whether there's any sort of secular parallel at the time, but this is certainly found in the Theravada Vinaya.*

But we seem to have carried this to extremes with the result that people feel, again, that they can get away with anything. And this diminishes the sense of individual, ethical responsibility.

 : *This happens in school. They've stopped the cane now and stopped you from being allowed to give extra work. If someone's naughty they call in psychiatrists instead, and so the kids have games to see who can get to the psychiatrist quickest.*

S: *So will such children grow up with a sense of moral responsibility and with a feeling that actions do matter and that actions have consequences?*

 : *No.*

S: *Well this is what the Sutra of Golden Light is getting at. That society has to bring home to you the fact that actions have consequences, that skilful actions have good, positive consequences for you, and unskilful actions have the reverse. I think in certain respects in this country we've gone in the direction of discouraging people from thinking ethically in this sort of way. And discouraged people from feeling morally responsible. Responsible for their own actions.*

No doubt as I said, some people are not responsible for their own actions. But the fact that you recognise that has been made an excuse for certain people who just want to deliberately do something unskilful or criminal to make diminished responsibility an excuse, so that they can get away with what they did quite deliberately in fact.

 : *It seems that we go out of our way to take responsibility away - it's their parents, it's their homes, their background, it's their mental state, school.*

S: *It's anything except them. So this seems to be a going to the opposite extreme to which we went before. A dog could be executed for an offence in earlier centuries in this country. A dog could be hung for theft or whatever. Even the poor dog was held responsible, but now it's gone to the other extreme and even human beings aren't held responsible.*

Nagabodhi: *But do you think, therefore, that to have a sort of legalistic attitude towards morality is a step towards a natural kind of morality?*

S: *This seems to be the Buddhist view, in a way. Not legalistic, it's rather that the law and the administration of the law, should reflect moral values and especially the operation of the law of karma.*

Nagabodhi: *I can see that from a theoretical point of view, but to the person who steals and then gets the birch, or whatever it is, are they going to sort of refrain from stealing because they are beginning to develop a feeling that theft is offending a natural idea of morality or are they just.....*

S: *It's just self interest. You want to avoid the consequences, and in this way you learn as it were. In this way also you become liveable with. If everybody in society is of diminished moral responsibility, what happens to society? There is no society in the end. There's just the jungle again.*

Nagabodhi: *I can see that, but is the individual who is simply holding back out of fear of the consequences on that level any nearer to enlightenment or at least to living spiritually.....*

S: *No, but for enlightenment to be possible, for an ethical life to be possible, and the ethical*

life is the first step, there must be an ordered society, as far as the average person is concerned anyway. You can't go to enlightenment directly from the jungle as it were. The ordinary person needs to grow up within a social context where there is such a thing as organised social life, where there is such a thing as ethics, where there is such a thing as responsibility towards other people and so on.

Siddhiratna: It sounds somewhat as if the legal thing is based on fear. That's what sounds a little bit suspicious. Well, yes and no. In a way it has to be based on fear, but there's also the question of the education of the child - punishment yes, but what sort of punishment? It's not necessarily a violent punishment, but if the child, especially, is brought up knowing that there will be consequences of his actions and that if those actions are unskilful there'll be something unpleasant, then you've gained your main point. For instance if there's chaos in the school and the children feel that they can get away with anything, what's going to happen to society later on? At present it's still being contained, this sort of indiscipline, but if it spreads too much, society will break down. This is the plight we've got ourselves into to some extent in this country.

At present the problem is confined mainly to schools and things like hooliganism and so on and so forth. No doubt there are other factors like a lack of outlet for people's energies etc., etc. But one big factor is this sort of rationalisation away of such a thing as moral responsibility.

Siddhiratna: How do you think that affects things like Trade Unions and people who go on picket lines for changing conditions?

S: In what way do you mean?

Siddhiratna: It's hoping that there'll be laws passed against trespassing which may mean that you're not allowed to picket the place in which you work, because you have a genuine grievance perhaps against say the wage level.....

S: You mustn't take the law into your own hands. You mustn't coerce others.

Siddhiratna: And that's what picketing means?

S: Yes. You stop people from working who want to work, so this is coercion, this is force, this is against the rule of law.

Siddhiratna: I'm not sure about being force but I think you're allowed to try to make the people understand your point of view.

S: This is the theory. In practice it's intimidation.

Siddhiratna: There's often a great discrepancy between the theory and the practice of something.

S: If it becomes too great, well then it can't be tolerated, can it. If something invariably is abused, well then even though there's a theoretical justification, that thing has to be abolished.

Siddhiratna: It seems to go that way, yes.

Nagabodhi: Would such a system just mirror the law of karma or in fact could it be the law of karma in operation on us, in that if you did something that was morally wrong, society

made you pay for it, you wouldn't have to wait a few rebirths.

S: Yes, you could well say that. You're paying off your debts as you incur them, you could say that.

***Lokamitra:** I think sometimes too much is made out of doing things out of self interest or fear. After a while it's obviously undesirable but it's why most people get on the spiritual path in some ways, and the Buddha often talks about turbans on fire and things like that.*

S: I think if children are brought up in the right sort of way, not only at school but also in the home, and were properly trained, you just wouldn't need intimidation later on. It wouldn't be necessary.

_____: *Does that suppose that you were going to have the system of penalties to reinforce the law of karma, won't you also have to have a proportionate series of rewards to encourage people to.....*

S: Well if you have a good system of rewards, say where children are concerned, you probably don't need a system of penalties. You can do it the positive way if you're skilful. I was talking about this on the previous study retreat, about India, and the way in which Indian parents bring up their children, and they get them to behave properly, and in a civilised way, in a very natural, positive way, but they don't punish them. You hardly see an Indian punishing a child. They don't smack their children. They're very indulgent, but they do socialise them. They don't have even things like early toilet training or anything like that. They give the very young child a very sort of free hand where all these sort of things are concerned. A long rope, but with great kindness and a lot of patience and thought, they do effectively socialise the child, and apparently, in the vast majority of cases, without any sort of traumatic effect. They do it in a very gentle, kindly, but quite firm, way. You hardly ever see a child being corporally punished in India. It's almost unknown. It's not the way they do things and it isn't really necessary. But it means that the parents must have certain definite principles of their own, certain very definite ideas about life and conduct, and must have a very positive attitude towards the children and must be willing to spend a lot of time with the children, not just teaching them but talking with them, playing with them, taking them around, which Indian parents usually do. Not just bundling them off to school and thinking it's the teacher's job to bring them up.

So if one pays this sort of attention to one's children I'm sure there's no problem or very little problem later on. Because after all the infant is a little brute! You've got to socialise him so he's fit to live in human society and the human community. He's just a little animal to begin with. But if you do it gently and kindly, then the process is relatively painless. But if you do it in a crude and brutal sort of fashion, well they grow up with all sorts of, maybe socialised, but with all sorts of resentments. So the fact that one adopts this sort of principle doesn't mean that one has got to be harsh, or that the law has got to be very rigid or anything like that. If one pays proper attention to the socialisation of the child in a very positive way, then well over half the battle is already won. Maybe three quarters of it is already won.

But what happens to the child nowadays? Especially if mother's out at work, father is only home in the evenings. The child goes off with his own gang, as it were, his own peer group. Doesn't want to spend maybe much time with his parents, watches TV a lot, and schooling is sometimes encouraged almost to be undisciplined.

_____: *Do you think it's true as some people seem to think that there's an innate aggressive instinct in man or is this more a result of sociological factors?*

S: I don't know. The evidence seems to point both ways. I just don't know. But certainly there is in the child, a lot that needs socialising whether in the form of aggression or some other form.

Nagabodhi: *Do you think the idea should be to socialise the child, to get a child to accept and conform to certain norms in society almost no matter what those norms happen to be, because the stability of the society in some ways is even more important than the quality of life within that society.*

S: I touched upon this too. In fact we discussed it quite a bit, that many people who nowadays, especially younger people, who have children have got a completely disgruntled view of society, and they communicate this to the child. The child grows up with no respect for society's institutions and so on - I think this is counter productive. I think the intelligent thing to do would be to socialise the child and inculcate in the child a respect for society, but also at the same time, make it clear to the child, as he grew up, that there was a lot in the existing society that needed changing, and that should be changed, if that was at all possible. But not bring the child up with a disrespect, as it were, for society as such or social life as such, which is tending to happen nowadays. That would seem to be self defeating completely.

But this is the attitude of many young parents, which is rubbing off onto quite a number of children. This is very very foolish, I think, on the part of the parents. Because whatever you may think of the actual existing society in which you live, man cannot live without society. So if you destroy whatever faith your child may have in society as such, or if you bring up your child to disbelieve in society as such, you are virtually making a human existence impossible for the child. We went into all this very thoroughly on the last study retreat. I forget how it came up but it did come up somehow. So I won't say too much more about it now. But you see the point. So it's not a very positive thing to say well society is completely bad, society is completely rotten i.e. the one in which you're living - pull it down - don't have anything to do with it, adopt a completely negative attitude towards it - That doesn't help anyone.

The best thing to do is to have a positive ideal of society that you want to work for, and say our existing society certainly doesn't conform to this, it has certain good points but a lot of bad ones, and we propose to change it gradually, or change it simply, in one way or another. But not to adopt a completely negative, or encourage a completely negative attitude towards society as such, which is in effect what often happens. As I said that is to make human existence itself, and human existence is essentially social, impossible.

I mustn't be quoted. I'm sure no one here will do this. I mustn't be quoted out of context to as it were justify the status quo. That's not my intention at all. I'm merely saying don't throw away the baby with the bathwater.

Nagabodhi: *The notion of punishing, if someone does something that's wrong the punishment should be punishment, but if you then use the word skilful and unskilful - if somebody acts unskilfully, do you feel that it's still a matter of punishing the person or should it be a matter of re-education?*

S: I think that in some ways the term 'unskilful' isn't quite adequate. Sometimes you know a thing is unskilful but you decide, no I'm going to do it anyway. So that isn't just unskilfulness is it, it's a sort of cussedness, a sort of stubbornness. It's not just unskilfulness (Pause) except in a deeply spiritual sense, but on the practical, as it were, social, ethical level, you have to treat it almost as deliberate wickedness. Not just as a little mistake which someone happens to have made, a sort of oversight. 'Oh I'm sorry - I made a mistake - I killed him.' Not like that.

Manjuvajra: *So it's something else that you're punishing really. You're pointing out the unskilfulness and the cussedness really.*

S: *Yes, you could say that,*

Manjuvajra: *I mean what would normally be the result of cussedness? Where would one be reborn is one was a cussed person.*

S: *Well Hell I should think. (Pause) I think also this sense of justice is very important. I think this is something which is completely overlooked nowadays. I think the majority of people have got a sense of justice which is constantly being violated. I think this is something that we haven't thought about at all in modern times. I think, as I said, the majority of people have got a definite sense of justice, of what is fair, and this is constantly being violated. So they lose their faith virtually in justice. All sorts of things go on or are permitted to go on which don't seem fair at all. And you are given the feeling that people are allowed to get away with it, and that isn't fair, that isn't just. That people do all sorts of terrible things and get away with it, or that they have all sorts of things that they don't deserve. Where's the justice of that?*

So I think many people feel a sort of deep violation and a helplessness. They can't do anything about it, and when a lot of people in the society have their sense of justice violated beyond a certain point, I think that society begins to break down.

There was something said here about a sense of justice. What was it?

Vessantara: *About when the king becomes unrighteous in spreading dhamma.*

Siddhiratna: *"...ill judged and prompted by anger or desire, that people were afflicted by a sense of injustice."*

S: *Affected by a sense of injustice. I think this is very important. For instance supposing you commit some trivial motoring offence and you're punished quite savagely with a very heavy fine, and somebody else commits what seems to be a really serious offence and he's let off with a much smaller fine, you can't help feeling the injustice of this. I'm sure this happens a lot. A lot of people get this sort of feeling in different contexts. It's not even that they mind being punished, but let it be proportionate. Supposing there are two children. They both commit the same offence. Father beats one of them savagely and just smacks the other one very lightly. How would they feel? Especially the child who has been punished savagely? But this is happening all the time. And not only in the terms of punishment but of reward as it were. Some people feel a certain person is born into a certain family and he's born a millionaire. Why? Where's the justice of that? Why should somebody be born into that sort of family. Well you could say law of karma, but people don't believe in it quite in that sort of way. It looks like an unfair advantage.*

So I think most people do have a sense of justice in this sort of way, a sense of fairness, certainly in this country, but that it is constantly being violated. So the king must not violate people's sense of justice, the law must not violate people's sense of justice. Otherwise they lost faith in the king, they lose faith in the law, and then society doesn't work any more.

[End of Tape 5 Tape 6]

This is one of the reasons why king's courts were originally set up in Britain, because the local courts varied so much. You could never be sure whether you'd be punished or let off or executed, imprisoned or fined - you just didn't know - for the same offence. So therefore the

assize courts were set up, the judges travelled around the country on circuit, the king's judges, and you could choose to be heard in those courts for certain more serious matters, and there you were sure of receiving the king's justice which was impartial and even and was the same all over the country. There's a little bit of that still in this country. Magistrates courts notoriously differ don't they from one part of the country to another or one court to another.

