

## 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 17

**S:** I think there is quite a difference between Karl Marx in the Library of the British regime, and the Buddha under the Bodhi tree. [Pause]

On the other hand there is this point that Marxism, or Communism, is very powerful and very influential in the world today, so sooner or later we have to consider where we stand with regards to it. I think this is inevitable. In this cosy little island of course, we are not faced with that problem. So since we are not immediately faced by it, we prefer to ignore it. Not think about it too much, if at all. But, for instance, in places like Finland they have to think about it - Vajrabodhi is thinking about it. I don't know along what lines at the moment.

\_\_\_\_\_: From what I've heard from Bodhisri he's started to use lots of Marxist language, - he uses the language of the Marxists in an attempt to communicate with them.

**S:** I have heard, and have also read, that in Britain currently, Marxist philosophy is undergoing something of a revival in the universities. Has anyone heard about this? It's becoming a bit intellectually respectable, especially as there are nowadays so many brands of Marxism which are **not** connected with official Russian Communism. And that Marxist philosophy is becoming increasingly respectable and influential in British universities. So I think if one does come into contact with university people, one may be increasingly asked questions from this sort of standpoint. So, therefore, perhaps, one has to do a little homework, and maybe think about this a bit. I'm not suggesting you should read "*Das Kapital*" right through. In my own younger days this was one of the two books that I started but was never able to finish. The other one being, for your information, "Finnegan's Wake". (Laughter) I struggled through about a third of "*Das Kapital*", and I just gave up.

**Nagabodhi:** How far did you get into "Finnegan's Wake"?

**S:** I think about three pages! (Laughter)

**Nagabodhi:** Did you go and see the film?

**S:** I didn't know there was a film. (Laughter)

**S:** But certainly Marxism is one of the great 'movements' of our time, if not, in some ways, the biggest and most influential, apart from Capitalism - If you can call that a 'movement'. So I think, perhaps we need to give some attention to it, and work out roughly where we stand with regard to it.

**Siddhiratna:** I think it's quite surprising to find how far it does go into things like universities and colleges. When I was at college last I was surprised to find how much Socialism there was in the BFI, in their Education Department - all their syllabuses are based on a socialistic view.

**S:** Well, there is a certain amount of very diluted Marxism and diluted Marxist socialism, sort of vague sort of semi-pseudo-liberal ideology - I wasn't thinking so much of that, but more in terms of straight Marxism, if you like, a quite sort of rigorous intellectual analysis. I was thinking more of that kind of thing. I think some of you know what I mean.

**Lokamitra:** All the student demonstrators ten years ago are now lecturing and writing books and so on.

**S:** About what?

Lokamitra: Well, all the Marxist and so on demonstrators of the student things ten years ago are now running universities.

**S:** I did find that when I was in Paris, and gave a few lectures there, that I came across many people of this sort - intellectuals with a Marxist background, or with Marxist sympathies, who asked questions from that sort of point of view. Sometimes very interestingly. In one lecture I spoke about ethnic religions and universal religions and about the possibility that a universal religion might, as it were, harden in the course of time into an ethnic religion, and one student of Marxism - as he must have been - made quite an interesting question: he asked me whether I thought that official Russian Communism - the Communism of the Russian Communist Party - did not represent a similar sort of hardening, an ethnic hardening of Karl Marx's original thought, which was more like a universal religion. So I said I hadn't thought about it, but it was quite an interesting suggestion. One can see, as it were, the same law operating, - albeit on a somewhat lower level, or a considerably lower level - that certain as it were creative ideas produced by Marx had become a sort of 'official' ideology of a very rigid, 'hard-line' party, sort of dogmatically enforced.

So I think what is attracting people's attention in British universities on a more serious level, **is not** the dogmatic Marxist ideology put out from Moscow, but it is the more creative ideas of Karl Marx himself, even in his more youthful period in the youthful writings, which official Communism repudiates. He was very close to Hegel. I think many people in British universities are more interested in that sort of Marx - Marx, the thinker, or Marx, the philosopher, rather than in the Karl Marx of the Russian Communist pantheon. This is my impression. I must say I don't have too much knowledge about it.

Vessantara: From what I've seen, I had quite a lot of contact with the University, the Russian version of Communism just isn't seen as having very much to do with Marx any more. They look to Cuba or China.

**S:** Well, China, in a way, has even less to do with Marx, but that doesn't mean it isn't interesting and possibly creative.

Manjuvajra: I think that the current idea is that China is much, much closer to original Marxist ideas. It's called the Marxist Leninist

**S:** Maoist - Marxist Leninist Maoist instead of Marxist Leninist Stalinist. Vajrabodhi, of course, went to China and spent a few weeks there. He returned with very mixed feelings. He returned with feelings of a very healthy group but he wondered what had happened to the individual. [Pause] It was a very sort of healthy, possibly happy group life - certainly healthy - in a rather puritanical sort of way, but with no room for the individual.

Siddhiratna: There was a film on Mao's death on television not long ago, where they showed scenes of people working in fields - other people, the Red Guards I think it was, going out to quote Mao sort of all together in some sort of lump way, but you try to imagine what would happen if somebody said "No", or "Excuse me I've got something else to ....." (Laughter)

**S:** You have to practically appear on the streets in some of the cities, just carrying your 'little red book'. You're hardly safe without it, sort of thing. So there certainly doesn't seem much room there for the individual.

Nagabodhi: That does seem to be the absolute fundamental point of opposition between what we're doing and almost any form of Communism, in that the individual is not valued as the unit - it's society.

**S:** Whereas at least in the Capitalist countries with all their fault, and they really are quite terrible and tremendous faults, there is scope, very often, for the individual. There's also scope for all sorts of disastrous mistakes on the part of the individual, but that is another matter perhaps. All right, let's carry on.

**Text:** *"What is certain, on the other hand, is that the Buddha was not regarded by the earliest generation of Buddhists as a superhuman figure of any kind."*

**S:** Is this true? Well, it depends what you mean by 'human' and therefore what you mean by 'superhuman'. From the Western point of view the Buddha was 'superhuman', but not from the Indian point of view, or Buddhist point of view, because for the Buddhist 'human' included also, at least potentially, the 'transcendental'. The Buddha was an **enlightened** human being, not an ordinary human being, so he was 'super' to ordinary humanity. So 'superhuman' from the Western point of view, surely! Do you see what I mean?

**Siddhiratna:** Does this go back to what we were saying this morning about the Western idea about what 'human' means?

**S:** Yes exactly, yes!

**Siddhiratna:** I've forgotten what you did say actually, or what ..

**S:** Well the Western idea of 'human' excludes tacitly 'God'. There is a distinction between 'human' and 'divine', between 'man' and 'God'. So the term 'human' covers a comparatively limited range. But in the case of Buddhism 'human' can go right up to ultimate reality itself and include that, because the human being is capable of realising that, as the Buddha did. So the Buddha is not 'superhuman' within the **Buddhist** framework of reference, because there is nothing super to the human, but it is certainly superhuman within the Western framework of reference, because in the Western framework of reference there is much that is super in regard to the human. That is a very ambiguous and unsatisfactory statement. The Buddha is explicitly described as the highest being, the highest person, the best of bipeds etc. All right, carry on then.

**Text:** *"He had no religious role, such as that of the chosen revealer of divine truth, nor was he regarded by the early Buddhists as in any sense a superhuman saviour."*

**S:** That is all quite true, but the Buddha was much more than simply not that. Carry on.

**Text:** *"As a modern Buddhist writer puts it, 'The Buddha exhorts his followers to depend on themselves for their deliverance, since both defilement and purity depend on oneself. One cannot directly purify or defile another. Clarifying his relationship with his followers and emphasizing the importance of self-reliance and individual striving the Buddha plainly states: You yourselves should make the exertion. The Tathagatas are only teachers (Dhammapada, v-276).'"*

**S:** Well this is true. On the other hand it is not true, it leaves out altogether the element of inspiration, doesn't it? That the Buddha inspires others by his presence, by his example, by his mere being, as it were. It isn't just some anonymous voice speaking from behind the blackboard, as it were. All right, on you go.