Nagabodhi: *One magistrate to another.*

S: *One magistrate to another.*

Nagabodhi: *Certainly for drug offenses I remember a friend of mine who had to go up and the solicitor was saying we'll hopefully have it at a certain time on a certain day when such and such a magistrate will be taking it, because it made a difference of quite a lot of money in terms of fines he thought.*

S: *So doesn't this create a sense of injustice or a sense of 'there is no justice'? All right, even supposing you feel that you ought not to be fined for something like drugs, but at least you don't mind so much if your fined the same amount for your offence as anybody else in any other part of the country in any magistrates court will be fined for his offence. But when you maybe get sent to prison for exactly the same offence, and somebody just is fined, well you feel aggrieved. If you're all punished alike, even though you may feel you haven't really committed an offence, you won't mind so much. It's the sense of injustice that rankles. So therefore it is important that society should be just. This is the point that the Sutra of Golden Light makes and which some of these other texts seem to make.*

Manjuvajra: *Doesn't that sense of injustice go even deeper then. I think of the Book of Jobe - there it's sort of fitting a kind of eternal human experience.*

S: *I think in the case of the Book of Jobe it was a question of the misapplication of the idea of justice. Certain things just happen. If there's a thunderstorm and you're struck by lightning, well you could feel well what's the justice of this, but you don't expect justice from nature - that's your mistake. Justice is a human concept which applies within human affairs. Nature is not just. This is what God says in the Book of Jobe. God seems to personify here just natural powers. "I send my rain upon the just and the unjust alike. I send my rain into the desert where no man is." Yes, nature's like that. Nature is not just. It's only human beings who can be just.*

Vessantara: *It's surprising how common, certainly in the past, this idea in the beginning of this section about when the times are out of joint then nature goes out of joint.*

S: *I would say in the light of certain modern researches, this is quite significant. It's an idea we ought to re-examine. Perhaps that would lead us rather too far afield. One needs to do quite a bit of reading up on it anyway.*

Siddhiratna: *Who were you thinking of?*

S: *Well things like "the Secret life of Plants", the fact that your mental state can affect the life of the vegetation around you, things like that.*

Nagabodhi: *You don't think a sort of disillusionment with society and its norms does lead some people at least at the moment towards the spiritual life. I'm thinking of the drug people.....*

S: *If it's disillusionment, yes. If it's disgruntlement, no. I think most are disgruntled rather than disillusioned. Disgruntlement means you would like those particular things but you can't get them, therefore you feel aggrieved. Disillusionment means you no longer want those things because you've seen through them. Trade Unionists are disgruntled, not disillusioned when they don't get all the money that they would like. (Pause) Anyway we must leave some time for individualism. Let's carry on.*

Text “*THE KING AS THE SUPREME INDIVIDUAL*”

*This might lead one to suppose that at the time of the Buddha monarchy was expanding at the expense of the tribal republics because it was popularly held to be a preferable form of government. But that would be to think that the known examples of it were, on the whole, just and beneficent rather than otherwise, and such a thought is both naïve and historically unwarranted. It would be too ingenuous to imagine that monarchical rule had its origins in the free choice of the people; the king was where he was, in almost every case, largely because he had, so to speak, climbed up on the shoulders of others. Even in the case of a long-established dynasty, where a king had succeeded to his throne by hereditary right, he would almost certainly have had to deal with rival claimants, in the form of ambitious brother-princes, or powerful ministers who might easily become would-be usurpers. In India palace intrigue and the coup d'etat were far from uncommon. They are, in fact, envisaged in the manuals of statecraft as possible courses of action to be followed when a king failed to rule in accordance with the traditional **dhamma**, or law of righteousness laid down by generations of brahman priests. The king's quasi-divinity afforded him no protection if he defaulted in his role as the upholder of **dhamma**. It is clear that he ruled, in the first place, by virtue of his ability to protect himself from intrigue and attack. That he ruled by the grace of God or with the consent of the common people were, in reality, subordinate considerations. It was as the **de facto** solitary wielder of power that he inspired fear and reference; to such a figure it would not be difficult to attribute divinity, especially in India, where the dividing line between men and gods is less sharply drawn than it is in some other cultures. There was a special reason for the growth in power of one of these monarchies in particular, namely that of Magadha. The territory of this kingdom covered approximately the area which today forms the adjacent administrative Districts of Patna and Gaya. To the south of this is an area containing vast iron-ore deposits, described by modern geologists as 'one of the major iron ore fields of the world, in which enormous tonnages of rich ore are readily available'. It is noteworthy that this iron ore, which is of high grade, 'occurs usually at or near the tops of hill ranges' and that most of it 'can be won by open-cast methods'.”*

S: *What are open-cast methods, does anybody know?*

Nagabodhi: *Just digging directly down through the hillside.*

Text “*Of the kingdoms of the Gangetic plain it was Magadha which was best placed to benefit from this good supply of readily available iron. Since it was nearby, the trouble and cost of transporting the ore would not have been so great for it as for other more distant kingdoms. Moreover, supplies of ore to the other kingdoms of the north Indian plain would have had to pass through Magadha's territory and it would consequently have been able to exercise some kind of control of iron supplies to these other states. The iron was used for agricultural tools (and so aided the development of agriculture), and also for weapons of war. The kingdom which controlled the iron supply and had the easiest access to it would obviously be in a position to develop agriculturally and militarily more rapidly than others. The shift in the balance of power among the north Indian kingdoms in favour of Magadha seems to have been taking place during the Buddha's lifetime, in the reign of the Magadhan king, Bimbisara, and his son, Ajatashatru, who was also king while the Buddha was alive. Ajatashatru, especially, appears in the early Buddhist literature as a very powerful,*

determined and ruthless monarch.”

S: I'm not quite sure how definitely established this fact is, that the rise of Magadha was due to its access to iron. It's true that there are these iron ore fields nearby, but Trevor Ling doesn't cite any authorities, apart from the purely geological ones.

_____ : And you'd expect those to be somewhat depleted by now if that were the case.

S: I don't know. They are very very considerable indeed. I don't remember any reference in the Pali texts to iron mining or anything of that sort, and I don't know whether this is just his hypothesis based on the fact that, one; there are these iron deposits in that area, and two; Magadha did rise to power; or whether there is any actual evidence for the part that iron played in all this. We know that in, for instance, the Middle East, the discovery of iron and access to iron played a very important part in the rise of the Assyrian Empire. As far as I remember, the Egyptians for instance had weapons only made of copper, and the Assyrians were able to conquer the Egyptians and the Babylonians because they had access to iron. This was the source of their strength. But whether this was in fact the case with Magadha I don't know and he doesn't cite any direct evidence. It may well have been, but he does seem a little fond of these sort of rather speculative hypotheses. But anyway let's leave it an open question, because Magadha did rise to power. That we know very definitely and it may well have been because iron was more readily available etc.

It's also interesting that the wooden plough is still used in India today even. Trevor Ling refers to the use of iron in agriculture, well one of the main things would have been the iron ploughshare, but a wooden plough, a completely wooden plough with just a wooden stick instead of the ploughshare is still used all over India. Anyway let's go on.

Text *“The old maxim that nothing succeeds like success appears to find support in the history of kingship in India. What seems to have been abhorred more than anything was political anarchy. The social evils of this are depicted in the ancient texts, brahmanical and Buddhist, in a way that suggests that the common view of society was one which saw it as an aggregate of aggressive, violently self-assertive individuals whose mutual destructiveness could be held in check only by a single controller possessing the authority and the power to punish. The violence of the many individuals was to be met and overcome by the violence of the one supreme individual.”*

S: There's a lot of truth in this but it seems that the violence of the one supreme individual wouldn't be quite enough. That would be virtually holding everybody down by means of a permanent reign of terror which seems not to have been the case. There are all sorts of other factors involved, including cultural and religious factors, but certainly it does seem that this fear, this fact that what seems to have been abhorred more than anything was political anarchy was based on facts. That political anarchy was really something to be feared. Complete breakdown of law and order. Complete breakdown therefore of society itself and truly human existence, civilised existence.

All right, let's go on to "The Emergence of Individualism". We may not be able to finish this today.

Text *“THE EMERGENCE OF INDIVIDUALISM*

A question which it is important to try to answer at this point is one concerning the causes of this individualism during these early centuries of Indian history. It was a period, we have seen, characterized not only by increasingly marked individualism but also by the growth of monarchy;”

S: He says "it was a period, we have seen, characterized not only by the increasingly marked individualism". He takes that as an accepted fact now, but I don't think we can really regard it as such, certainly not for the reasons that he gave.

Text "...together with these factors there appears to have been an intensification of urban life in some of the larger cities. These three features of the life of the period certainly seem to be in some way inter-related. What has to be considered is whether one of them developed first, independently of the other two, and if so, whether this was because of some other prior condition."

S: This seems to be really jumping the gun quite a bit. "These three features of the life of the period certainly seem to be in some way inter-related. What has to be considered is whether one of them developed first", but surely first you should establish very definitely whether they are in fact inter-related, before you try to find out which one came first. He says seem to be inter-related. Anyway let's go on and see what happens.

Text "The possibilities are (1) that individualism was the primary factor, that is, that the trend towards individualism facilitated the growth of monarchical government, and that this entailed increased urbanization; or (2) it may have been that monarchy was the novel factor which, once introduced into the lands of the Gangetic plain, gave rise to urbanization, which in turn led to increased individualism; or (3) it may have been that the growth of cities was the primary factor: that is, that there were non-political reasons why certain cities grew in size and density of population, and that these cities then became the growth-points of an individualism, which, by gradually spreading through the whole region, paved the way for the advance of strong monarchical government as the only solution to the evils entailed in its increase. There is something to be said for each of these possibilities, but on balance the known facts seem to favour the third."

***Nagabodhi:** I'm not sure that he's actually defined what he means by 'individualism'.*

S: No, he hasn't at all, no.

***Nagabodhi:** It's a bit difficult to even.....*

S: He's talked earlier on about undisciplined individualism. "In general therefore the collapse of the republics may be said to have been due to the prevalence of an undisciplined individualism", but all that he's really sort of established is that the collapse of the republics may well have been due to different rival groups within the republic, but that's quite a long way from undisciplined individualism.

_____ : He seems to mean something like just very simple kind of egotistic demanding. Like grabbing for oneself. Ego anarchy.

S: Also very often you can't see whether a certain thing is cause or effect. Things are inter-related in such a complicated sort of way. All these factors could well have been going on and increasing at the same time, without any one of them being the direct cause of the other two. He seems a little naive in this sort of discussion doesn't he?

***Nagabodhi:** I just don't even know how to approach him until he's actually defined what he means by individualism.*

S: Let's go on then.

Text “We have already seen that a considerable growth of population was taking place in the Gangetic plain at the time of the Buddha, due largely to the increased cultivation of what had formerly been forest. In the 'middle' country (**Madyadesa**) it was rice growing which predominated, but it is clear from the evidence of the Pali Buddhist texts that a variety of other crops and fruits were also grown. The result of this increased population **size** would have been a slight increase also in population **density** over the whole area, with, however, more acute increases in density in the cities of the plain. We have seen, too, that there was in the cities a considerable diversity of occupations, with a fairly refined degree of specialization. This was due partly to the needs of a royal court, which each of the great cities either was or had been at some state in its history. But it was due too, and possibly in even greater measure, to the diversification of the economy which would have followed as a consequence of the growth of population, the development of agriculture, the growing differentiation in methods of production (such as herdkeeping, fishing, the raising of rice and other cereal and vegetable crops, fruit-growing, forestry and mining) and a general increase in the economic wealth of the region. Moreover, the continual extension of the area of society which was under monarchical rule, as opposed to tribal republican government, would have meant a growing complexity in modes of social organization. ”

S: This seems quite straightforward doesn't it.

Vessantara: The whole thing's based on really flimsy arguments.

S: A not very in depth analysis, you could say.

Vessantara: He makes certain assumptions earlier on like the fact that the population was increasing he only infers from the fact that they changed to rice growing, but by the time it reappears here it's a proven fact.

S: Yes. Anyway let's carry on.

Text “All this accords well with the general line of argument developed by Emile Durkheim, that the development of the division of labour has for its principal cause an increase in the density of a society. An increase in the overall density of population brings with it an increase in what Durkheim calls 'moral density'. By this he means increased facilities for transportation and communication throughout the area, and thus an increase in the extent to which, and the area over which, social contacts take place. Durkheim summarizes his argument at this point in the following proposition: 'The division of labour varies in direct ratio with the volume and density of societies, and, if it progresses in a continuous manner in the course of social development, it is because societies become regularly denser and generally more voluminous.' This would appear to fit very well what was happening in the Ganges valley in the period we are concerned with. Among the consequences of such a development of diverse specialist occupations, according to Durkheim, is the growth of individualism: 'far from being trammelled by the progress of specialization, individual personality develops with the division of labour'. He points out that in more primitive societies each man resembles his companions; there is little differentiation of tasks and statuses and it is the corporate life of the tribe which, so to speak, occurs in him which is his alone and which individualizes him, as he is something more than a simple incarnation of the generic type of his race and his group'.”

S: Now! How true do you think this is?

Manjuvajra: Well he's defining what he means by an individual.

S: Yes.

Manjuvajra: , which is something very different to what we would use. It a sort of man's ego definition.

S: The point is are you more of an individual in our sense of the term, because you are more specialized? You're not, are you?

_____: I would have thought less.

Siddhiratna: Specialized in some working way?

S: Yes. For instance, in India, you've got different groups of people who follow the same occupation and who belong, therefore, to the same caste. You may have scores, hundreds, thousands of people all following the same occupation, all doing the same work - they definitely have a sort of common character, just as Durkheim says all the members of the tribe, before specialization, have a common character. So perhaps it's a sort of relative thing.

Nagabodhi: It is a degree of definition of the independence, but whether it's got anything to do with individuality in the sense we understand it....

Manjuvajra: But is it any more independence because if a man is specialized, then he's much more dependent on the society that he's a part of. He's lost his integrity.

Nagabodhi: But he's maybe less dependent on his family connections. If he's got a trade, for example, he can travel, he can earn money, he's a free economic unit.

S: Well if there's another society somewhere else which needs his sort of services.

Nagabodhi: You got this very much in England. The rise of the novel was very much concerned with the development of individualism in this sense. Robinson Crusoe was very much a kind of analogy of this whole thing.

S: Robinson Crusoe was the typical all-rounder who did everything himself, wasn't he?!

Nagabodhi: In one sense, yes.

S: Perhaps it also depends on the kind of occupation. Maybe you can't generalise too much. If it's the kind of occupation that tends to take you from place to place, then that may be a means of making you more of an individual by bringing you into contact with different societies, different other people, but that would not mean that the greater specialization itself made you more of an individual, but only the opportunities which a certain kind of specialization gave you. For instance a merchant. A merchant is a highly specialized thing, but then a merchant travels from place to place. It is not being a merchant that makes him more of an individual, it's the opportunities that being a merchant gives him that makes him more of an individual if he can take advantage of those opportunities.

Nagabodhi: But when society is organised in such a way that the merchant doesn't have to spend most of his time making his shoes and catching his own food, then he's free to just be a merchant, free to choose, in other words.

Lokamitra: It surely just means, according to Ling, economically different from the rest of the group, or different from the main group here. That he's not a hunter and gatherer like the rest of them or like they used to be.

S: *But are you necessarily less of an individual because you live in the same way as everybody else?*

Lokamitra: *Not according to our terms, but according to his terms.*

Siddhiratna: *Can we say what our terms are actually, just for a quick redefinition of them?*

S: *Well the individual is one who is aware, who is self aware, who is responsible, who is emotionally not dependant on the group. This very broadly is the individual. Mainly these three things.*

Vessantara: *The opportunity to specialise must imply some kind of greater freedom of choice than you had under the old tribal system, which I would have thought is in small measure to do with individuality, or a stage towards it.*

Siddhiratna: *You mean one particular talent can come to the fore as it were?*

Vessantara: *If you like. If you're totally tied down to following the way of life that the tribes always followed which involves hunting and so on and so forth throughout the year, that's in a way a lower situation than when you grow up and you can decide whether you're going to be a shoemaker or a goldsmith or a blacksmith.*

S: *But in India, you couldn't decide because it was hereditary, or at least it certainly became hereditary quite quickly.*

Nagabodhi: *This is something I wonder about this whole thesis. He seems to be arguing his way from theories developed in the west and applying them tooh this must have happened in the east simply because there were certain things, but he's not looking at phenomena that arose in the east and then saying well therefore we can apply these things. All sorts of things didn't happen in India that happened in the west as a result of western individualism. And maybe he's going to claim that the Buddha was the phenomenon.*

S: *For instance you could argue that specialization sharpened your sense of difference from others and therefore enhanced your sense of individuality. But are you any more of an individual simply because you function in one particular way among a number of human possibilities? Doesn't the idea of being an individual include a certain amount of all round development. There's that too.*

Vessantara: *It seems that our definition of individuality starts considerably beyond the kind of definition that's been used here. It's really a question of whether specialization would make you a little further on the road towards individuality.*

S: *It seems to me that the whole crux, as it were of this question of the group and the individual, is that individuality begins to develop when, in one way or another, the individual or proto-individual, starts feeling himself as an individual distinct from the group. Different from other members of the group. It could be that his specialization gives him some small measure of that. It would be a very small step in that direction, I would say.*

Or put it this way. How does one become aware of oneself as an individual? How did one? If you think back in your own cases, when did you first become aware of yourself as an individual? Can you remember?

_____: *It would be an accident wouldn't it. You wouldn't be able to say I have become aware of myself as an individual.*

S: You might be able to think back to a time when roughly, apart from any actual incident, you started thinking or realising that you were an individual.

***Siddhiratna:** It usually occurs in one's teens I would have thought. Fifteen or sixteen, something like that.*

S: And how does it happen? Can anybody think. Was there anything that made them realise that they were an individual, separate from everybody else?

***Nagabodhi:** Disagreement.*

***Siddhiratna:** Yes, with the family usually.*

***Nagabodhi:** A feeling of being alone.*

S: Very often it's just a conflict between your interests and those of the group, even when they are interests which you share with the group but somehow or other they get into conflict, into collision. When you no longer accept the ruling of the group as it were. This may not be the invariable way but it I think probably the most common way. It seems as though, if you start off as a member of the group in a very statistical sense, you've got the same desires, the same wants basically as everybody else in the group, so theoretically there shouldn't be any conflict of interest, but actually there is because sometimes you all want the same thing but that particular thing is in short supply. Therefore you become more aware of yourself as different.

***Siddhiratna:** Differentiated. (Pause) That sense of becoming an individual ties in more with our sense. The way that we use the word individual.*

S: For instance you could at a higher level become aware of a difference when you realise that you thought differently from everybody else. You had a different outlook on life. This I think is the real starting point of higher individuality, and this is what happened among the Greeks at the time roughly of Socrates. The old archaic system was falling into.....a lot of people could no longer accept it and started feeling that. Socrates among them. It's also connected perhaps with the growth of the power of thought. Perhaps it's connected with the growth of rationalism in a way, the power of reason. Though perhaps that's sometimes gets out of hand, but then you start questioning things. The elders of the tribe say such and such and they give the old sort of mythic explanation of things; you with your developed reason can no longer accept that. Then you begin to feel a difference. You begin to feel yourself as a thinking individual. Therefore as an individual.

You might have been brought up in a Christian family and your parents and others might have tried to send you to Sunday School, and then a point came when you realised that you didn't think as they thought. You couldn't accept it, and that also would be the sort of germ of individuality, wouldn't it?

***Nagabodhi:** Those two germs - realising you see things differently or think about things differently are lacking in the case of individualism. You may be more interested in getting your own way more than helping others, but you're still after the same things that other people are after. Active disgruntlement.*

S: Right.

***Lokamitra:** He seems to be trying to fit Buddhism or the growth of Buddhism into some sort of half-baked Marxist theory of history. Sort of starting off with the primitive tribal society*

which had some very positive aspects like, according to him, non individualism; then there's sort of corruption and then coming back with the Buddhist state or whatever.

S: He doesn't distinguish between what we would call sub individuality and, as it were, individuality, even super individuality.

_____ : He just keeps it all on one low level.

S: It seems to me that there was originally a state of relative unanimity with your social group, that in one way or another you became conscious of your difference from that group and became at least an embryonic individual, and that brought you up against certain problems, and then you can either reconstitute another group, maybe in a more complex or subtle manner, which you can then be a member, but not yet an individual, or you can go in an altogether different direction and become full and individual and start looking for other individuals and then give birth to a spiritual community.

It is interesting - Trevor Ling goes into this later on though in a different way - that the Buddha was faced by two choices. He could either be a king or he could be a spiritual teacher or an enlightened being. So it's as though that suggests he could either take refuge in a bigger and better group, or stop thinking in terms of the group altogether. Become himself an individual and start encouraging and helping others to become individuals and then with them set up a spiritual community, in other words found the Sangha. But Trevor Ling it seems regards the Buddha in setting up the Sangha, as setting up a religious group, almost as a sort of bigger and better version of the old ethnic tribal group which has now broken down. He doesn't have the conception of spiritual community at all because he doesn't have the conception of an individual at all, in our sense.

So his whole treatment of this question of the individual is very confused. An individual means basically someone who is consciously developing himself as an individual.

Nagabodhi: What's the best way of encouraging or treating a young person, an adolescent, maybe even younger, who is going through this, who is experiencing themselves as an individual, probably in reaction to say parents. Most people go through that rebellious phase. Is this a healthy or possibly a healthy....

S: I think one has to distinguish between reactive individualism and incipient individuality. I think they may look very similar to begin with.

Siddhiratna: What is the difference?

S: Well the reactive individualism is simplyyou are a sub individual, you are just a member of the group, but you come into conflict with the group because you share the same selfish interests, and you feel you're not getting your share. But in the case of incipient individualism you begin to realise yourself, see yourself, feel yourself, as an individual separate from the group, and as it were wanting something that the group as such can't give you. Which you can only get by developing yourself. But in the case of individualism you think as it were that the group could give it if it wanted to but it won't, so you develop this resentful and angry attitude towards the group.

Siddhiratna: And you think that this is what Nagabodhi's thing about adolescence, rebelliousness.....

S: Yes, I'm saying in reply to that question that you have to try and distinguish between this reactive individualism and incipient individuality.

Vessantara: So with reactive individualism you're disgruntled and with incipient individuality you're disillusioned.

S: Or on the way to disillusionment. This is why I refer to most of these people in Trades Unions - they're disgruntled. They are not disillusioned with capitalist society etc. They're disgruntled. The golden goose is not laying big enough eggs fast enough. They are quite happy with the goose as such. Well they're quite happy with the golden eggs that means - they just want more of them! But to be disillusioned would mean that you didn't want the golden eggs any more. You wanted something else that no layer of golden eggs could give you.

Siddhiratna: Would you not think that in something like Trades Unions that....I don't know enough about Marxism or Trades Unions to talk very knowingly about them, but I should suspect you would come across somebody there within the Trade Union movement who knew about Trades Unions and wanted to implement what they thought, what they felt, and you could trace that back, and the whole beginning of their attitude would be altruistic in the sense that we would see developing ourselves and our Movement as altruistic.

S: I'm quite sure this was the case at the beginning, yes.

Siddhiratna: So that certain of the things that they do are not entirely selfish or just after golden eggs.

S: I think the idealism that was originally there has been completely lost. One of the grossest remarks that I ever heard on the radio - a noted Trade Union leader said that when the boys after the lolly nothing on earth can stop them. Trade Union philosophy apparently in the 1970's. And you notice this sort of economic anarchy today with these silly disputes over - what do they call it - between unions?

_____ : Division of labour?

S: It's not just division of labour it's.....

_____ : Demarcation.

S: Demarcation disputes, and the demarcation dispute leads to a strike which is in nobody's interests.

Nagabodhi: So going back the adolescent boy who doesn't get on with his parents because they won't let him stay out at parties beyond ten o'clock, is probably just expressing disgruntlement.

S: Yes, but it's also the parents' fault because they've not brought him up in such a way that they can appreciate the fact that he shouldn't be out as late as that, if that is in fact a reasonable thing to demand of the boy, that he shouldn't be out after that hour.

_____ : Disgruntlement can lead to disillusionment.

S: I think it can, yes. But disgruntlement itself needs to be distinguished from disillusionment.

Nagabodhi: But there must be kind of missing link between disgruntlement and disillusionment because disgruntlement usually just leads to more disgruntlement. What do

you see the missing link being?

Manjuvajra: *Is disillusionment disgruntlement with metta?*

S: *I think it's more than that. I think there's a certain amount of insight.*

Lokamitra: *Eventually you realise that you can't be satisfied or whatever.*

S: *Sometimes when the disgruntlement is very painful and if you are naturally intelligent, then you start seriously thinking and disgruntlement can lead to disillusionment. Oh we've gone way over time. Never mind. I think we will just have to carry on with individualism and individuality tomorrow. But it really does seem that he ought to have thought about individuality and individualism much more deeply before he sort of introduced the topic or concept. [End of side 1 side 2]*

Manjuvajra: *Obviously to him it's not a particularly important word is it.*

S: *No, quite clearly not.*

_____ : *Individuality? It is in a way but.....*

S: *Yes. It's very important as a chain in the link of his argument, but he's so anxious, as it were, to use it as a link in the chain of his argument, that he doesn't bother to examine the link itself very carefully. Any old link will do, provided it can only be a link in that chain of argument.*

Siddhiratna: *He does seem very concerned with taking western sociology and political ideology and fitting it on top of the Buddhist ().*

S: *Some of it may be quite relevant, quite applicable but not always.*

Siddhiratna: *The definitions have to be sorted out.*

S: *One might well ask the question, to what extent does one feel oneself to be a member of the group, I mean in the wider social sense, as well as an individual. Because you are a member of the group. You are affected by the group, you are affected by the society in which you live. You have a place in it. So this is quite an important question. What is one's attitude towards that group to which one belongs? The social group, the larger social group. Society at large.*

_____ : *Is one almost obliged to have one?*

S: *I think one is, at least in effect, at least in practice. You are given a vote. Are you going to use it or not use it? Even if you decide not to use it, well you have adopted a certain attitude towards society, or towards that particular society. You have to obey certain laws. So you are a member - even as an individual - externally at least, you remain a member of your particular society, your particular group. You can't get away from it. Very very few people only can get away from it under very exceptional circumstances, at least for a while.*

Siddhiratna: *Those people might be the very rich.*

S: *Well maybe they get away from it least of all.*

Siddhiratna: *Why not most of all if they can afford it?*

S: Well, just look at concrete examples of the very rich. Where do they go and what do they do? They always want to have their lawyers with them. They've always got to be consulting with their bank managers. They've always got to guard what they've got. They may be broken into, robbed, abducted, murdered, hijacked.

No, I was thinking of people like those who went off into the deserts on solitary treks for several months or who sail a little boat across the Atlantic. They may be able to get away for some time, but hardly anybody else. Even the very rich man doesn't get away from the tax man does he? Even Howard Hughes couldn't get away.

Siddhiratna: *I was thinking in the sense that they could in fact afford to pay a lot of other people to look after all that for them.*

S: Who looks after all those people? All right, you pay another man to look after them. Who looks after him? You have to take some interest. And all right, supposing you've committed an offence, well it's you who go to jail if it's that sort of offence.

Siddhiratna: *You can even be set up for it.*

S: So you can't really cease to be a member of society. I think one needs to remember that sometimes. However genuinely an individual you are, it means you just have to establish your own positive relationship with the society to which you belong. It doesn't necessarily mean that you accept it, not all of it anyway. It's very difficult to be a hermit nowadays.

Lokamitra: *I suppose you make your own relationship with it, rather than.....*

S: You can cut yourself off to a certain extent, but not completely.

Nagabodhi: *There's the story of Jitari waking up on his solitary retreat and there was a man in a boat down in the sea with a megaphone saying "You are surrounded!" (Laughter) They thought he was an escaped criminal or something. He woke up and there was a man bobbing in the water in a boat below his cave, saying "You are surrounded".*

S: What did Jitari say?

Nagabodhi: *He was very sphinx-like throughout the whole thing. They said, 'what are you doing here' and I think he observed the Aryan Silence! He finally said 'if you really want to know, come back this evening alone!' (Laughter)(Laughter)(Laughter). I don't know whether they sort of believed him or just lost patience but they went and left him.*

S: Well you see, he might even have been arrested or whatever as being someone of unsound mind, or something like that even. This also you have to be aware of these days. Anyway it's time for supper. We'll carry on with individuality tomorrow.

[Next Session]

S: Let's go back a little bit and start again on "the emergence of individualism" and get more thoroughly into that.

"THE EMERGENCE OF INDIVIDUALISM"

A question which it is important to try to answer at this point is one concerning the causes of this individualism during these early centuries of Indian history. It was a period, we have

seen, characterized not only by increasingly marked individualism but also by the growth of monarchy; together with these factors there appears to have been an intensification of urban life in some of the larger cities. These three features of the life of the period certainly seem to be in some way inter-related. What has to be considered is whether one of them developed first, independently of the other two, and if so, whether this was because of some other prior condition.

The possibilities are (1) that individualism was the primary factor, that is, that the trend towards individualism facilitated the growth of monarchical government, and that this entailed increased urbanization; or (2) it may have been that monarchy was the novel factor which, once introduced into the lands of the Gangetic plain, gave rise to urbanization, which in turn led to increased individualism; or (3) it may have been that the growth of cities was the primary factor: that is, that there were non-political reasons why certain cities grew in size and density of population, and that these cities then became the growth-points of an individualism, which, by gradually spreading through the whole region, paved the way for the advance of strong monarchical government as the only solution to the evils entailed in its increase. There is something to be said for each of these possibilities, but on balance the known facts seem to favour the third.