**Text:** *"The Buddha, or Tathagata, does not direct the attention of his disciples away from themselves to some higher, holier being; he directs their attention to human nature with which he is concerned and with which they too must be concerned".*

**S:** Well, again, there is an ambiguity. He directs their attention to human nature, yes, but not only as it is but as it can be: that is to say to enlightened human nature, which does represent a 'higher, holier being', as it were.

**Text:** *"His words are in the spirit of the philosopher, whose attention is upon the human condition, and the right ordering of human affairs."*

**S:** Again this is true and not true. It leaves out altogether the Transcendental dimension.

**Text:** *"As the son of the leading citizen of Kapilavastu, Gotama had the equality of status which enabled him throughout his long public life to meet with the kings of northern India on equal terms, but he did so also as one whose philosophy was of particular interest to those who dealt with the ordering of human affairs."*

**S:** Do you think this is very correct?

**Vessantara:** Well it wasn't because he was the son of a leading citizen of Kapilavastu or because he had a few good ideas that kings talked about

**S:** They didn't talk to him as kings, this is also quite clear.

\_\_\_\_\_: There is some element of truth in what he says, about it being in the kings' interest to have Buddhism being a sort of passive doctrine, to put it crudely. There was some vested interest in sort of spreading Buddhism throughout his kingdom. It would be particularly amenable to him.

**S:** But the point is whether we do find that there were actually any kings adopting this attitude, because we know that Pasenajit was connected with the Buddha; we know that Bimbisara was; we know that Ajattasatru was, in a way, we know that one or two other kings were, but they all seem, as far as we can tell from the records, to have genuinely respected the Buddha as the Buddha, and in the case of Bimbisara and Pasenajit, to have been 'upasakas'. In fact Bimbisara was believed to have been a 'stream entrant'.

So no doubt they did see the practical utility of the Buddha's teaching on the ordinary ethical level for the ordinary citizen, for the ordinary subject, but also it seems, they did recognise its purely spiritual value in terms of human development.

\_\_\_\_\_: I just thought it may have been heavily weighted towards administrative, uh, .....

**S:** Well this depends how strongly we think the Buddha himself emphasised that aspect of his teaching, and we know that whenever the audience, or whenever the listener was receptive, at least in the case of a lay audience, as soon as he had spoken about 'dana' and 'sila' and so on he hastened, almost, to get on to the 'Four Noble Truths' and the cessation of craving and the attainment of 'nirvana', going far beyond the purely social context; going far beyond anything that might be of interest to the king as such.

So there was the social dimension, this is very true - the aspect of the ethical - and maybe the kings did appreciate that quite strongly, but those who recognised the Buddha as 'Buddha' would also have appreciated the purely spiritual side of his teaching, and valued that for its own sake.

In all states, of course, you do get the attempt to harness religion, for want of a better term, to purposes of social order, if you know what I mean. Sometimes quite legitimately, but sometimes quite **illegitimately**. Sometimes, for instance, to help bolster up a quite unjust

regime.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yeah. I thought that Buddhism being `transcendental' would have vacated the field entirely, and if some other religions wanted to sort of direct, and have some say in government for their own ends.

**S:** Buddhism was concerned with the organisation of society in as much as Buddhism was concerned with the ethical life of the individual, because it believed that the ethical was the stepping-stone to the spiritual. So an ethical life is lived out in society. If a society is an unethical society, an unjust society it becomes that more difficult for the individual to be ethical, for the individual to be just. So even from the standpoint of individual development one has, as it were, a vested interest in the maintenance of an ethical social order. So even though the ultimate interest of Buddhism is `transcendental' it can't ignore the social, because it can't ignore the ethical. All right let's go on.

**Text:** *"The city with its royal court was the characteristic locus for his teaching activities".*

**S:** Whether characteristic is not really very definite. It certainly was one of the loci for his teaching activities. But whether it was **the** characteristic one I think is quite debatable.

**Text:** *"When he died we are told that he was honoured and his mortal remains disposed of after the manner of a king".*

**S:** What do you think that meant? It seems to me to mean simply that they were to be honoured in the best possible way that people could think of honouring them: or that they were accustomed to honouring anybody's relics.

**Lokamitra:** Was it different than the way great sages were .... their remains were disposed of?

**S:** We don't know how great sages' remains were disposed of. According to Vedic tradition the remains of sadhus were to be thrown into the river. [Pause] But don't forget there is also the contemporary conception of a king as a `deva', a divine being. So people were accustomed to honouring these divine beings during their lifetime, and also after their death, by enshrining their remains and building stupas. So if the Buddha had wanted to indicate that after his death his remains should be honoured on a grand scale, or a lavish scale, then the only way in which he could convey that, or communicate that to his followers would be to say, "Well, like the remains of a king". It doesn't mean that he was necessarily placing himself, or placing his work as it were, on the same level as a king, or on the same level as the work of a king.

\_\_\_\_\_: The meanings seems to be definitely slanting towards identifying the Buddha as being the king in public ( ? )

**S:** You mustn't forget that, as I said, the king was also a divine or semi-divine being, not just a purely secular figure, so if you do admit some degree of comparison between the Buddha and the king, it isn't portraying the Buddha as a purely secular figure (Loud noise of jet aircraft obscured words) ... it is between the Buddha and the king as already semi-divine as it were. For instance the king wore sandals, and usually people didn't wear sandals. The king wore particular kind of rather high sandals. Why was this? Later on other personages wore them. It was to lift the king above the earth, and what did this symbolise? That the king was not really of the earth, he was a divine being. We find in some primitive tribes, for instance in South African tribes, right down into the last century, kings, after their election or consecration or whatever, were never allowed to set foot on the earth, were always carried on somebody's shoulders, for much the same sort of reason. The king was divine. So even if you

**do** compare the Buddha with the Indian king of his day or kings of his day, don't forget they were semi-divine beings, not just secular beings.

\_\_\_\_\_: What do you think they were in fact? ( words so softly spoken as to be inaudible )

**S:** Well the two chief functions of the king in the Buddha's day seem to have been considered to be the protection of the people by keeping out foreign invaders, the enforcement of law and order, and the collection of taxes to pay for the army, to pay for the administration of law and order, and to support himself in court on a suitably lavish scale. Later on some kings added public works, public utilities, but this was considered quite extraordinary, as it were. And kings did not even issue a coinage, did not even provide schools, did not provide hospitals. Later kings like Ashoka did - this was quite exceptional. [Pause]

The king was a semi-divine being who maintained order, and collected taxes. At least his representatives came periodically to punish offenders and to collect money from whomever he could collect it. Mahatma Gandhi, for instance, tells a story of when he was in South India once, and he was trying to stir up opposition to the British Government, he asked a poor peasant woman, "Do you know who governs you?" He wanted to bring it home to her that she was governed by foreigners. So she said, "No, not really, I suppose we're governed by some divine power". This was her impression, that in Delhi or wherever, very far away there was some divine power that governed the country. And this is very typical of the traditional Indian attitude. And the king, as we saw the other day, was addressed as 'Deva', which means 'God'. The Buddha himself, in the Pali scriptures, as I mentioned, addresses kings as 'Deva', which means divine being. Anyway let's go on.

**Text:** *"If one asked whether the Buddha had the greater affinity with the priest or with the king, and whether it was religion or to secular affairs that his characteristic concerns were closer, there can be no doubt about the answers which would have to be given".*

**S:** No. I'm afraid there is a lot of doubt. He's not particularly close to either, really. It's very special pleading and he does his best but I'm afraid we can't let him get away with it.