We have already seen that a considerable growth of population was taking place in the Gangetic plain at the time of the Buddha, due largely to the increased cultivation of what had formerly been forest. In the 'middle' country (*Madyadesa*) it was rice growing which predominated, but it is clear from the evidence of the Pali Buddhist texts that a variety of other crops and fruits were also grown. The result of this increased population **size** would have been a slight increase also in population **density** over the whole area, with, however, more acute increases in density in the cities of the plain. We have seen, too, that there was in the cities a considerable diversity of occupations, with a fairly refined degree of specialization. This was due partly to the needs of a royal court, which each of the great cities either was or had been at some state in its history. But it was due too, and possibly in even greater measure, to the diversification of the economy which would have followed as a consequence of the growth of population, the development of agriculture, the growing differentiation in methods of production (such as herding, fishing, the raising of rice and other cereal and vegetable crops, fruit-growing, forestry and mining) and a general increase in the economic wealth of the region. Moreover, the continual extension of the area of society which was under monarchical rule, as opposed to tribal republican government, would have meant a growing complexity in modes of social organization.

All this accords well with the general line of argument developed by Emile Durkheim, that the development of the division of labour has for its principal cause an increase in the density of a society. An increase in the overall density of population brings with it an increase in what Durkheim calls 'moral density'. By this he means increased facilities for transportation and communication throughout the area, and thus an increase in the extent to which, and the area over which, social contacts take place. Durkheim summarizes his argument at this point in the following proposition: 'The division of labour varies in direct ratio with the volume and density of societies, and, if it progresses in a continuous manner in the course of social development, it is because societies become regularly denser and generally more voluminous.' This would appear to fit very well what was happening in the Ganges valley in the period we are concerned with. Among the consequences of such a development of diverse specialist occupations, according to Durkheim, is the growth of individualism: 'far from being trammelled by the progress of specialization, individual personality develops with the division of labour'. He points out that in more primitive societies each man resembles his companions; there is little differentiation of tasks and statuses and it is the corporate life of the tribe which, so to speak, occurs in him which is his alone and which individualizes him, as he is something more than a simple incarnation of the generic type of his race and his

group'."

S: Well that's as far as we got yesterday so I hope that's refreshed our memory but let's go just a little bit more than we did yesterday into this question of whether, and if so in what sense, there is a development of individualism or whatever with the development of specialisation. Durkheim is quoted as saying, regarding the growth of individualism, "far from being trammelled by the progress of specialization, individual personality develops with the division of labour". And then later on, "with the development of specialization, there is increasingly for each man 'something in him which is his alone and which individualizes him, as he is something more than a simple incarnation of the generic type of his race and his group.'"

Lokamitra: *It seems to be a sort of alienation in a way.*

S: What occurs to me is this. This might start the ball rolling. Supposing you've got a factory in which people are all engaged on piece work. So, according to this line of thought, the higher the degree of specialization, the smaller the piece that you are engaged in producing, the greater will be your individualism? But then again one might say that isn't a fair point, because perhaps you would be with a large number of other people all producing the same part, all on the same workbench, so you wouldn't be sufficiently differentiated from them, so perhaps what Durkheim has in mind is a society in which there aren't hundreds of people doing the same thing, specializing in the same job, but perhaps one or two people. So then, certainly, the potter stands out from the basket maker, the basket maker stands out from the fisherman, the fisherman stands out from the weaver, and so on. Especially if you've got just one of each or two or three of each, in a particular tribal group. They seem to have more individuality than they had in the days before they took up those particular crafts, those particular specialized occupations. Could you say that?

Ratnaguna: *I think you could say that could lead on to individualism because the potter realises he's different from the basket maker.*

S: I think the great point that can be made here is that it isn't as real development of individuality in our sense, even when it is just a question of one or two people within each group following a particular occupation, because it doesn't represent a growth from within necessarily. It represents something virtually imposed from without, unless of course, which might sometimes happen, someone in a primitive society, in a tribal group, had a sort of strong feeling he wanted to make pots. I think that is unlikely to have happened at that stage, although this is probably only speculative. It seems much more likely that the tribe needed pots. Perhaps the man who wasn't strong and fit enough to go hunting and shooting and fishing stayed at home and made pots. Though of course again there is the point that, apparently in the very early days it wasn't the men that made pots at all. It was the women, but we'll leave that aside.

But it does seem that inasmuch as this kind of specialization, even in that sort of limited way, wouldn't represent any sort of development from within, any expression of that person as an individual. It couldn't be taken as an index of individualism or individuality in the sense in which we use that term. Do you see that point?

Siddhiratna: *Wouldn't there be degrees of individualisation? I should have thought that in early societies where you've got a hunting society that for instance in art there's one person who stays behind and is the doctor cum witch doctor sort of figure who perhaps draws the cave paintings to bring the people good luck, and he has a speciality for that. In the same way that people might be really good at making pots or incorporate something into the pots, and they have a talent for that. Perhaps we can call it a talent. Individualisation perhaps*

starts from a talent of some kind expressing itself.

Nagabodhi: *I think the thing about a primitive society is the person who, even if there was somebody who did a particular thing more than others, he didn't in a way see himself as being a kind of independent agent. Like everything was integrated, there was no such thing as money. If you married something you exchanged goods. The economy was bound up with the social life which was bound up with the religious life, and you just kind of acted out your role within that kind of system. So even if you did more of one thing than other people did, in principle the inward experience was really the same as everyone else's. You were simply conforming to your dharma.*

Siddhiratna: *You said acted out a role but where does the role come from, who imposes the role or is the role self-imposed?*

Nagabodhi: *It's just built in. It's such an organic structure, the whole society.*

S: *You're born into it. You don't question it. Individuality seems to begin when you start questioning the order to which you belong. When for instance society says well you're going to be a potter and you say, no I don't want to be a potter, or when society says oh you're not supposed to go there and do that, and you say well yes I'm going to go there and do that. The group says no member of our group ever goes beyond that tree, that's just not allowed, it's dangerous there, it's not mapped; but some enterprising individual says well why not, I want to go, I'm curious. So he defies the sort of tacit prohibition of the tribe. He does that particular thing, and then he survives, nothing happened and he comes back. So he's just that little bit more of an individual.*

It seems to be that individuality grows more in this sort of way.

Lokamitra: *In a way this needn't be that different from what he is saying here. I don't think he's referring to the potter and so on in the tribe. He's referring to people who break out of the tribe and go to the towns, become merchants, travellers, journeymen and so on, who are no longer bound.....*

S: *Yes, but presumably the differentiation starts in the villages. An enterprising village shopkeeper - though that infers quite an advanced state of economic development - the shopkeeper decides to go and see what's happening in some other town and see if he can do better there. But as I said yesterday, in that case it wouldn't be so much the trade itself, the occupation itself that was an index of individuality, so much as the opportunity it provided you for seeing other societies, other groups, and therefore feeling yourself as it were distinct from them all. If you start seeing other groups, other tribes, especially when you go to the city, then you don't regard your group, your tribe, as sort of absolute any more. This is something that still happens when we go abroad. We learn that the manners and customs that we've been brought up to regard as sacrosanct are not universal and are certainly not absolutes.*

But probably this is something which so far as I know has never been properly gone into, properly from our point of view, that is to say the origins of individuality in the true sense. Does anybody know of any investigation of this kind?

_____: *Do you mean in the historical sense or in the sort of personal....*

S: *Anthropological and maybe individual case histories even today may well throw light upon what happened originally in history. Also there is the point that perhaps in some ways the development of individuality was connected with the conflict between the king and the*

priest. Originally these were one and the same person it seems in most societies, but they became differentiated in function. A certain amount of rivalry grew up between them, as between the Kshatriyas and Brahmins. The Kshatriyas represented the king principle, the Brahmins the priest principle, and on account of this conflict of interest between them, different standpoints developing, a certain degree of individuality could have developed.

So perhaps there are quite a number of factors contributing in one way and another to the development of individuality.

Ratnaguna: *I don't really see that the split between king and priest could bring individuality. I'd have thought that would just have been like the potter versus the basket weaver.*

S: *Except that if you are in that sort of position, the king or the priest, you are in a very influential position. You are trying to gain power as we saw between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas, so this means you have to think a bit. You can't do it by brute force, especially the priest can't, maybe the king can. So in this way you start thinking of ways of influencing people. You become aware of how people are to be handled. In this way you could certainly, at least in the case of the priest, a certain individuality develops. The king to retain his power also has to counteract all this.*

Ratnaguna: *But is that individuality?*

S: *I'm not talking about full blown individuality but the beginnings. You begin to differentiate yourself from others, other members of the group, in the way that they think.*

Ratnaguna: *So if you're quite a clever businessman you could be on the way to individuality.*

S: *You could. It seems as though the king and the priest were the first people to become sort of noticeably differentiated from the group. I don't want to press this too much because as I said there were all sorts of factors no doubt involved in the emergence of individuality. I think what is important to distinguish is individualism, in the sense that Trevor Ling seems to use the term, and individuality as we use the term. There are times when perhaps individualism does begin to sort of merge with individuality but sometimes it's very difficult just to see where one begins and the other ends. You could say for instance in the case of the king, he feels he has a certain responsibility for the people. He is in charge, he's got to think, he's got to plan and so on. This leads to the development of a certain independence. He realises in an emergency he has to decide. He may ask others for advice at this time but the decision is his. He has to think, and sometimes he may even think against what others think and may enforce that.*

So again there is some degree, some seed of individuality. Also there is the question - you see this in later history - the king is very often the one person who is free to be an individual. You often feel this in reading history, that the king in a sense is the only free person, in terms that he can do as he likes. He's got the time, he's got the power, he's got the resources. Nobody else can. Has anyone ever thought this? In that sense the king was the only individual.

_____: *There's another side to that, in that the king must be acceptable to the people otherwise he'll be removed from power.*

S: *Yes, so that means the king must make himself acceptable to the people. So this requires a degree of self-consciousness. Thinking what effect is the line of conduct or line of policies I'm initiating going to have on the people. You can't just disregard, so that makes you more aware, and that contributes to individuality.*

But if one sort of thinks back. Supposing one tried to imagine oneself as a member of a primitive community, a tribe, how do you think you would have become an individual? In what way? How would it have happened?

Nagabodhi: Even in the case of an ideal society this would be possible, but surely it's almost innate in human nature to be anti social at times at least, and that nobody is just born fully socialised. As we were saying yesterday that conflicts are going to arise.....

S: That is the conflict, not between the individual and the group, but between the animal and the group. The pre socialised person, to avoid using the word 'individual', and the group. So that sort of conflict doesn't seem to give rise to individuality.

_____ : Do you think it's got anything to do with a quest for power? At the tribal level, perhaps one person would have that power to rule over the others and try to follow up that.....

S: Because the question arises why do you want power, or even what is power? Let's take it it means power over others, why do you want power over others?

_____ : Perhaps it's something to do with incipient individuality.

S: I think there are two aspects to this question. One is that you want power over others because of some psychological deficiency in yourself, so that power over others is compensatory. Two, you want power over others so that you can express yourself more fully, either because you need the co-operation of others to give shape to your plans and projects, or because you just want to stop others getting in your way, or others are needed to provide you with the resources that you need for carrying out your plans and projects.

So the second would seem to be in the line of development of individuality, but not the first.

_____ : I get the impression that a tribal system is based in some sense on a kind of collective consciousness, so in a sense you wouldn't get any sort of individuality emerging until the tribal system breaks down. It's certainly based on a very strong sort of mythical tradition. It seems to suggest a sort of group.

S: So then the question arises what factors would lead to the breakdown of the tribal system?

Siddhiratna: It seems at some point - I think what Nagabodhi was saying - that there's some point, it seems to be in adolescence, there is a point where you start questioning maybe the history of the tribe or the beliefs of the tribe and, as far as you are able to rationalise yourself, then you either agree or disagree with it, and whether that disagreement means something to you, then you'll act on it. You'll leave the tribe or you'll try to change it. But I don't know why one starts questioning other than it's.....

S: It can be, as Luvah suggested, because there is a break down in the tribal set up. For instance, in India, in connection with the growth of cities and that was connected with increase of population and so on. So it may not be that the tribal group literally breaks down, although that might happen sometimes, so much that it's sort of superseded. Some other factors come into operation with which the old tribal situation is connected, and which act upon that and modify it. For instance you might be living a sort of tribal life in some village community, and then one day along comes say a merchant, and he's got various goods produced in a nearby town, or it may be a town far away, that you've never seen before, which have never been produced where you live. Or he might come with tales about the great ocean. You'd never heard about the great ocean. What you've been told by the elders of your tribe contain no reference to the great ocean, so you start thinking, well that's odd, if you're a

little bit intelligent, they never said anything about the great ocean, but this merchant says he's seen it, and they are supposed to know everything. How is it that they never mention this? Then you start wondering whether the elders of the tribe really do know everything. Then you have to start sort of thinking a bit for yourself. It's in all sorts of ways of this kind. You can't catalogue them all and you probably can't say that individuality began due to this cause or that cause or these two or three causes. There's a whole sort of complex of factors of this sort which go just to develop that sense of individuality and not thinking quite along the same lines as everybody else.

Siddhiratna: Do you think that it must almost always be based on some external factors like coming into contact with a merchant or.....

S: Not necessarily. We do know from studies of say tribal life, that things like dreams even play a great part. Someone has a great dream which tells him something that has never happened before. What the Red Indians call a Great Dream. He says I've had this dream. In the dream I was told we must do so and so. They've never done it before, but they have faith in dreams and they act upon it. This also is connected with the medicine man and all that. Sometimes an ordinary tribal member may have a dream and he becomes important because he's the man that had that Great Dream which led to such and such modification of tribal life.

Or it may be for instance that some people don't accept his dream and say no that's not really a Great Dream. Maybe there's a dispute and he says no, it is a Great Dream, it must be followed and some of the others at least say no, it isn't a Great Dream, it's not to be followed. Then there's a clash, then there's a split and then he has to make up his mind whether he's going to follow his own Great Dream and get others to follow it with him, or whether he's just going to accept the opinion of at least some of the elders that it wasn't really a Great Dream. In that way he has to start thinking and deciding for himself.

So I think there are probably numberless incidents of this sort, sometimes very minor ones, but all contributing to the development of what in its fully blown form, we call individuality.

Siddhiratna: There's an area of sort of responsibility as well. Sort of self confidence.

S: Yes, right, and also you realise you're responsible for your own life. You've got to look after yourself as it were. A time comes when you can't rely on the tribe to do it for you. That might come in times of natural disaster. There might be a great flood or there might be a drought, there might be a famine, and the tribal economy breaks down, it's every man for himself, and you have to start thinking for yourself or for yourself and your family, and you see the old magic doesn't work. The witch doctors have prayed for rain, they've done all their rain dances, but no rain falls. The whole system seems to break down. You wonder why.

OK I'll get out and go to some other place, and you go off and find the river and that modifies your whole outlook as it were. The old magic didn't work, but what happened, I went and found a river myself.

Lokamitra: The socio-economic situation, I suppose could affect the possibilities of individuality arising.

S: Certainly it could, oh yes.

Lokamitra: Because the more sophisticated it becomes, the more numerous are the possibilities which someone has to choose from. They are not necessarily tied to just living in the tribe as always was done, but they can begin to think, well that attracts me or that which he's doing attracts me.

S: So it's quite clear we can't regard specialisation as even the most important factor in the emergence of certainly individuality as we understand that term.

Manjivajra: *I think in a way it's quite irrelevant, because what Lokamitra's just said, even though in a society seemingly you've got lots of different choices, in a way that's like the near enemy isn't it, because they're not really choices. You're still maintaining the overall group values.*

S: Yes, you've no choice. Even if you've been confronted with the possibility of accepting the group values or not, well then fair enough, it's a conscious and deliberate decision that you accept the group values. You accept them as an individual. But if there's no other alternative, but you can only make a sort of very limited selection within the group pattern, then in terms of real individuality there's no freedom of choice at all. It's like your parents saying to you, well look you can either be a solicitor or you can be a doctor. It means you are kept within the ranks of the same middle class social set up.

Lokamitra: *In a changing situation where the sophistication is growing all the time, then the group values will be changing all the time to some extent, so that will bring in more scope there.*

S: But it's how the group values change. If they just change due to impersonal factors, economic factors and maybe climatic factors, but the group as group remains the sole source of authority and value, then that doesn't contribute anything in itself to the development of individuality.

Lokamitra: *But if you can say well look sometime ago this was taken as valuable and now it's not, so you can begin to see that things aren't always fixed and that there are other possibilities perhaps there besides what you're told.*

Vessantara: *I don't think that contributes very strongly. You could say that about women's fashion now. They change every year but women are still just as concerned with following the latest fashion, whatever it may be and wearing the same as everybody else.*

S: Also changes in primitive times take place very very slowly and it's usually the elders that are repositories of any tribal history, which wouldn't be history in our sense. So that sort of historical consciousness is probably not part of primitive man's mentality.

Siddhiratna: *It would be more myth wouldn't it.*

S: Yes. Anyway maybe we need not go into that further. The point that seems to emerge quite clearly is that individuality does emerge from the old tribal set up or whatever, but that it can emerge in consequence of or as a result of, all sorts of factors and combinations of factors, both internal and external. Social, economic, psychological and so on. All right let's carry on reading then.

Text *“More recent work in the fields of sociology confirms this view of the development of individualism in societies characterized by developed occupational specialization, particularly where this is found in an urban milieu, Louis Wirth points out that 'in contrast with earlier, more integrated societies, the social life of the city provides much greater **potentials** for differentiation between individuals'. One passage in particular from Wirth's writings may be quoted here for its relevance to our study of early Indian urban life: The superficiality, the anonymity, and the transitory character of urban social relations make intelligible, also, the sophistication and the rationality generally ascribed to city dwellers.*

*Our acquaintances tend to stand in a relationship of utility to us in the sense that the role which each one plays in our life is overwhelmingly regarded as a means for the achievement of our own ends. Whereas the individual gains, on the one hand, a certain degree of emancipation or freedom from the personal and emotional controls of intimate groups, he loses, on the other hands the spontaneous self-expression, the morale, and the sense of participation that comes with living in an integrated society. This constitutes essentially the state of **anomie**, or the social void, to which Durkheim alludes in attempting to account for the various forms of social disorganization in technological society.”*

S: *What work do you think this is? Do you think there is this possibility of spontaneous self expression in the more integrated society? Do you think that is correct?*

Siddhiratna: *The integrated society I think is the group in this sense.*

S: *The tribal group, yes.*

Vessantara: *Even supposing you're more accepted, within certain bounds which the group lays down you can express yourself more freely than you can with people you just meet as relative strangers.*

S: *But if you live in the city, you are not meeting people all the time as relative strangers.*

Nagabodhi: *Whether we agree with it or not it seems to run completely counter to Ling's argument.*

S: *In what way?*

Nagabodhi: *I would have thought that in his argument so far he's trying to prove that the less integrated the society is, the more opportunity there is for self expression, as specialisation is in fact.....*

S: *But they haven't discussed the relationship between self expression and individuality. It seems to me that self expression is connected with individuality, but Wirth seems to connect it virtually with non individuality. So it seems that what one means by spontaneous self expression just hasn't been looked at at all. What he says is probably to a great extent correct if one thinks in terms of modern times and what happens when the village lad goes to the big city, but whether that is applicable to the original emergence of individuality at the time when there were only these primitive tribal communities and maybe a few big cities, that's another matter I think.*

[End of Tape 6 Tape 7]

But I think perhaps we have to realise that we don't really know much about primitive societies. Primitive societies as they originally existed, and the point has been made that you can't regard existing, so-called primitive societies or recently existing primitive societies like those of the Red Indians, the Bushmen, the Hottentots, the Eskimo, as giving us a completely faithful picture of how man lived say a million years ago. This is just not accepted by anthropologists. So really we have very little to go by, so we have to be very careful that we don't just extrapolate and so on. We don't know really very much about original primitive life. it's very inferential and speculative - what we do know or think we know.

So maybe what Wirth says is very applicable to the modern situation but I think we should be careful about reading it back to those days when individuality was beginning to emerge. Let's go on then.

Text "This agrees with what is known of urban society in the early Buddhist period. In the Jataka stories and in the many dialogues between the Buddha and various different individuals, it is precisely this sophistication, this rationality of the urban dweller that we recognize. Moreover, there was also at that time a considerable degree of what Durkheim called **anomie**, or moral and social dislocation. To be more specific, the transition which many people were then experiencing from the familiar, small-scale society of the old tribal republics to the strange, large-scale and consequently more impersonal, bleaker life of the new monarchical state, was accompanied by a psychological **malaise** which the Buddha was to take as the starting-point of his analysis of the human condition, calling it **dukkha** Erich Fromm, too, has drawn attention to the association between the developing sense of individuality in the human person and a sense of **growing aloneness**. He refers to the separation which the growing person experiences from the world which was familiar to him as a child. 'as long as one was an integral part of that world, unaware of the possibilities and responsibilities of individual action, one did not need to be afraid of it. When one has become an individual, one stands alone and faces the world in all its perilous and overpowering aspects.'"

S: No doubt we'll go into this question of dukkha later on but just for the moment I don't think really one can look at dukkha in this sort of way, because the Buddha's definition of dukkha or description of dukkha in the Pali texts is quite clear and is applicable to the life of somebody living in a tribal society as much as to someone living at this so-called period of dislocation. He says birth is dukkha, disease is dukkha, old age is dukkha, being separated from what you love is dukkha, and being joined to what you hate is dukkha. So this is dukkha in a very basic, very fundamental, existential human sense, not dukkha as connected with any dislocation of the social and economic system. So that dislocation certainly did not give rise to a realisation of dukkha in the Buddhistic sense.

_____ : Couldn't you say that dukkha will give rise to the dislocation?

S: You could say that, yes.

_____ : Sort of basic unsatisfactoriness of the original state.

S: Yes.

Lokamitra: Could the dislocation have helped an increasing awareness of dukkha?

S: There is that possibility too. The whole situation seems so complex that one can only note certain factors but not identify any particular factor as the cause or a cause or the main cause or anything like that. But dukkha itself in Buddhism refers to the human condition as such, not to anything that happens within the social and economic order.

What about this question of aloneness?

Nagabodhi: It goes back to what you were saying a minute ago. I really think he is projecting the problems of twentieth century industrial society onto what couldn't have been more than a peasant economy, even with the big cities and kings.

S: As far as I recollect there's no reference to aloneness in our modern, psychological sense anywhere in the Pali Canon. The nearest sort of term that you get is Kevala or Vivikta and this is used in an entirely positive sense. Oh how wonderful to be alone, as it were. Entirely in that sort of sense. I don't think there's any reference to anyone being afraid of being alone or feeling alone. So he may well be reading far too much back into sixth century BC India.

Vessantara: *How do you think the sense of aloneness in this presumably more negative sense has arisen then?*

S: *I don't know. I can't say that I've thought about it. Do people feel alone? For a start what is aloneness? Start with that first.*

Siddhiratna: *Do you think the sense he's used growing aloneness here is more in the sense of alienation. Alienation in that more existential sense?*

S: *Possibly it is, yes.*

_____: *It's more like the state Pascal describes when he talks about the emptiness of space and so on.*

S: *But I don't remember any trace of that sort of feeling anywhere in Buddhist literature. The ancient Indians were not frightened by those vast immensities. They seemed to rather rejoice in them and to expand in them and enjoy them. The Indians don't seem to have been terrified of the abyss or anything like that. I think perhaps one of the things that we have to try to grasp and this is one of the things that does strike us when we go through the Pali scriptures, how healthy people were on the whole, compared with people today. There don't seem to have been psychological problems. Certainly people were wicked, certainly people did unskilful things, but they don't seem to have had psychological problems in the sort of complex modern fashion.*

Siddhiratna: *Wouldn't somebody argue that, going back a bit to what we were saying yesterday about jurisprudence and stuff, that if somebody steals or takes what is not theirs, or takes what is not given, there must be something fundamentally wrong with the society in which they live for them to want to have to do that.*

S: *Well yes and no. They might have a quite unreasonable desire. They might have a desire to kill which society couldn't tolerate.*

Siddhiratna: *But what would cause that desire to kill?*

S: *Well it can be a sort of vestige of the animal inheritance as it were, or it could be due to some sort of individual psychological thwarting.*

Siddhiratna: *Which is not related to the context in which they live or something like that?*

S: *No. Which is possibly related to the context in which they live. (Pause) I was reading some weeks ago a biography of the Zulu king Chaka. Anyone ever heard of him? He was a famous Zulu ruler at the beginning of the last century and he unified a number of tribes and established a sort of almost mini empire. He was very famous for his ruthlessness and was quite a legendary figure, but how did it all start? According to this biography, first of all he was an illegitimate child and he and his mother were made to feel that they were sort of inferior. To make matters worse, his gentle development wasn't all that it should have been and the other young Zulus made fun of him on this account. This became a very very sensitive point with him throughout life. So he, quite clearly and as one reads the biography this is obvious, started on a process of over compensation. He wanted to make people respect him and fear him and look up to him instead of despising him and mocking him as they had been doing. And this made him really determined, ruthless, capable and he ended up establishing this virtual Zulu empire, and the biography is written in a Rudyard Kipling-esque sort of way. There's no psychological analysis or anything like that. It's just the simple*

story, but it's quite clear what the whole motivation was of his whole extraordinary career. This is entirely within this sort of somewhat extended tribal society. How he defeated the witch doctors. A very famous story.(Pause)

Vessantara: How did he defeat the witch doctors? (Laughter)

S: Well, they used to sniff out guilty people, especially those who had been guilty of witchcraft and they had tremendous power. They were mostly females, witches rather, not witch doctors. So what he did was he secretly one night daubed the doorposts of his own house with blood and so on and so forth and then in the morning he raised a terrible hullabaloo - "someone has been trying to bewitch me, so the witches have got to smell out those people". So the whole population was assembled and the witches smelled out several hundred people who, according to tradition, should be at once put to death, including certain people very close to him that he knew the witches were jealous of. So after he'd had them all sniffed out, usually as soon as they were sniffed they were executed by having their skulls smashed in, but he gave orders that all the executions were to be carried out afterwards. So there was a tremendous sort of tension building up and people absolutely terrified as the witches sort of sniffed nearer and nearer and in the end they had I think a couple of hundred victims.

So when they were just about to be executed he said, Stop, catch hold of the witches." So his private bodyguard seized the witches and he said, "I did all this. You are not real witches", or there was one wizard, a man, who understood somehow that he'd done it himself, and he conveyed this, and he was the only one who was spared. All the witches practically were executed, and he told the people, this is how these witches have deceived you, all these years, all these centuries. And this was entirely without any sort of western influence. This was entirely within the indigenous tribal context.

So you can see this sort of intelligence and even rationality developing. Also on account of his early deprivations and sufferings and humiliations. So he was clearly much more of an individual than other Zulus. Even though not a full individual in a spiritual sense, but certainly much more of an individual.

Anyway that's a bit in passing. But I think what mainly emerges from this discussion so far is an inadequate criterion of individuality on the part of all these authors including Trevor Ling. It seems extraordinary that they introduce these categories without discussing them very properly, very thoroughly.

Ratnaguna: I've just got one question. At the end of that paragraph when he says, "When one has become an individual, one stands alone and faces the world in all its perilous and overpowering aspects." do you think perhaps that doesn't apply to early sort of tribal.....

S: I think probably not. There is that element but it's not exclusively that. You face the world also with all its promise and all its opportunity.

Ratnaguna: I was going to say is that over dramatised.

S: I think that's over dramatising it, yes. I really think that is. If you look through the Pali scriptures and if you read about the people who became the Buddha's followers, especially those who were living at home, a sort of lay life to begin with, what you usually find is that they were people of some position, people who didn't have to work, with leisure, and who had not very much to do and weren't attracted by anything of the sort of things that they could have done, and the Buddha's message just intrinsically appealed to them. So theirs was as it were very much a growth oriented approach rather than a problem oriented approach. Do

you see what I mean? The only real problem was dukkha, which is something really basic and fundamental. But that doesn't seem to have been everybody's starting point, even so. All right let's carry on then.