**Lokamitra:** What's the derivation of the word 'religion'?

**S:** Well it is disputed - 'religare', 'to bind back' - that's one derivation: 'to bind you back to that which you've broken away from, or lost. It's also a sort of 'careful observance, a studied, scrupulous observance' of something. As when we say in modern parlance, "He religiously brushed his teeth every day". So in that way you religiously observe certain divine powers, certain portents, you're very scrupulous about them; you're very scrupulous with regard to the sacred. Originally religion seems to have meant something like that. You were conscious in the environment of something strange, something unusual, something sacred, and you were very scrupulous in your behaviour towards that, or with regard to that; very careful. You were mindful of the fact that there was something unusual, awe-inspiring, terrible, possibly dangerous, so you were a bit on your guard with regard to it, careful about what you did with regards to it. So you were a 'religious' man, an 'observing' man.

On we go and see how much more we disagree.

**Text:** *"The rigorously logical and scientific method of the discourse which were preserved in the Pali Canon has been fully and competently expounded by other writers".*

**S:** They are not always rigorously logical or scientific in their method. Sometimes they are highly poetical and purely descriptive and inspirational. What is logical and scientific about the Buddha's parables for instance? There are lots and lots of parables. [Pause] All right, on

we go.

**Text:** "G. S. P. Misra concludes his account of the matter with these words: 'It can truly be said that Buddhism appeared in the intellectual arena as a harbinger of a new trend in the realm of thinking. The empirical and analytical outlook of the Buddhists led them to found a system of psychology and logic which had great influence on Indian The early Buddhist period in Indian thought as a whole,....'"

**S:** Mm. You notice the mixture of metaphors: 'in the intellectual arena as a harbinger of a new trend in the realm of thinking'. Where you find a mixture of metaphors always be on the look out for very confused and muddled thinking.

**Siddhiratna:** What is the mixture there?

**S:** Well an 'arena' is somewhere where you fight, but a harbinger is like a sort of messenger, like a 'harbinger of Spring'. You should say 'appeared in 'the intellectual arena' as the fighter for a new trend in the realm of thinking'. You could have said that. So people who mix their metaphors are people who don't have a very vivid realisation of the concrete particular. They are lost in vague abstractions. Do you see what I mean? If you've got your eye on the object you cannot mix your metaphors. If you think concretely, you cannot mix your metaphors. If you've a vivid sense of actuality, you cannot mix your metaphors. Unless of course, you do it deliberately as a sort of super poetic device as sometimes Shakespeare does. But these people are not Shakespeares. (Laughter)

So you notice this idea of 'Buddhism appearing in the intellectual arena' like some mail-clad warrior, or gladiator. And then 'as a harbinger'. "*The empirical and analytical outlook of the Buddhists led them to found a system of psychology and logic which had great influence on Indian thought as a whole*". It's true they did have great influence, but 'empirical'? Again, another very ambiguous word: the meaning of the word 'empirical' depends on how far you envisage your experience extending. If it's experience merely through the five senses and the rational mind, well, the basis of your empiricism is very limited, but if it includes the whole range of the 'dhyanas' etc. etc., then the basis of your empiricism is much more extended. So which of these is it? Do you see the difference? And it wasn't a purely analytical outlook. There was much that was one might say 'synthetic', much that was imaginative, much that was a matter of inspired vision.

And (did the Buddhists in any case found a system of psychology in the modern Western pseudo-scientific sense? Certainly they did write and think about much that we describe as psychology as we saw on the Abidharma seminar. But it was a psychology, if you can call it that, very much geared to the needs of the practical spiritual life, or the practical needs of the spiritual life rather. [Pause] Yes, carry on.

**Text:** "*The early Buddhist period in India was, writes A.K. Warder, 'one of the supreme ages of rationalism in human history', and he adds that 'we have not yet outlived its repercussions*".

**S:** What is 'an age of rationalism' anyway? (Sound of chuckling) Do you have whole ages where everybody becomes very rationalistic? And 'reason dominates all human affairs'? Maybe you have a few sort of intellectual elites which becomes somewhat rationalistic at certain periods, but 'ages of rationalism'? And was Buddhism one of those 'supreme ages of rationalism'? All of this is very, very doubtful indeed, even as regards early Buddhism.

**Siddhiratna:** How long do you think he means by 'age'? A hundred years, or five hundred years?



**S:** I don't know. Possibly a hundred years at least. [Pause]

Even Dr. Conze speaks of early Buddhism as rationalism tinged with mysticism. I rather like that `tinged with mysticism'. He says that the Mahayana is mysticism **tinged** with rationalism.

**[End of side one side two]**

No. I'm afraid all these good gentlemen have gone sadly astray. I can understand the Indians going astray. I think there is a sociological reason for it, quite definitely. And what do you think that is? Well, they're Indian. (Laughter) They are quite naturally taking pride in their natural heritage, also they are Western educated, scientifically minded, so they want to sort of convince themselves that they too have their scientists, they too have their rationalists in India, centuries upon centuries ago - 'Look there is the Buddha, he was a rationalist, he was an analyst, he was scientific in his outlook. Don't think that the Indians were only superstitious and mystical, no, they were rationalists centuries before the Europeans were rationalists, - etc. etc. etc. Blah, blah, blah', and so they go on in this sort of way. (Sound of chuckling). I've heard it umpteen times - this is just a more respectable presentation of it in books, and poor old Trevor Ling seems to be under their influence. They seem to be rather holding him by the hand, and he is tottering along.

Lokamitra: I heard a very good example of that in India .....

**S:** ..... and of course, it is dedicated to Mother Indira Gandhi.

Lokamitra: I was at ( ? ) where they have these what they call `Kamasutra' temples ..... [**S:** Erotic sculpture] .... yes, erotic sculpture drawn in the temples and I was at the station there, and one man whom I'd met there was talking to the stationmaster, he'd bought a number of plaster replicas of some of these sculptures, and he said, "Now, look" , he was saying to the stationmaster, "we had these long before the West had mini-skirts!". (Loud laughter)

**S:** `We had the permissive society before you had it in the West'. We had pornography before you had it in the West. Yes, I really think as regards G.S.P. Misra and A.K. Warder, the reason for all this is simply sociological, it's just rather misplaced cultural patriotism. It's rather like us if we were to try to prove that King Arthur was a Bodhisattva, or something like that. Anyway let's go on. I'm afraid this is becoming hilarious if it wasn't so sad.

**Text:** *"This, then, was the new wisdom; it can hardly be called a religion. What has to be asked, therefore, is why, before many centuries had passed, it had begun to assume the characteristics of a religion (in the terms in which religion has been defined in chapter 1), with the result that in modern Asia it is unequivocally as a religion that Buddhism appears in the analyses of social scientists."*

**S:** I wonder what they've got to do with it? But anyway, you see the way in which your wrong way of looking at things, your confusion of categories, your lack of clear thought, gives rise to a pseudo-problem, because you've got to account now for how Buddhism, which wasn't originally a religion, became a religion in the course of its later development, presumably in the form of the unfortunate Mahayana. Anyway let's carry on.

**Text:** *"It is possible, even from what has been discovered so far in the course of our investigation, to see how this came about. The Buddha was not hostile to the religious ideas and practices of the ordinary people, He did not endorse these ideas and practices, but neither did he, in general, oppose them."*

**S:** He seems to have endorsed the ideas, if for instance you include in that ideas about the existence of all sorts of supernatural, or supernormal beings, - he certainly seems to have endorsed that, and to have accepted that they did exist, in fact according to the scriptures he had conversations with them on a number of occasions, and regularly received them in the early hours of the morning and taught them. So surely this cannot be referred to as not endorsing these ideas and practices. He might not have endorsed the practice of making offerings to these beings, but he certainly seemed to have endorsed their existence, and accepted their existence, and experienced it personally, if we can take the records of the scriptures literally. So this really won't do very well.

**Text:** *"From his time and throughout the subsequent history of the tradition, the Buddhist attitude appears to have been based, whether consciously or not, on the recognition that a man's view of the world can only be modified, not radically changed."*

**S:** Oh dear! Well, certainly a few people's view of the world can be radically changed. I thought that was what Buddhism was based on - that people could change, they could develop: could develop beyond their present selves. Anyway, let's carry on and learn the worst.

Text *"That is all that can be expected immediately and in the short run"*.

**S:** Well, how immediately is immediately, and how short is the short run?

**Text:** *"In the long run it is possible that a radical shift of viewpoint may take place, but with the generality of men it will be a very long run before this happens. " In the long run .....this happens."*

**S:** Does he mean a long run in this life, or throughout a series of lives, or what? He doesn't make it clear.

**Text:** *"A distinction is sometimes made between men of traditional, or preindustrial, societies and men of modern, industrialized ones in terms of a contrast between irrationality and rationality."*

**S:** Well, do men nowadays in the modern industrialised societies, behave always with rationality?! Is this what he is really saying? He seems to be saying this. All right, let's carry on.

**Text:** *"It is assumed that in preindustrial societies the processes of thought are a-rational or non-rational, or even, it has been suggested, follow a different kind of rationality from the one characteristic of men of Westernized, industrial society."*

**S:** One would have thought there was only one kind of rationality. There are different applications of rationality surely. Anyway, carry on.

**Text :** *"But, as Malinowski pointed out with reference to the rationality of primitive people, 'a moment's reflection is sufficient to show that no art or craft however primitive could have been invented or maintained, no organized form of hunting, fishing, tilling or search for food could be carried out without the careful observation of natural processes and a firm belief in its regularity, without the power of reasoning and without confidence in the power of reason; that is without the rudiments of science.' The process of reasoning will in principle be the same for men of primitive and of more advanced societies; in both cases it will be a systematic tracing out of causal sequences."*

**S:** Mm. This is true of course.

**Text:** *"The significant difference between the two will be in the premises from which each respectively starts".*

**S:** Ah! But where do you get your premises from? This is a crucial point. Reason doesn't give you your premises, it only enables you to draw correct conclusions.

**Text:** *"Given certain premises, the logical development will be one line of thought; given different premises, it will be another. What, therefore, distinguishes one man's world-view from another's is not necessarily the rationality or irrationality of his processes of thought but the premises from which his reflections upon the world begin. They are usually bequeathed to him in a general way by his culture; they may be determined more particularly by his economic circumstances, or perhaps by his social status, or his role relationships, and so on."*

**S:** There is of course, the question of his spiritual experience beyond reason, but Trevor Ling doesn't take that into consideration.

**Nagabodhi:** You could say that an individual is someone who makes his own premises. **[S: Mm.]** discovers or formulates his own premises.

**S:** You could go further than that and say that the individual one who **is** his own premise. What does he formulate his premises out of? Presumably his own experience, his own intuition, in other words himself. **[Nagabodhi: Yes.] [Pause]**

**Text** *"If the conditioning factors are changed, then it is conceivable that a man will abandon one premise and adopt another. The rationality of a man when he is a wholehearted Protestant may not differ in any significant way from his rationality when he decides to convert and become a Catholic; what is likely to have happened is that he has come to adopt a different premise as the basis for his reasoning about the world and about his part in the whole scheme of things. Rationality, remaining constant throughout, may have a part to play in convincing him that the explanatory value of a process of reasoning based on premise A is superior to the explanatory value of the process which is based on premise B. He may therefore change his premise, from B to A. Or the change may be due to rational choices less evident and conscious, to more indirect and unconscious influences, like a change in any of the other determining factors which have been mentioned - economic or social status, role relationships, and so on."*

**S:** Well this seems quite reasonably clear. Let's see what use Trevor Ling now makes of them.

**Text:** *"The Buddhist method appears to have been not to make a frontal attack on the premise which was responsible for a man's world-view. The approach was rather one or other of the two which have been outlined: that is to say, either the use of rational means to persuade men to alter their premises, by a demonstration of the evidently superior explanatory value of basing thought on premise A rather than premise B; or by conditioning them through a new regime of life. In this latter case, men were to adopt the new way of life because of certain evident, inherent attractions which it had for them. At this stage, however, the premises on which they based their world-view were still those, let us say, of the artisan of a north Indian city in the sixth century BC. Buddhist monks do not all become masters of the Buddha's philosophy overnight, by the act of entering the Order. But in the course of following out the day-to-day and year-to-year requirements of life in the Buddhist Order, there*

*ensues for such monks a slow and subtle shift in their view of the world. The adoption of this kind of policy might seem to leave Buddhism open to too great a danger of corruption. To some observers this is how it has seemed; for Buddhism has been tolerant, and has countenanced beliefs and practices which are fundamentally alien to its own central affirmations, beliefs, for instance of a polytheistic nature. Nevertheless, the principle has never altogether been lost sight of, that the Buddhist world-view is not dependent in any way upon belief in a god or gods or upon practices associated with such beliefs."*

**S:** I don't see how beliefs and practices such as the belief in polytheism, or beliefs of a polytheistic nature, 'are fundamentally alien to the central affirmations of Buddhism'. Do you see what I mean? Among the central affirmations are those pertaining to, say, the Wheel of Life. Well, yes, Buddhism does believe or does accept that there are gods, goddesses all part of the Wheel of Life, all arising, all being born, all dying, all being impermanent, all conditioned. Well there's nothing there inconsistent with or alien to its fundamental principles - its central affirmations.

But anyway, what about this question of - "*Buddhist monks do not become masters of the Buddha's philosophy overnight by the act of entering the Order. But in the course of following out the day-to-day and year-to-year requirements of the life in the Buddhist Order, there ensues for such monks a slow and subtle shift in their view of the world*". What do you think of this? Do you think this is what actually happens, or can actually happen?

\_\_\_\_\_ : It sounds like he's just putting down to reconditioning.

**S:** Mm. Do you think that this can actually happen?

Lokamitra I think so.

**S:** Mm. Yeh. Well actually, this is what happens for most Buddhist monks. They don't sort of learn the philosophy first and then proceed to apply it by joining the Order: they join the Order and they get, in a way, you could say ideally, deconditioned and reconditioned. In other words it's learning by participating in a whole way of life. And this is, I think, very important, because we tend to think of learning as an intellectual process. And tend to think of becoming intellectually convinced of the truth of something and then proceeding to put it into practice, but for the majority of people this isn't the case. We are born into a certain culture, we acquire the values of that culture, and we act accordingly. And the same sort of thing can happen on the spiritual level, even on the level of the spiritual community, if someone is open and receptive. You can join a spiritual community in the sense of going to live among people who themselves are genuinely members of the spiritual community, and if you are sufficiently open, by following their way of life, and by participating in their way of life, you can come to feel and experience something of their, as Trevor Ling calls it, world view. Do you see what I mean?

You may be sort of drawn, almost instinctively drawn, to people who are leading a certain way of life without being able to understand very clearly why you are drawn by it, or what you are drawn to in fact. Do you see this? So you learn the underlying philosophy, as it were, by participating in the way of life which is the practical expression of the philosophy. And this is the way most Buddhist monks in Buddhist countries learn about the Dharma and the Buddhist way of life. [Pause]

Siddhiratna: So if it's not necessary that you know what, or why you are drawn to such a way of life, what actually inspires you then?

**S:** Well, what does? You're just attracted by the people and the way that they seem to be living, and you just want to join in. This is just what you actually find in Buddhist countries.