Text "INDIVIDUALISM AS A CONSEQUENCE OF URBANISM AND MONARCHY

There are thus good reasons for saying that **the development of urban life**, as a result of population increase, and the political innovation of **monarchical rule** were both responsible for the development of an awareness of individuality and the sense of personal isolation and psychological **malaise** which accompanies such awareness."

S: This is absolutely hypothetical. He really hasn't produced any evidence at all for this.

Text "What is more, monarchical rule had the further effect of giving the development of urban life an extra stimulus, over and above the general incentive towards the development of cities which the extension of agriculture and the accelerating growth of population provided."

S: That may well be so but we don't really know what connection that had with the development of individuality.

Text "But kingship, as it had emerged in early Indian civilization, was itself a consequence of the specialization of functions which had developed in Aryan society in the Vedic period. The primary differentiation of functions was between the brahman priest and the kshatriya nobleman. In the earlier, nomadic period of the Aryans' history, as in the early stages of other societies, political, cultic and judicial functions appear to have been performed by the same person or class. It has been suggested that 'the tribal priests who antedated the brahmins and were not always distinguished from the kshatriya warriors developed some sort of secret organization as a preparation for sacrificial purity.' It is possible, too, that changing conditions, from the more violent and insecure conditions of nomadic life to those of settled agricultural communities, deprived the kshatriya warrior of his superior authority just at a time when the development of ritual and sacrificial ideas was enhancing the authority of the brahmins. Perhaps, indeed, the stimulus for the development of these new sacrificial ideas was the need for a new source of authority in the changed conditions of life, and the need to legitimate that new authority - the authority of the brahman priest. This, certainly, is what appears to have happened: on the one hand an increasing specialization in the sacrificial **cults** and the esoteric mysteries connected with its performance, and on the other an increasing specialization in the business of secular government, now no longer by the kshatriyas as a class, but by kings, as individual specialists in the technicalities of political administration, diplomacy and so on. So, by the time Aryan civilization reached the Gangetic midland plain it was already characterized by the first stage in the specialization of functions and an incipient trend towards urbanism, in the sense that its political structure required an administrative capital. The nature of the terrain and its resources were such that these characteristics soon developed, in the way we have seen, into an increasingly diversified political and economic structure. From this situation there then emerged, as a consequence of the increasing complexity of life - especially in the cities - a growing awareness of personal differentiation, or individualism."

S: You notice we have a sort of definition of individualism - "A growing awareness of personal differentiation". Was it necessarily just that do you think? Maybe it is a definition of individualism but what about individuality?

_____ : That seems to be what he talked about before as specialization.

S: Yes, it's differentiation without difference if you know what I mean. Just like a doctor can be different from a solicitor, but they're basically the same kind of middle class creature as it were.

_____ : I can't quite see how anybody, whether in the tribal society or otherwise would be unaware of personal differentiation. I can't see how it develops. ().

S: Well, the development of individuality is connected with the development of self awareness. You could say that you are not really aware of others unless you are aware of yourself or self-aware. This is what is sometimes called 'reflexive awareness'. That you not only sort of act, but you as it were know that you are acting or you think that you are acting. You not only feel but you know that you feel. So it would seem that personal differentiation in the sort of true sense only begins when this sort of thing takes place, and it would seem that the primitive peoples, like children and even some adults, they don't have this self consciousness. So it means you don't really differentiate yourself from others unless you are self conscious. You have a sort of feeling that you are different from others or you act as though you are different from others, but you don't sort of really recognise that. You are not really aware of it, because you don't have self-consciousness.

_____ : I still can't imagine it. It seems an impossible state to be in.

S: Well what about children? Children don't have self-consciousness. You can see the self-consciousness developing in children. For instance children, to begin with, refer to themselves in the third person, don't they? They regularly refer to themselves in the first person only when some degree of self-consciousness has been developed. So it seems that self-consciousness is connected with the development of awareness, and connected with the awareness of personal differentiation in the true sense.

So in the case of where there's no self awareness you see another person, you act with regard to another person, but you don't think well here am I in relation with another person. That involves the element of self consciousness. In other words unless you're self conscious you cannot reflect for instance upon yourself say in relation to another person. That requires self consciousness, and the primitive person it seems, the really primitive person, just doesn't possess that any more than a child possesses it to begin with. Even some adults don't possess it, at least in a very developed form. So self consciousness sort of involves the ability to reflect upon oneself and one's relations with others as though one was a third party. So in a sense it involves a degree of alienation.

_____ : This undifferentiated state would be when, supposing you're with a group of people and you get caught up in what that group of people are doing, then you just lose yourself.

S: Yes you don't even think, well here am I doing this with other people. You just do it with them, and you just have a sort of feeling of being with them and doing things with them, but it doesn't even occur to you that well here am I doing it with all these other people. It's as though, as it were, the group consciousness had taken over. If you are sort of momentarily taken over by that group consciousness, afterwards you can reflect and realise what happened, but in the case of the primitive man, he hasn't reached that stage and he never reflects in that way. He's always part of the group. It's only when individuality begins to emerge that he can even think of himself in those sort of terms.

Siddhiratna: The consciousness which isn't self consciousness, which is before self-consciousness, seems to be a blind consciousness in some way. I was wondering can a self-conscious person in fact revert back to that? It's almost as if you are closing your eyes in a

sense.

S: Yes, I think it is possible and this is what we see in all sorts of mass phenomena, that you lose your self consciousness. I think self-consciousness is a quite precarious thing. I think this is what we don't always realise and for this reason partly, individuality, even in a relatively or only relatively developed sense, is a quite precarious thing.

Siddhiratna: I get the impression that it's something that you lock into and in some ways would be difficult to get out of. You may be taken over for a period but if the self-consciousness that you achieved before that was genuine, then it would be impossible to revert back in some way.

S: Well it depends how genuine is that individuality and that self consciousness. If it was firmly established which suggests a fairly high degree of spiritual development, then you never lose it. You can never be taken over by the crowd as it were. You can never become the victim of a sort of mass hysteria. You can never merge with the group. But I think very few people have reached this state. I think the majority of people, given the right, or rather the wrong, circumstances, would lose their self consciousness and merge with the group. I think it happens at parties for instance. Yes?

[Break in Recording]

..... French anthropologist (Levi Brule) - I expect everyone's heard of him, has got this famous term Participation Mystique, and it's nothing mystical, don't be misled by that, and this is a sort of experience of oneness with the group, but not in such a way that you think well here am I feeling one with the group. You don't even think that, and this is what is meant by the absence of that self-consciousness or that reflexive consciousness.

Siddhiratna: That still sounds as if it's in some way almost animal like.

S: Oh yes indeed, exactly.

Siddhiratna: Because I recently went to a day fair - something like Islington Peoples Community Festival - where there were a number of people there and I had a very very strong sort of emotional experience there. I was (brought) to tears in some ways and being with those people concerned with those activities and feeling very warm towards everybody there. It was amazing. A sort of strong identification with all those people there as a group. But I wouldn't decry that experience as merely being group minded or something like that. I felt that it was more than that in some way.

S: Well that may be. Because obviously there are different levels.

Siddhiratna: Because I was aware of having that experience, but being dependant on that situation for that experience in a way.

S: Yes, well this is sort of intermediate perhaps.

Manjuvajra: I wanted to bring that up as well, the fact that sometimes you can be with a group of people and it really is a sort of intensely pleasurable position to be in, particularly if you've been feeling that you haven't had the social contact with people, and it may be just a very simple sort of meeting of four or five people for a cup of tea or something, but it becomes really pleasant. Would you say that that was a kind of retrogression, sort of taking things easy for a bit?

S: *In a way, yes. I would say it's going from one extreme to the other, because if you are on your own too much in the wrong sort of way, you become sort of alienated from yourself, and out of contact with your feelings, so when you get into contact with other people in the sort of group situation, then you do experience some warmth, some emotion. So by going to that other extreme as it were you get back into a middle position. After you leave the other people well you just feel better, you feel more yourself in a quite genuine sort of way. But that is the other extreme.*

Ideally that when you are on your own, you shouldn't get alienated and when you are with other people you shouldn't lose your self awareness. But if you've gone to the extreme of alienation, you may have to sort of immerse yourself in the group just to get back into contact with your feelings. This is what lots of people do today. Their whole life is alternating between alienation and immersion in the group. Like if you're working in a factory, well you've got the alienation in connection with your work, and then maybe this sort of group identity through your trade union or your football team and so on. But I'd go so far as to say that if you're not careful, even if you go to a tea party and you get engaged in mindless conversation and gossip, you can lose your self awareness, and you sort of come to afterwards.

Ratnaguna: *I imagine you'd always come to because you've got self consciousness.*

S: *Yes, and depending on circumstances, and also if you remembered to remember. Sometimes you come to when you just are left on your own, but sometimes you don't, and I think there are some people who hardly ever experience self awareness, self consciousness, this reflexive kind of consciousness. I think there are quite a lot of people like this. Well one meets them.*

Nagabodhi: *It's quite deceptive in a way to keep talking about getting immersed in the group and summoning up images of football crowds and parties. I mean that's true for some people but it's just as likely to happen, and I know in my case, much more likely when I'm just with two or three people having a chat over tea.*

S: *Right, yes. Well the group, presumably at least two other people - maybe one other person wouldn't constitute a group, even with you, but with two other people it could. Yes I don't want to create the impression that you've only got to be on your guard when you happen to go to a football match or go to a party - no! You have to be on your guard all the time. It can happen over a friendly meal. If you're not careful it can even happen on an Order day or something like that. You lose your self-consciousness. Though perhaps you don't lose it to the same degree even so. I used to notice this when I was very much younger, that if I'd lost my self consciousness, when I came to I'd always feel as though I'd been sort of contaminated.*

_____: *Aren't we conditioned to regard self-consciousness as a handicap?*

S: *Ah. I'm using the term self-consciousness not in the ordinary colloquial sense. I'm using it in the sense of reflexive consciousness, not in the sense of a kind of embarrassment or clumsiness, not in that sense at all. But in the sense of the ability to be aware of yourself and yourself in relation to others, as though you were a third party. This is connected obviously with self consciousness in the ordinary sense because this is sometimes what happens, that you're aware of yourself in an uncomfortable, alienated sort of way. On one of the seminars - I forget which one - we had quite a lengthy discussion about the connection between the embarrassed kind of self consciousness and self consciousness in the reflexive sense, and we came to the conclusion, I think, that self consciousness in the sense of social embarrassment was a sort of intermediate form, or intermediate stage that you often encountered in*

adolescence when people were making the transition from this pre reflexive consciousness of the child to the self consciousness and awareness of the adult. This I think was the conclusion that we arrived at.

But self consciousness as I use the term is reflexive consciousness in a positive sense.

_____ : Is that synonymous with self awareness?

S: Yes, broadly speaking yes. Consciousness and awareness being broadly synonymous in English if one isn't very precise about terminology. But I think it's important to sort of try to grasp imaginatively as far as one can, what it is that self consciousness or individuality in our sense, gets you away from. Otherwise it's very difficult to understand what that self consciousness or reflexive consciousness or individuality is in itself. So whenever one feels within oneself this tendency to slip back and just drift along with the group and sort of chit chat with the group or share in mass emotion, this is regressive, this is atavistic even you could say.

_____ : Atavistic?

S: What is atavistic? Oh dear! It's a going back. It's a sort of throwback to the past. Instead of going forward to something new you sort of revert automatically and unconsciously to a previous situation and are sort of reborn in that situation as it were. That is atavism. It's a sort of biological throwback.

Nagabodhi: In a way to be an individual, more than just being aware of your differences, it must imply also an awareness, a kind of reflexive awareness of your potential at all times.

S: I think it eventually involves that too, yes.

Nagabodhi: Because I know that the sort of dominant feeling I get when I know I've been just immersed in a group consciousness is of selling myself short. It's that feeling that I just haven't.....

S: You've cheated yourself. You've violated yourself.

Nagabodhi: But if I could carry around with me some kind of awareness of what I could be, what I could be contributing at any particular time, and aspire to that rather than....

S: Well this is what is technically called mindfulness of purpose in the Satipatanna Sutta. I forget the Pali of it but it is being aware and mindful all the time, what it is you're really trying to do, what is the overall sort of meaning and purpose of your life. Well in this context that you are trying to develop, that you are trying to go further, but when you get caught up in sort of meaningless, mindless say gossip or socialization, then you just forget all about that sort of thing.

_____ : Just now you were going to say that if you felt yourself getting drawn into one of these group situations, then you should, and you were going on to say something.

S: Get out of it as soon as possible!

_____ : No, you were going to give something to bear in mind that would help you to get out of it.

S: Was I? I think the most important thing is not to allow yourself to get into that situation to

begin with, or the sort of situation in which that sort of loss of one's reflexive consciousness is likely to arise. Also it means not allowing oneself to get into that state of alienation by oneself which results in one just going to the other extreme of immersion in the group.