That little boys for instance: they see the monks; they like the look of the monks; they find the monks quite friendly; they like going along to the vihara; they like going along to the monastery; they like the atmosphere there; they like to sit with the monks, or talk with the monks; they find the monks very friendly, and they start preferring it to home. And then they say, 'Why can't I go and live in the monastery?' And then they are told 'well you must become a little novice'. All right, I'd like to become a novice, then I can go and live with the monks and be with them. So off he goes. He goes off to the temple, or the monastery, he's made a novice and he starts learning whatever it is that the monks are doing. He learns how to sweep the shrine out, he learns how to light the lamps, he lights the incense and put fresh flowers, and then he learns how to take tea to the elder monks, and then he learns some verses of the Puja. And then, if he's a bright boy, he starts asking questions - what is that about? what does it mean? why do you do this? why do you do that? In that way he gets into it all. He doesn't go along to the bazaar and find a little book on Buddhism and get interested in that way. Do you see what I mean?

The young boy in the Buddhist society gets interested in Buddhism doing the sort of things that the monks are doing, much in the same way as he gets interested in what he sees his father doing, and wants to join in. And sometimes even the quite small boy feels a very definite affinity and attraction which he can't explain, and of course, Buddhists will explain it by saying well, he must have been a monk in a previous life. He just wants to go back. They find that quite acceptable, and quite a valid reason. Some little boys have got this very strong attraction to the monastery, they always want to be with the monks, always ready to go off to the monastery. As soon as they're allowed, they leave home and go and live with the monks. And gradually they learn what it's all about.

So we mustn't think that learning and training are all sort of intellectual, and all a matter of conscious intellectual understanding and discipline: you learn also by participating, and you come to understand through participating, not by studying from the outside without participating.

For instance, there was a tradition among the Theravadin bhikkhus that you were not told what the rules of the monks were until after you'd become a monk. You were never told beforehand. The reason given, in good faith, by the monks in the old days was, that if you told the candidate what the rules were before he became ordained he would be so afraid he wouldn't become ordained. So you waited until he'd been ordained and then you told him. You can see the psychological truth in this, can't you? Once he's ordained and committed and introduced to the rules bit by bit, and one by one, well then, it's all right. But if before he's even ordained you just present him with the whole long list of rules, well, he'd be really terrified that he won't be able to observe them.

It's just the same, you could say, on the level of the 'upasaka' ordination: some people say that had they known before becoming an 'upasaka' what it would really involve, or what it would really cost them in the end; what they would have to give up, and what they had to do, they'd doubt very much whether they would have dared to undertake that step. That, was of course, an older generation of 'upasakas' who had very much more to do than those who are around nowadays, because in those days there was so much to be done by so few people. [Pause] All right let's go on.

**Text:** *"The phrase 'Buddhist world-view' has just been used, but only in the sense of a general view of human life and of the human situation, and not in the more technical sense of a systematically worked-out cosmology or cosmic geography. Such a world-view can, however, be found in Buddhism as it developed after the lifetime of Gotama; to be more accurate, there were three main Buddhist variations of Indian cosmology. In all of these the major features of general Indian cosmology appear. There are sufficient references in the discourses of the*

*Buddha to suggest that he is to be regarded as making use of traditional ideas about cosmic geography, although sometimes in a light-hearted and sometimes in a noncommittal way. It certainly does not appear to be a subject which, in the view of the early tradition, he regarded as of sufficient importance to deserve serious attention, or the elaborate systematic formulation which it received later on, in the **Abhidhamma** literature, produced mostly after the Buddha's death."*

**S:** Mm. There's also the point, of course, that the Buddha didn't have time to give his attention to everything, and he was, of course, concerned with the fundamentals. All right, let's go on.

**Text:** *"We are now nearer to being able to offer at least a tentative answer to the question which was raised at the outset of this study: What is Buddhism? It will be evident that Buddhism is essentially **a theory of existence**. It is, however, a theory which consists of both diagnosis (of the human malaise) and prescription for a cure. Since the practical steps which need to be taken to put the prescription into effect are also part of Buddhism, it is certainly more than a theory. And it is more than a theory of human existence only, since the whole of life, human and non-human, comes within the range of its scrutiny and analysis. It is a theory of existence which is principally characterized and distinguished from other theories by the fact that it discountenances and discourages the concept of the individual, and regards the boundaries between one so-called 'individual' and others as artificial. Moreover, it is a theory of existence which is in no way dependent on the idea of a divine revelation to which, ultimately, all men must submit in faith. Although it is a view of life which the Buddha is said to have gained at his enlightenment, that event is not thought of as having been brought about by some supra-human or supra-natural power; nor is it thought of as being beyond the ability of any other human being to achieve. True, the achievement does not come through intellectual effort alone; it presupposes great moral striving and purification, but this, too, is something which men are regarded as able to achieve without needing to resort to supernatural aid."*

**S:** So what he says is, in a way, true, but the whole discussion needs to be pitched, as it were, in a much higher key, and placed on a much higher level. All right, go on to the concluding paragraph.

**Text:** *"Buddhism is, therefore, in a certain sense, secular. It is certainly secular, if the sacred is defined in theistic terms, for neither the Buddhist diagnosis, nor the putting into effect of the Buddhist prescription - morality and meditation - is in any way dependent on belief in a god or gods, or in a personal power of any kind, and Buddhism does not necessarily or in principle entail any practices of a traditional religious kind, cultic or ritualistic, such as sacrifices to the gods, reading the holy scriptures, sacred meals, prayers and so on. Indeed, in such matters, it was in origin anti-religious if anything. In matters of dogma it was non-theistic, except in the sense that the gods were accepted as part of the cosmic scenery; but they were also regarded as having no ultimate priority or significance. However, if the new wisdom had a certain relative secularity it was not secular in an absolute sense, for there appears to have been, from the earliest stage that can be identified, an awareness of a transcendental dimension, a sense of that which is sacred, although it is not expressed in terms of belief in a god."*

**S:** He gets a little nearer to the truth now, doesn't he? As it were, in passing. He only says "there appears to have been" Anyway, carry on.

**Text:** *"There is, in the early formulation of Buddhist teaching, a sense of necessary loyalty to that which transcends immediate personal gain or satisfaction, to values which lie beyond the interests of human individuals or the interests of the contemporary societies and political*

*organizations of India in the sixth century BC. In broad terms, the new wisdom consisted of an invitation to men, even an appeal to them, to discover and recognize that the structure of being was different from what was commonly supposed, and that the human individual was not the key concept to the understanding of the human situation. It was an appeal also to realize this in the actual reorganization of human affairs, a reorganization directed towards a new, non-individualistic society. It is this aspect of early Buddhism which has often been ignored in modern, Western accounts, and it is to this, the social dimension of Buddhism, that we must now turn our attention."*

**S:** Well one could say that the new non-individualistic society could only be a society of individuals. But he appears not to see that. Having, at least fleetingly, recognised the possibility of the existence of a transcendental dimension, he at once turns to the social dimension of Buddhism at the end. Although there's the fact that he has sort of touched a transcendental dimension, he didn't really change things at all. He doesn't really seem to know what to do with this transcendental dimension even though he does mention it. He doesn't seem able to see where it fits in, because it doesn't fit into his scheme of things at all - to his view or interpretation of Buddhism. Anyway on the whole, he hasn't come very well out of today's discussion, has he? Nor have the various scholars from whom he has quoted. Well, tomorrow we'll have to see what he makes of 'The New Society', which is a quite lengthy and, I think a quite interesting chapter.

Is there any general point, or general comment on what we've done today? [long pause] It does all tend to show how difficult, not to say impossible in fact, it is to discuss the Dharma in any other terms than those of the Dharma itself. [long pause]

\_\_\_\_\_ : He should have really stated his terms of reference earlier on, and uh .....