Siddhiratna: *Can there be differences of opinion within a group?*

S: *No. Group in this sense, no not basically.*

Manjuvajra: *I must be misunderstanding then because what I'm hearing you saying is that you can't be with a group of people and feel sort of comfortable and part of that group of people. I can't imagine that you are saying that.*

S: *Ah group as group, and group in the sense of a term for a number of individuals together, these are two quite different things. Put it in this way paradoxically you can be with other people without being in a group. This is what I am saying. I'm using the word 'group' in this sort of tribal sense. But you can be with other people without being in a group. But I think the tendency is that when you are with other people it will slide into a group situation. If all of your, as it were at the same time or virtually the same time, lose your self awareness, if you are not very careful it will become a group situation.*

_____: *What would you say would be the factors that one should look out for?*

S: *When you start enjoying yourself! (Laughter) Enjoyment leads to unmindfulness. You know this. You start having a good time and enjoying yourself and laughing and joking. You become unmindful, don't you? You get carried away.*

Siddhiratna: *It's not necessarily though Bhante. You can participate.....*

S: *I think it's almost inevitable. (Pause)(Laughter) This is the great art, the great difficulty - to be happy and joyful but to remain mindful. It's when you are successful. When things are going well. You are having a good time. You're with your pals. You're having a drink. Having a good old chat and you're enjoying it thoroughly - then you must be very careful to remain mindful. If of course you can sort of blend that very positive, joyful experience with the mindfulness, well that's even better. But that is extremely difficult. You're really on a knife edge there.*

Siddhiratna: *Yes, because I've noticed that sometimes at Order meetings or at Order days even that you'll get a collection of people. A joke will start and that joke seems to be perpetuated totally illogically in some way. You've had the joke initially from one person but it goes on and on because people are somehow enjoying it in some very sort of negative way as if we're all together in it. In a very mindless kind of way. But then I think there are other circumstances which - you might be going to a film or something like that - where that will be entertainment, enjoyment in a popular kind of sense where I think people are genuinely mindful or aware of what they're doing or are relating it to their overall idea of things.*

S: *I think you can relate.. Like for instance you go to see a film and you talk about it afterwards and you discuss what it was all about and how that ties up with one's individual development and so on. This is certainly possible, but I don't think this always happens by any means. What I'm emphasising is the danger of the situation in which you are just with a number of other people, the danger of that situation just developing or degenerating into merely a group situation. And that is all the more likely if you are enjoying yourselves and having a good time. This is why I mention especially the party where at least in theory you're supposed to have a good time. So if you do start having a good time then you must really be careful to remain mindful.*

Siddhiratna: *I wonder what the definition of "a good time" is? (Laughter) A good time is being unmindful?*

S: *Well it usually amounts to that but it isn't that in itself. No. This is connected with something that is mentioned again and again in the Pali scriptures, that is the different kinds of intoxication - maddha - the intoxication with youth, the intoxication with strength, the intoxication with health. You see what I mean? And we could add, though this is not in the Pali texts, the intoxication with success. In all of these you start sort of revelling in these things and enjoying them in a sort of egoistic way, and then that leads to unmindfulness. You develop a sort of pride, a sort of carelessness, a sort of overconfidence, and that leads to loss of mindfulness.*

Siddhiratna: *Yes, I think that's what I feel about it yes.*

S: *I think it's that you've got therefore to be on your guard against, especially in those situations where things are going with a swing, where you're enjoying yourself, where things are positive and friendly, and especially when there's a bit of alcohol flowing. It's only a very mindful person that can use these things and not get submerged in them.*

I see it time and time again when people meet. The way they react to one another. What sort of scene they get into, what sort of wavelength is operating between them. You can see that they've lost their mindfulness, you can see it with half an eye.

[End of Side One Side Two]

They don't see it themselves! They're like zombies.

Siddhiratna: *Would unmindful pleasure then not involve stimulation. Personally I find that say a good party or something like that would involve something which was stimulating about it.*

S: *I'm not quite sure what you mean by a good party.*

Siddhiratna: *A good party would be stimulating, would encourage one to think or to relate or to be talking about....*

S: *Well yes, sure. I think that that sort of experience is unlikely to arise within the context of the common or garden party. I think you have to choose your people very carefully, and sort of plan your party in a very mindful way, and then it could happen, sure.*

Siddhiratna: *Whereas the common party then is somehow a wanting to numb in some way, to forget.*

S: *Or to escape from oneself, which means loss of self consciousness. If self consciousness becomes a bit painful because it's become a bit alienated, people try to lose it, to numb it. Or if they're just not very happy. Instead of facing up to the happiness, they try to forget it.*

Manjuvajra: *Sometimes if I get invited to a party, and maybe I don't particularly want to go or not want to go, I say all right I'll go and I kind of tick off that evening and say well that evening I know it's not going to be good for my spiritual development but I'm going to indulge that evening. Do you think this is a kind of disastrous thing to do?*

S: *I wouldn't say it's disastrous. You've simply wasted an evening. That's not disastrous.*

Certainly something can be made up for. No doubt it would have been better if one hadn't wasted the evening but to know that you are wasting it is in a way much better than to go along and not realise that you are wasting it.

Nagabodhi: *Maybe I'm talking about a lower level of development altogether but sometimes to have a complete lapse of mindfulness and get immersed in certain things does at least have the effect of putting me in touch with things that maybe I'd lost sight of in myself which I can then incorporate.*

Siddhiratna: *What would they be?*

Nagabodhi: *The wavelength that I operate on, the ways of thinking, ways of seeing people, aspects of my personality maybe. Just...*

_____: *Can you be a bit more specific.*

Siddhiratna: *Cruder aspects?*

Nagabodhi: *Yeah, well very often that sort of grosser aspect.*

S: *But this suggests that you go into the situation very mindfully. So if you deliberately go into a group situation very mindfully and mindfully to learn more about yourself etc., well that is completely acceptable. But if you genuinely do that! That's the criterion. If it isn't just a rationalisation or you lose your self consciousness after five minutes. But certainly one can do that. You can go out shopping and you can go to a supermarket or you can go down Brick Lane or just observe, but keeping your own awareness and self consciousness.*

Nagabodhi: *I can't say I was talking about something as dignified as that. I'm talking about when, in retrospect - no it's not so much that. I wouldn't say I've gone into the situation thinking, oh good, I'm going to be able to observe that side of myself, it's just that through losing maybe certain inhibitions that I've placed on myself, because perhaps I've lost...*

S: *Because usually that side of oneself is only too obvious and evident most of the time! (Laughter) You don't need to go studying it in that sort of way.*

Nagabodhi: *Other people may need to! (Laughter) But sometimes after a party I realise that I've been - well not after a party because I hardly ever go to them - but after some kind of situation where I've enjoyed myself.*

S: *Because one mustn't forget there is another way in which one regularly loses one's self consciousness but in a healthy and positive way that should be sufficient, and that is in dreams, in sleep. It's as though the human being as yet cannot keep up the strain of self consciousness and needs a periodic rest from it. This is one aspect of sleep. Though with practice you can develop self awareness, self consciousness even in sleep. But for the majority of people this just isn't possible. You need a rest from self consciousness. It's very tiring, it's like meditating. You can't do it all the time. So this is one, as it were, function of sleep, it provides you with that. You don't really need these other things. The sleep gives you your rest from self consciousness and you wake up fresher, hopefully with your self awareness even sharper than when you went to bed.*

But anyway the main purpose of this whole discussion is just to try to get us to feel or at least to imagine or imaginatively enter into, this tribal consciousness, this group consciousness, which is still very much with us in various ways, and to learn to distinguish that from individuality, which involves self consciousness in the sense of reflexive consciousness. We

must be able to be on our guard personally and try to maintain self consciousness in a positive healthy sense, against the inroads of the group consciousness, into which we are always being pulled back. Every time we turn on the radio, every time we open the newspaper, every time we meet certain people, every time we engage in desultory sort of talk, even with friends, there is always this danger. And most of all we have to be careful, as I said, when we are having a good time, when we are enjoying ourselves, because then we tend to get carried away. What is carried away? Well we, us that is to say, our self consciousness, that which is genuinely us.

But on the other hand we must be careful we don't develop what I call this sort of alienated awareness of ourselves. We must remain in contact with our feelings all the time.

Vessantara: *That would suggest to me that most people spend too much time with other people, in a way. If people spend more time on their own, once building up beginnings of self consciousness it would be helpful and easier.*

S: *And also one experiences oneself more when one is on one's own. In the feeling sense.*

Vessantara: *You were talking about people becoming alienated through being on their own. Certainly if I go say on solitary retreat or something I do experience my feelings much more fully in fact.*

S: *I wasn't thinking of that sort of situation, but a situation in which you are as it were with other people but separated from them, or forced to separate from them. Because you don't share their interests, they don't yours and so on.*

Manjuvajra: *When that happens, which it does with me fairly frequently, I feel that in a way that I'm in the wrong for not being interested. I feel as though.... like supposing I go and visit my (landlady) who is a person I'm quite fond of, but if we get into conversation, it takes about fifteen minutes for me to start to feel alienated, and yet I feel that there ought to be something there in that situation that I could come in contact with. Certainly as though there ought to be something in that situation that I could find of interest, even if it's just being aware of my own feelings or whatever. But it seems that I can find nothing there and it's just sort of totally boring.*

S: *I don't see why there's any problem at all. Some people are boring! I don't think you should turn it round and say well I've got some sort of problem because I can't find them interesting - no. Boring people are just boring.*

Manjuvajra: *There's a lot of them about. (Laughter)*

S: *.....you feel guilty. I experience this every time I go to see my relations. I'm very fond of them and I get on with them quite well, but after two hours I've had quite enough. I stick it out for two hours. After two hours it really is boring, so I don't prolong it. I don't feel in the least bit guilty about that. That is the situation. This is what is going to happen. This is one of the penalties, if you like, of the development of some degree of self awareness.*

Manjuvajra: *I think this may be one of the fear things that come up - that we mentioned earlier - that I've found that more and more people have become boring.....*

S: *Well actually you really are progressing then!*

Manjuvajra: *But it's a bit scary in a way, because you are almost thinking well if this carries on, there's going to be a time when I'm not going to find anybody interesting and it's just*

going to be sort of me.....

S: *It won't matter then. You'll be so wonderful then and so highly developed that you'll just enjoy yourself! (Laughter)*

Manjuvajra: *I suppose that's it, isn't it, the fact that one still sort of needs the kind of contact with other people, and you don't get that contact when you find someone is boring.*

Siddhiratna: *I can feel a sympathy with what Manjuvajra's saying, in the sense that you can get to meet people who are more or less interesting people, to a degree they're aware people, but because they're not say involved in a spiritual tradition or Buddhism specifically, there is sometimes a lack of..... you keep doing that with them - you don't actually meet, and I was looking at Marxist words where alienation is something like alienated self consciousness but he uses this word 'estrangement', as if you are estranged from the person.*

S: *Yes, right, you are a stranger.*

Siddhiratna: *Is that what that means?*

S: *I think it's connected with that. you've become a stranger.*

Siddhiratna: *I think estrangement in the sense that you can have a married couple who are unable to live together and they're estranged. There's a tension. And that's what I experience with some people who I meet. You know that they are intelligent people. You can have a conversation, but there's a difference of opinion, and they know that you're Buddhist because you've actually stated that.*

S: *I don't think the difference of opinion is what matters here. I think you can have a genuine communication with someone you differ from completely, provided that they've got some degree of self awareness. For instance I've had the experience in India many a time of talking with people who consider themselves good Buddhists and believed all the things that I believed, at least technically, but no communication was possible at all. And on the other hand I've met people that didn't share perhaps very many of my opinions or my beliefs but it was possible to have a good communication with them, because there was a degree of self awareness.*

So it isn't even a question of them not being Buddhist or anything like that, and also it's a question of what is a Buddhist. It is a question of a similar degree of self awareness. It's much more that, and you can sometimes find someone with a similar degree of self awareness who doesn't share any of your opinions, or very few of them. Vajrayogini came over, as you all know, recently and she was telling me that she came over primarily because she felt in Holland completely on her own. She'd got lots of friends, lots of colleagues and people she gets on really well with but no one with whom she could relate on a spiritual basis, she said. And that's why she came straight over because she felt quite on her own, and she needed some kind of spiritual contact she said, and she realised she could only get it here. It wasn't to be found in Holland. She'd come to that conclusion, even among her best friends there. She didn't have that sort of element in common with them. She had to come here, and she came very happily and cheerfully.

Siddhiratna: *What do you think the nature of this spiritual contact is? Is it as superficial as being able to use the same kind of jargon if you like or*

S: *It shouldn't be that. I think it is relatively superficial when it's that.*

Siddhiratna: *A sensation or feeling of something?*

S: *I think it's an awareness of something that you have in common which transcends both of you as narrow, limited individuals. It's something more like that.*

Siddhiratna: *A sort of common angle or ideal?*

S: *It's more than that. It must also be something to some extent felt and experienced. You can have in a broad sense the same ideals as others but not really be in communication with them.*

Siddhiratna: *Because obviously you can have the same ideals and the same objects but they needn't necessarily be spiritual in some way. Maybe purely economic or...*

S: *Or even when they were spiritual, if you are not roughly on the same sort of level of development or the same degree of implementation of the ideal, then it'll be very difficult to have a sort of equal communication, even if sort of technically or in principle you have got the same ideal.*

Siddhiratna: *You mean if one is more advanced than the other.*

S: *As it were, yes.*

Siddhiratna: *I would have thought the one that would be more advanced would in fact be able to relate to the lesser person....*

S: *Communication is essentially a two way process, otherwise Manjuvajra wouldn't have had the difficulty that he mentioned. It's not enough that he is aware of that other person. That other person has got to be aware of him for full communication to take place.*

Lokamitra: *You said implementation.... what did you say?*

S: *Well putting of the ideal into practice. If you've got the same degree of implementation, then you can communicate, but if you've got the same ideal, but different levels of implementation, or different degrees of implementation, then you may not be able to communicate very well.*

Lokamitra: *It's like people don't see you.*

S: *Exactly, yes, right. This is why I spoke of zombies. Yes, people don't see you.*

Nagabodhi: *Within the Order do you foresee that there are going to be therefore different levels because obviously all people who go for refuge share the same ideal, but there are going to be different levels of implementation. Is that not so? Simply through age, experience.*

S: *I really do feel though that it is very very difficult to categorise absolutely. I feel that quite strongly, and to mark it off, as it were. I am even having very serious thoughts about these so called higher ordinations and so on. Certainly about using the term 'ordination'. There might be people specialising in certain directions and maybe that should be marked in a certain way, but I feel more and more that one can't sort of distinguish in an absolute manner a degree of commitment or degree of self awareness to such an extent that you can sort of formalise it as a separate higher grade. I feel less and less happy about that.*

Siddhiratna: *Doesn't the implementation take on a kind of difference in kind as well. One person may be able to speak very well but another person feels quite a lot. Somebody else is very practical.*

S: *It doesn't even go according to the so called full-timer and so called part-timer. You could conceivably have a part-timer, who is technically part-time, who is more committed than someone who is technically full-time. You can't even distinguish I think really on that sort of basis. So my present thinking is to be inclined just to have the one ordination but different sort of branches of specialisation, but which would not constitute sort of higher degrees, as it were, of ordination. That is my present thinking. Sometimes it's difficult enough to decide whether someone is really willing to commit himself and be ordained, but if you have then to decide well whether so and so has reached this sort of level of self awareness and so and so has reached that, it becomes very very difficult, especially as people do change from time to time, different circumstances, different situations. So I am inclined to think at the moment that there should be just the one original Going for Refuge, the one original ordination. We might even stop thinking of it as an upasaka ordination. Even that is a limitation in a way. And then within the sort of fellowship of those so committed, there are different things that one can do, different things that one can turn one's hand to, and maybe there would need to be a differentiation, even a formal differentiation and different people doing different things. I don't think that could ever add up to a sort of system of grades.*

Nagabodhi: *By implementation then - I wasn't thinking in terms of the actual mechanics of whether one spoke or taught or so on, could you say what you do mean my implementation of the ideal, if it isn't.....*

S: *Well putting it into practice and carrying it out, realising it, in more and more different aspects of one's life. For instance you bring your employment, your working life into line, practise right livelihood. You bring your domestic life into line, you bring the way that you behave with other people into line with that ideal, you bring the way you use your money into line with that, you bring your eating habits into line with that, and so on. By implementation I mean simply all these things in a quite sort of simple practical manner.*

But anyway just again to make that original point, though I've already reminded you about it once, what we really have to try to understand is the general nature of the group consciousness and what happens to us when we simply partake of that and participate in it, and the general nature of the individual as such as self conscious in the sense of reflexively conscious, and the importance of preserving that type of individuality, that type of consciousness and safeguarding it from being submerged in the group consciousness at any time in any way or in connection with any given situation. So there can be a group consciousness which is that of a family, that of the economic unit, the trades union, the political group, the social group, class and so on.

Manjuvajra: *When you're with a group of people, like when you're with your family or with.....*

S: *I you speaking of being with a number of other persons or as it were immersed in a group?*

Manjuvajra: *No, immersed in a group, when you are coming into contact with that group, supposing you are going to visit some relations, after a while you begin to feel very tired, you get tired very quickly, is that because you are struggling to maintain your self consciousness?*

S: *No, I would say it's in a way a sort of resentment, and you are using energy to keep the resentment down. You just feel like screaming and saying "shut up, stop that silly sort of*

talk", but you can't, you're sitting there beaming, being all pleasant, smiling.

Also I think what is important, and here I speak from experience, don't allow yourself to be put on the receiving end, take the initiative. Don't sit there just saying "oh yes, no, yes, no, that's right" to their sort of flow of silly drivel. You take the initiative, you raise topics of conversation. Ask them what they think, have they seen this, did they see that? Otherwise you feel at the receiving end all the time and there are few things so demoralising as feeling that you are at the receiving end and you can't talk back, you can't hit back as it were. You've just got to sit there and take it all in, it's completely one sided and this is very frustrating and you start feeling resentful. So you must take initiative. Even if you are talking in a silly way, well at least you talk, at least you initiate your own silly subjects, and you will feel a bit better. At least it's not sort of one way all the time. If they start telling you about well they went on a holiday and the rain came through the roof, you tell them another gripping story about how the rain came through the roof when you were on your holiday in full detail (Laughter) and hold their attention as it were. At least you'll feel a bit better, especially if you're quite aware of what you're doing. But don't just sit there being on the receiving end all the time. That will surely build up resentment and make you feel more and more tired. Don't just passively accept their silliness, you be actively silly yourself, but knowing what you are doing.

Otherwise there is the tendency, we don't enjoy the visit, we don't enjoy the conversation so we just sit there saying "yes, oh no, yes, that's very interesting, oh yes, oh did it? oh yes, how nice!" and feel more and more at the receiving end.

So initiate conversation even if it is silly conversation. Never mind, you know what you are doing, so fair enough. And don't put yourself into those sort of situations too often or for too long. And don't feel guilty! I think this is quite unnecessary. "Oh I ought to love them more, I ought to want to spend more time with them, I ought to enjoy their conversation even though it is silly." Well why should you? You were right to be bored. Make no apologies for being bored. Be proud of being bored, it's a side you've evolved! If you weren't bored by their conversation, you'd be exactly where they are which would be terrible.

Let me just add a point here. "A growing awareness of personal differentiation". If you are not aware of other people, and to be aware of other people you've got to be aware of yourself, then you can't really be aware of personal differentiation. Do you see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: Could you say the first part of that again.

S: If you're in contact with people, sort of in a way conscious of them, you feel them and react to them, they react to you, but there's no reflexive consciousness, there's no self awareness, then you are not really aware of them. You're only aware of them when you're really aware of yourself, which doesn't mean just feeling yourself, which is simple consciousness, but being reflexively conscious and being able to think of yourself and see yourself, as it were, as a third party or as though you were a third party. So unless you've got this sort of awareness you cannot really be aware of another person, so that you cannot really have any awareness of personal differentiation. Do you see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: Do you mean something on say the psychological level of until you are self aware you are probably just projecting yourself onto others and just seeing yourself?

S: No, but within the group as such there's no mutual awareness possible. You are conscious but you are not self conscious, and therefore you are not aware really of others as others. Just as this person that you were trying to talk to was not aware of you as you. He was conscious of you wasn't he, he knew that you were there talking to him but was he aware of

you? No, as you say he didn't see you. So this is what happens within the group as such. You talk, you are conscious in a way, you feel one another, but you are not aware of one another. For that self consciousness needs to be there. If you can be aware of another you can be aware of yourself, self conscious. If you can be self conscious you can be aware of another person, but that only happens when true individuality begins to emerge.

So if you are in a situation where you develop self consciousness and you are truly aware of other people, that nobody else has developed self consciousness, and therefore nobody else is aware of you, and you are aware that they are not aware of you, then this is experienced as a sort of loneliness. It was all right so long as you were not aware of them, but once you become aware of them and then you see that they are not aware of you, then the sensation of loneliness and isolation - it's not alienation, or not necessarily alienation. Maybe loneliness is the best term.

Ratnaguna: I just can't grasp how you can not be aware of someone. It just seems really odd.

S: You grasp what Manjuvajra was saying. You can imagine.....

Ratnaguna: I've heard it before, I've heard people say it before - he was talking to me but he wasn't aware of me, but I just can't see how you can talk to someone and not be aware of them.

S: But don't you find people doing that to you?

Ratnaguna: I can't say I do.

Siddhiratna: Isn't it sort of on the level of shopkeepers perhaps, not putting shopkeepers down, but you go in (Laughter)..

S: Well they've no time to be aware of you.

Siddhiratna: Yes, or the bus conductor's "Thank you". He knows that he's said "Thank you" to something but he didn't know it was you, sort of thing. Is that possibly.....?

S: Yes. A kind of it. Under other circumstances he may be capable of being aware of you, but he certainly isn't at that particular moment. But suppose someone is like that all the time, even when he's talking to you, even when he's looking you in the face, and that is the situation that Manjuvajra was referring to.

Siddhiratna: Perhaps you get the occasional crazy person walking around the streets. They are actually talking to you but you know that they don't see you as yourself, it's just an object or perhaps their projection.

Lokamitra: If you are quite aware of yourself and of the other person, it's often quite difficult for another person to talk to you without actually being aware of you. Do you find that happens?

S: Do you mean it's not easy for the other person or a third person?

Lokamitra: I'm saying you're aware of oneself and people generally, but especially of that person you're talking to, that person you're talking to, though normally they may not be very aware, it's very difficult for them in that situation to communicate with you without experiencing you.

S: No, I wouldn't say that. I'd say that by the fact that you are aware of them to begin with, makes it more easy for them to be aware of you, and you can even sort of encourage them to be more aware of you, but there are many cases in which no amount of awareness of them on your part seems to help them to become aware of you, and that's where the frustration comes in. You seem to be making no headway at all. And perhaps they haven't got any sort of language or are not familiar with any sort of language in which it's possible to even discuss the matter, and make them theoretically aware of the possibility.

Ratnaguna: *If you are talking to someone who you realise is not aware of you, is the tendency for you to start not communicating back?*

S: Well you can't really. You can keep up the conversation and he may even go away quite happy with the conversation, completely oblivious of the fact that you were feeling a bit frustrated or that you were feeling that you were unable to communicate. He may not be aware of that at all. He may go away thinking you had a wonderful talk, and that you are real friends.

Ratnaguna: *What I'm saying is that I do know somebody who I think does do that, but I find instead of trying to encourage him to communicate, I find I end up doing the same because it gets too tiring. Do you see what I mean?*

S: Ah yes. It is tiring. That's quite dangerous because you get just sucked back in, so if one is aware of that danger to oneself, you have to try and avoid such situations as much as you can, as much as is practically possible. It is very tiring because there's so large a sort of part of yourself that just cannot come into action, cannot come into play, and you experience that as very frustrating and you might even get a bit resentful, in a way quite unskilfully but you can't help it. To keep down the resentment and not express it requires a lot of effort and then you start feeling very tired.

Lokamitra: *The important thing in that sort of case then is to keep the communication on one's own terms almost.*

S: Yes. If there isn't this - not only on one's own terms because it can't be on your terms - but where it cannot be on your own terms in that sort of sense, just restrict or limit the communication as much as is practically possible.

Anyway what about this whole topic today of the Monarchy, the City and Individualism? I think Trevor Ling tries to sort of delineate a rather sort of very hypothetical sort of cause-effect sequence in a way that's quite illegitimate. No doubt by the time of Sixth Century BC India, individuality had begun to develop. People had ceased to identify themselves completely with the tribal group. No doubt the growth of the city had something to do with that, either as cause or effect. No doubt the rise of the monarchy had something to do with both, either as cause or effect or as both, but I don't think we can establish any sort of simple direct cause-effect sequence between these factors. No doubt there are many other factors involved. But that individualism, or maybe embryonic individuality, did emerge in a quite widespread fashion at that time, and that The Buddha as it were came in on the crest of that sort of wave in a manner of speaking, this is a matter of fact. But the why and the wherefore of it is a quite complex matter and it can't be I think sorted out as straightforwardly as Trevor Ling seems to think. He sounds very plausible if you read him rapidly, but probe a little into it and it doesn't seem plausible at all. It's very hypothetical, very speculative, very reductionist, very simplistic. So you can really say that, yes, in the time of the Buddha, monarchy was superseding republicanism. Cities had emerged into prominence and were the centres of urban culture, and also individualism, even individuality, was emerging on quite a

grand scale relatively speaking, and no doubt somehow, in one way or another, all these different factors were interconnected.

You can't really I think say very much more than that. Perhaps you don't need to say, from the Buddhist point of view. All that is really of interest is that around that time there was this eruption of individualism, just to use that term for the time being, and the Buddha in a sense, from an historical point of view, was a part of that movement, even the culmination of that movement, and also the starting point of a development which was infinitely greater, which entered what we call the spiritual dimension. Moved into that dimension.

Nagabodhi: *Was the tradition of the wandering sadhu then new to this period? Was there not already an old tradition of people who left home and wandered about?*

S: *Oh yes, yes. But it seems that during this period, not just of a few decades but maybe say even two centuries or more before the Buddha, this whole process, this whole tradition had gathered momentum. It was anti Brahminical or at least non Brahminical, though more often than not anti Brahminical, and it presupposes obviously a development of wealth and prosperity, so that these economically parasitic people could be supported, people seemed happy to support them. There was the wherewithal to support them, and they were just roaming around. They were people who had become dissatisfied with life at home, looking for something beyond, dissatisfied with the ethnic traditions, dissatisfied with Brahminism, looking for some truth, some other way of life, some other meaning and purpose beyond the life of the tribal group, and there were some who were leaders amongst them who felt that they had found a solution. They arrived at a teaching and they formed little groups, little fraternities, so the Buddha emerged on the scene as a leader of one such little group, but that rapidly became the biggest and most important group, and with the possible exception of Jainism, swallowed up all the rest, or superseded all the rest.*

So quite clearly the wanderers were people who were no longer satisfied with the existing order of things, no longer satisfied with the life of the tribal groups, no longer satisfied with home and family life, no longer satisfied with the traditional religious beliefs and practices, and that they wandered from place to place and were supported, and they were on the look out for something more, something better, something new. Some of them thought they had found it, many others were still looking. Like Sariputra and Moggallana, they left home with the idea of just looking, finding a teacher, finding someone who had attained some knowledge and wisdom. So the existence of the Paribrajakas, the wanderers, just goes to show two things: one, that the society as a whole was sufficiently prosperous to be able to support them, and, two, that quite a large number of people were no longer satisfied with the existing order of things, and that applied, at least in the Buddha's day as much to people in cities as to people in villages.

There is one little point which occurred to me, not directly relevant here but a bit relevant. You remember the Buddha's description of the Middle Way, and the so called first discourse or first sermon. He describes the two extremes. Do you remember that? And there are various epithets which he uses to describe. He describes for instance the part of self mortification as painful and useless. He describes the path of self indulgence as hino and gamo. Hino means low, inferior, but what does gamo mean? Gamo means village. It's a village practice. Here you see the introduction of what Trevor Ling calls the urban values. (Pora) for instance is urban and it means exactly what it means in English or in Latin. Speech is (pora), urbane. Right speech, perfect speech is (pora), which means urbane speech, the speech of city folk, polite refined, agreeable, not this rough coarse jungly speech of the village people. And in the same way the practice of self indulgence, the opposite of self torture, is described as a village practice, which suggest that, if not in the Buddha's view, according to the outlook of the times, life in the cities was more refined, more civilized, even

in a way more spiritual, which goes a bit against what we usually think about city life.

No doubt there were the gamblers and the prostitutes and so on, but at the same time there was a degree of refinement, there were certain spiritual possibilities in the city that you did not find in the village, you did not find in the old ethnic society. We can apply that today, can't we? If you were living even in a village in Norfolk, what would you find? What spiritual inspiration? you'd find the local vicar at best. Maybe he'd be a good chap but if you were disillusioned with Christianity itself, what good would that be? But in the city there are all sorts of possibilities of spiritual communication and inspiration.

So it's interesting that the Buddha uses this quite almost contemptuous term, gamo, to refer to the self indulgent extreme such as was practised by the villagers. So the villagers are just devoted to self indulgence, eating drinking, making merry in various ways, sex, gambling. This was the self indulgent life of the village. Contrasted with the more refined life of the city, or at least certain aspects of city life. It's almost as though the village life had no redeeming factors from the Buddha's point of view.

Lokamitra: *It's almost an animal existence.*

S: *Almost an animal existence, and you really do find... I have been to indian villages where you really feel this. They are certainly healthy and wholesome. There's nothing negative but*

[End of tape 7]