**S:** Well he should have had a little study in connection with to what extent, if at all, Buddhism is susceptible of a sociological viewpoint - or something of that sort. [Long pause] All right let's leave it there go into 'The New Society' tomorrow.

**Next Session** (for the moment referred to as tape 22 due to misrecording of original reels!)

**S:** All right, Chapter 8: 'The New Society' - 'Self, Solitude, and Sharing'.

**Text:** 8 *The New Society*

### *SELF, SOLITUDE AND SHARING*

*"In the words of a great Indian of modern times, Rabindranath Tagore, the way of the Buddha is 'the elimination of all limits of love', it is 'the sublimation of self in a truth which is love itself.' Tagore has, in these words, identified the essence of what has come to be called Buddhism. For Buddhism is not, as so many Westerners have imagined, a private cult of escape from the real world. The word 'imagined' is used deliberately because such a view of Buddhism can proceed only from the exercise of the imagination, not from knowledge of the Buddha's teaching, or of the nature of the Buddhist community, the **Sangha**, or of Buddhist history. To speak of Buddhism as something concerned with the private salvation of the individual soul is to ignore entirely the basic Buddhist repudiation of the notion of the individual soul. The teaching of the Buddha was not concerned with the private destiny of the individual, but with something much wider, the whole realm of sentient being, the whole of consciousness. This inevitably entailed a concern with social and political matters, and these receive a large share of attention in the teaching of the Buddha as it is represented in the Pali texts. Moreover, as we have seen, the context of the Buddha's own spiritual quest was the increasing individualism which accompanied the growth of cities and monarchies,*

*and the problems attendant upon this growth. To attempt to understand Buddhism apart from its social dimension is futile. Individualism places limits on love, and if Buddhism is an attempt to deal with what it sees as the disease of individualism, and is primarily a method of eliminating these limits, as Tagore realized, then it will entail a concern with the social and political dimension."*

**S:** Mm. So what does one think of this paragraph? [Pause]

It seems to me that the basis of the confusion is contained in this sentence - "*To speak of Buddhism as something concerned with the private salvation of the individual soul is to ignore entirely the basic Buddhist repudiation of the notion of the individual soul.*" The whole confusion and ambiguity seems to centre there. First of all - did the Buddha repudiate the notion of the individual soul?

\_\_\_\_: Just the unchanging .....

**S:** It's the **unchanging** individual soul that he repudiates, or rather **the notion** that the individual soul was unchanging. Certainly Buddhism isn't concerned with the private salvation of the ego, if by 'ego' you mean a sort of permanent cross section of the individual, but it **is** concerned with the **development** of the individual. [pause] So the fact that Buddhism isn't concerned with the salvation of the ego, doesn't mean that it isn't concerned with the development of the individual. So you can't go from saying that Buddhism is not concerned with the salvation of the ego, therefore it must be concerned with the well-being of the community. That doesn't follow, does it?

So, because you misconstrue the Buddha's teaching about the individual, you make that quite illogical jump to an interpretation of Buddhism along sociological lines. Do you see what he does? - "*The teaching of the Buddha was not concerned with the private destiny of the individual, but with something much wider, the whole realm of sentient being, the whole of consciousness.*" Well again there's confusion because the teaching of the Buddha **was** concerned with the development of the individual. Admittedly that development had through ethics, a social dimension, but primarily the concern was with the development of the individual. The Buddha was not concerned with "something much wider, the whole realm of sentient being" in opposition, as it were, to the individual. He was concerned with the development of individuals as individuals, but not with the development of the group as such, or the well-being of the group as such.

So there seems to be terrible confusion here. So it's via his misunderstanding of the Buddha's teaching about individuality, via his confusion between the 'ego' and the developing individuality, that he arrives at this strange conclusion of the Buddha being concerned with **public** life, and the **public** dimension, not just with private salvation. It seems to be a terrible, and quite, in a way, quite pathetic confusion and misunderstanding.

"*Individualism places limits on love ....*" Well, does it?

**Nagabodhi:** Well, if that individualism ....., [ **S:** (breaking in) If by individualism you mean .....,] if you understand by individualism looking after yourself, then yes, it must do.

**S:** But unless you are a healthy, growing individual, unless, as it were, you love yourself - this is the Buddha's teaching surely - you can't love others. Presumably he means feel mettā. Presumably he's thinking in terms of mettā.

And what about this saying of Tagore's? It's strange that he quotes Tagore as an authority on Buddhism. He's a very fine poet. 'the elimination of all limits of love' is the sublimation of self in a truth which is love itself. It's rather odd he should quote someone who speaks of the



sublimation of self. This seems a bit more like the development of individuality. `...in a truth which is love itself? Does Buddhism speak in terms of a truth which is love itself? - especially the early Buddhism with which Trevor Ling is concerned? Does Buddhism use that phraseology, or suggest that sort of thing? What does it mean?

Nagabodhi: I rather sympathetically relate it to as referring to the fact that wisdom on the highest level can't be distinguished as something just intellectual .....

**S:** (breaking in) Fair enough. But it is certainly not brought out in the early Buddhism with which Trevor Ling is concerned. I can take Tagore's statement in a sort of poetic kind of way, but Trevor Ling isn't making that sort of use of it. [Pause] And he is also using the quotation for a sort of sociological purpose, that if the limits of love are broken down then at once you devote yourself to social service. I doubt if Tagore even meant that. And "*...the disease of individualism*" - here again there's this ambiguity. So this is not very satisfactory at all, is it.

There's also one aspect of this question of individuality, or individualism I intended to say something about yesterday, but it got lost in the midst of the discussion, and that was this: We speak of the individual emerging from the group, yes? You speak of the individual, as it were, freeing himself from the group, freeing himself from group conditioning, becoming an individual, thinking for himself, accepting responsibility for himself, developing self-consciousness, reflexive consciousness. But there is one important point that we mustn't overlook, and which, perhaps, gives some clue to the understanding of how `individualism' as distinct from `individuality' comes to develop, or comes to emerge.

You could well say that tribal man, the man who is fully identified with and completely a member of, that the **tribal** group as distinct from the larger groups that emerged later on in history, the man or the individual, that is to say the numerical individual, who is a member of a tribal group, is, in a way, an all-round developed individual, **on that level**. Do you see what I mean? There is the physical development, emotional development, even what we may call mental development, and so on. The primitive man though fully identified with the life of the tribal group leads, on that level or within that group a balanced sort of life, and is, himself, a balanced sort of person, though not an individual. Do you see what I mean?

Now the individual who emerges from the group is **not** all at once a balanced individual - an all-round developed individual. Do you see what I mean? And why is this? It seems that individuality develops via the development of the thinking faculty, which is of course to begin with practical and utilitarian. [Pause] Do you see what I'm getting at? It's as though the development of the intelligence, or the development of the reasoning powers, upsets the primitive balance of that member of the tribal group. In other words his intelligence develops disproportionately, and it is that disproportionately developed intelligence which levers him out of the tribal group, and which becomes the starting-point for the development of his true individuality.

Siddhiratna: You say he develops disproportionately, you're saying that he begins to think too much?

**S:** Well not just think too much.

Siddhiratna: for the group as it were.

**S:** No, not even that. Because he's able to think, because he's able to develop foresight, because his thinking to some extent emancipates him from the current situation, he is able, as it were, to speculate, and he is able, therefore, to gear himself, or to gear his life, or even to gear the life of the tribe, if he possesses sufficient power, to what he has speculated, or to what he has theoretically postulated. Do you see what I'm getting at? Which may involve an

element of, as it were, forcing.

Siddhiratna: In a sense he becomes a sort of a policy-maker?

S: In a way, but I was thinking of something more profound than that, or more basic than that, if you like.

When you start thinking you start thinking of what is possible, but the mere fact that it is possible does not mean that it is desirable. When you develop, or over-develop the thinking faculty you tend to think that because you can think of doing something that is sufficient reason for doing it, and in this way the imbalance develops.

Now a very good example of that in modern times is the space program. It's as though if you can think of doing something you should do it. But the capacity for abstract thinking runs far ahead of the development, or even the needs, of the organism as a whole. Do you see what I mean? But supposing you take your primitive man - you might get a primitive man who develops his intelligence, let's say: his tribal group has always lived in the same spot. All their traditions let's say, let's assume, that tie them to that particular spot, but this tribesman of unusually developed intelligence starts thinking and he starts thinking that such and such place, say ten miles away, has got a much better water supply and therefore the tribe ought to move there, because it would be more convenient. So he thinks along those lines, and he talks to everybody, and he succeeds in convincing them. And therefore in the end, though many of them are very reluctant, because he's very convinced that an improved water supply will be a good thing, and he can answer all their objections etc., in the end they all move. Maybe his reasoning influences the elders of the tribe. But what happens? When they all move there, when they settle there, despite the increased water supply, everybody feels as it were, rootless, as though they don't belong there. Their traditions have been disrupted, because their beliefs, customs, rituals were all bound up with that old area. So they feel very disturbed, very unsettled and because of that the whole tribe sort of starts dwindling, it loses its energy, loses its confidence.

So you see the sort of thing that happens. Because reason enables you to abstract yourself, to extrapolate yourself, as it were, from the organic needs of yourself and of the group to which you belong. In this way imbalance is created. Do you see what I mean? So in the individual, when you force your organism to go along in accordance with something that you've merely thought because you have thought it, then there is a great strain on the organism. This is the nature of mind - this is the nature of rational thinking. So inasmuch as it's through rational thinking that the individual begins to be emancipated from the group, that the person who is emancipated from the group is to begin with, an unbalanced person: a person whose thinking is in excess of his emotional development and so on, and that is individualism. To become an individual what you have to do is to restrain your one-sided intellectual development, and cultivate your emotional side, and develop as an individual in a more integrated way **on a higher level**, a more conscious level, than the level of the primitive member of the tribe. And once you've achieved that more all-round development **on the higher level**, a development which is covered in Buddhist teachings by the teaching of 'the Five Spiritual Faculties', then you can go on to develop your true individuality. Do you see what I mean? So it is usually your thinking faculty which is the means of emancipating you from the group, but this means that because it is on account of this over-development of the thinking faculty that you've emancipated yourself from the group, when you **are** emancipated, or at least to some extent emancipated, you find yourself a one-sidedly developed person. And very often you find yourself in a situation of conflict, because mentally you've emancipated yourself from the group, but emotionally to a great extent you still belong to it. So having prised yourself free from the group and the group consciousness to some extent by means of your developed intelligence, you haven't got to continue developing along those same lines, developing just

your intelligence more and more, you've almost got to stop developing your intelligence - that has developed sufficiently for the time being - and develop the rest of you, and achieve a sort of **emotional** independence (from?) the tribe, and a development of emotion as a true individual. Do you see what I mean?

So I think we may say that individualism develops when the individual has won his emancipation from the group, and the group consciousness, by a relatively one-sided development of the thinking faculty. Do you see this? This is individualism. And this also is connected with the alienated awareness. So nowadays the situation is that we've got quite a lot of individualists, people who are mentally emancipated from the group though still belonging to it emotionally, people who are capable of a great deal of mental activity, and who sometimes try to gear the whole of their being to the purely one-sided ideals, if you like, of that over-developed intellect - The so-called 'intellectuals'. Do you see what I mean? But it would seem that this is a necessary stage of development.

Nagabodhi: The image I have of the individualist is one of somebody who does what they want to do rather than ..... Does this link up with the .....

**S:** (breaking in ) Yes, emotionally there are many intermediate stages - emotionally the individualist, in a way, belongs to the tribe. It is only mentally that he has emancipated himself. So for instance he may talk big, he may put forward all sorts of lofty ideals. Intellectually, yes, he has emancipated himself from the narrowness of the tribe, but his emotions aren't really behind those. His emotions are still tribal, his emotions are still, well, in a word, selfish - egocentric. So you have that sort of duality, that sort of conflict. The tribal man is selfish too, but he is completely restrained, or usually completely restrained by the requirements of tribal life. If he steps beyond the pale he is either completely ostracised, which means he dies shortly, because no one would have any contact with him and he can't bear that, or he is just killed. So he has no choice.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Is this the difference between 'will' and 'power'?

**S:** Yes you could say that too.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Do you think for most of us our development is just doing that, where half individuals because we've sort of got our minds but most of our development is just emotionally getting away from the group?

**S:** Yes right. And this is one of the reasons why for instance, the mettā bhavana is so important because this relates directly to the development of the whole emotional side, doesn't it? I think maybe this is one of the reasons why people find it so difficult.

Nagabodhi: I'm trying to link this up with the conversations reported in 'Shabda', and .....

**S:** (breaking in) Well, the split off intellect] ..... if you get this, if it is the intellect that's developed and that is beginning to formulate ideals, then, assuming that the emotions haven't been integrated, what must happen is that, increasingly, those ideals are unconsciously simply used and prostituted more and more. **S:** Yes. Right.] .... and pulled down and distorted until, in fact, they are simply rationalised. You are using your ideals to rationalise your lack of ideals.

**S:** You see this sort of conflict comes out even in our study of Buddhism, or even in our **experience** of Buddhism. Because, for instance, we read a lot of books, we understand a lot of things, say we understand about the void, and 'the one mind', etc., etc., but it's all mental. There's no corresponding alignment of the total being and the emotional nature in accordance with what we have mentally understood. The mind, the thinking faculty is constantly

outstripping the rest of us. So that was all right originally - just to provide that point of departure, that **means** of departure from complete identification with the group. It's as though the thinking faculty represented our point of breakthrough. But having achieved a break-away from the group to some extent, through the development of the reasoning faculty, we are not, then, just to allow the reasoning faculty to continue developing in that one-sided, alienated way indefinitely, while allowing the remainder of our being to remain, as it were, within the group. Do you see what I mean?

But this is usually what happens, isn't it? We go on refining and refining intellectually, but all the time the greater part of us, which is the emotional part, remains firmly stuck within the group. So what we need initially, having made that at least intellectual break with the group, is an all-round development, and the development of the emotions, the freeing of the emotions from dependence on the group, which will give us, eventually, an all-round development **on a higher level**, analogous to that all-round development which, on a lower level, before we started becoming individuals, we had within the 'tribal group'.

Lokamitra: Do you see that one will achieve this balance and then as it were move up, or that all the time it's a process of trying to get to the balance, going a bit one way and then the other way, and gradually .....

S: I have obviously over-simplified, but I think the broad position is that mentally, more often than not, in some ways at least, we are emancipated from the group. We can look at the group objectively, criticise the group, run it down, say how it ought to be, what is wrong with it, how it is to be put right. We can extrapolate a sort of ideal group. But all the time we remain emotionally completely identified with the group, and we don't get beyond it.

\_\_\_\_\_: What about what you were saying yesterday about in India - boys used to go along to the monastery and get to know the monks and ( ? ) that way? I imagine they could get into Buddhism without too much thought.

S: That is true. I wasn't thinking so much of India but of Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia like Ceylon and Thailand. But that is a more all-round way of getting into it, a better way you could say, even; because the intelligence is there. And once they have got into the monastery, well, if they're average, bright specimens and usually they are not or at least in principle they are not taken if they are not, then they start asking questions and they get answers to their questions, so their mental involvement with Buddhism, their theoretical involvement, proceeds 'paripassu' as it were, with their practical involvement and their practical involvement with their mental involvement.

But in our case, we remain, usually, in this country, stuck in our ordinary everyday situation, leading our ordinary everyday lives based on ordinary everyday emotional attitudes, but have simply a **mental** involvement with Buddhism. At least this is what was happening everywhere in the Buddhist movement in this country until very recently, mainly until we came along.

Nagabodhi: I heard a talk on the Summer School last year, Trevor Leggett talked about it - I don't know whether it was a Chinese or Japanese expression - 'dragon's head, snake's body'.

S: Ah ! That's very good. Yes.

Nagabodhi: The next day he used it again because he was answering questions on his talk, and he really gave a very elaborate and magnificently structured argument about it, and quite complicated, and Christmas Humphreys from the floor said, I think probably in fairness as a bit of a joke - "Well it's all void, isn't it?" So Trevor Leggett said "Yes", and he looked at him

very piercingly and said, "But dragon's head, snake's body."

**S:** Mm! Mmmm! Mm! That's very good indeed ! Or you might say, perhaps in this country, 'dragon's head, worm's body'. Yes.

But it is, in a way, a necessary process. For most people development in any other way is difficult - they start **thinking** independently usually, before they become independent in any other way. So we have seen that this reflects the general evolutionary process.

\_\_\_\_\_ : You say it's a necessary intermediate step, you mean you can't more or less go straight and work on your emotional side without passing through that intellectual phase?

**S:** It would seem not. I don't say that you can't, if you've got favourable conditions, yes, I think you could, but in the modern world those favourable conditions hardly ever exist.

**Lokamitra:** Could it be that some people say, come along to a movement like ours, not so much from the intellectual point of view, but because they've had enough of the intellectual side of things and their emotions are beginning to react, and so .....

**S:** The only difficulty is that it mustn't mean their emotions latching on to a group, and wanting a group satisfaction, though that may happen to begin with.

**Lokamitra:** But some people definitely are more emotionally orientated, as it were, by nature, almost.

**S:** Mm. Yes. Such people are, as I think I suggested in that extract in Shabda are not necessarily unintelligent people. They may only be unintellectual, but the point I was making, the real point, the original point, was that when we speak of the emergence of the individual from the group, we are not to think of an all-round developed individual emerging from the group. It doesn't seem to happen that way. What happens as I pointed out is that usually emancipation from the group occurs via the intellect, via the development of independent thinking, and therefore what emerges is an unbalanced person, a one-sidedly developed person, and that one-sidedly developed person we have still very much with us.

So therefore one of the most pressing tasks within the context of individual development is to bring the emotions up into harmony with the intellect, and have a more all-round development. Sometimes, of course, the intellect gets completely out of hand, and sort of outstrips not only the actual needs of the individuality as a whole, but any conceivable needs. It just goes into quite irrelevant directions - it goes theoretical for the sake of being theoretical - and losing all contact with the concrete needs of the growing individuality as a whole. Do you see what I mean? For instance you might get somebody who became interested in Buddhist thought - he might develop an interest in 'anatta' and 'sunyata', well, clearly this has got a bearing on his own individual development, but he might forget all about his own individual development as a complete person, as it were, and he might just delve deeper and deeper into 'anatta' and 'sunyata', and then learn Sanskrit, and learn Tibetan, and learn Chinese, so he could read all the original texts; going into all the refinements of the different schools, technical terms and so on, and spend twenty, thirty years in this way as a scholar in that field, **but never once** thinking in terms of relating it back to his own individual development, and his emotions could remain completely immature, completely undeveloped. And he really would be a dragon's head with a very long, thin, weak snake's body.

I remember when I really started getting into Buddhism in the sense of trying to understand Buddhist thought many years ago, especially when I was writing my 'Survey', I constantly asked myself, "How does this teaching relate to one's actual spiritual experience, one's spiritual life and spiritual development? Why did the Buddha say this? Why was the Buddha concerned with this? Where does it connect up with spiritual life?" I found that very, very

few scholars ever thought in those terms. In many cases it didn't even seem to occur to them, even Buddhists themselves, very often. As though it was just a sort of game that had no relevance to life, and no bearing on the spiritual life, or one's spiritual development as an individual.

Lokamitra: You said that you see this one-sided development still very much in the Movement - do you see it any particular areas, or fields of activity?

S: No. I think it pervades practically everywhere: that people's mental understanding of things far outstrips their emotional feeling for things.

Vessantara: In a way it emphasises the importance of things like solitary retreats, because in that situation if your intellectual separation from the group does very strongly outstrip your emotional life, you come up against that quite strongly.

\_\_\_\_\_: Did you not say that in *'the Three Jewels'* that you saw the Sangha as being roughly divided into intellectual types and emotional types - that the intellectual attachment to Buddhism seems to be a bit more durable than the emotional attachment?

S: A bit more durable?

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes. The emotional - the person, say, who comes to the Movement through an emotional attraction tends to run its course fairly early. There's nothing lasting there.

S: Mm. Mm. I think this depends very much with what one means by 'emotional' here. If it's a sort of passing fancy, well, clearly, this is not going to last, or if it's based on some very evanescent emotional state, but if one means by 'emotional' the fact that one's feelings are fully involved then that person is as likely to stay, I would say. I don't remember the passage, but I must have been thinking of people who are attracted by this group or that group emotionally in a very superficial way, because they get some quite sort of temporary and superficial emotional satisfaction, which is quickly exhausted. Or they become disappointed in the long run and then they get onto another group. I don't think I could have been thinking of someone who became deeply and truly emotionally involved with the group.

\_\_\_\_\_: Maybe I was assuming that one excluded the other.

S: I **did** say something about the 'doctrine follower' and the 'faith follower', and that, in the case of the 'faith follower' there is a minimum of intellectual interest, and not so much interest in the principles, but more in persons and especially a more emotional pull towards the guru, whereas in the case of the 'doctrine follower' it's the **principles** that are found attractive and personalities count much less. [Pause]

But I think what we find nowadays is that people are attracted, or get involved with Buddhism, either in a one-sidedly intellectual fashion, or else there is the sort of influence of a kind of personality cult, which doesn't represent an emotional attraction to a guru in the positive, traditional sense: but simply looking up to some sort of powerful figure that will give you security and possibly do everything for you. You, of course, get more of this in the non-Buddhist groups, because no form of Buddhism really encourages this, though it does creep in sometimes and you get people like the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa coming over, and you get hundreds of old ladies thronging around.

But again, you see, there's the other side of the coin: when you get the over-developed intellect you get the under-developed emotion, the child-like, infantile emotion. I've noticed that very often the bigger the intellectual the more the credulity. Do you see what I mean?

It's the intellectual who will be taken in, and when he does `fall' as it were emotionally, will `fall' in a big way.

Well, you find this even in ordinary life: the great intellectual, the academic, will sometimes fall violently in love and will be just as childish and infantile and silly as the next man. You've got these two together - this over-developed intellect, and these underdeveloped emotions. It's really a pathetic sort of combination. But most people have this combination in some degree, don't they? In your conscious mind you're a great big man as it were, but unconsciously you're just a little child, possibly in some cases, crying for mother, or even a baby just howling for the breast.

Nagabodhi: In a way, in my experience and looking around too, you may begin with that position of unbalance but I find I'm going almost from one position of unbalance to another because I can find a certain degree of stability based on what I think and following that through, but sooner or later my undeveloped emotional side breaks through and completely upsets the apple-cart, and there's a struggle, and maybe I'm integrating things as I go, but it feels more like just going from one position of unbalance to another.

S: Mm. Yes. Well this is not going from, as it were, side to side, but from top to bottom. If you know what I mean. There's not just the horizontal imbalance, there's the vertical imbalance. It's not that you've got, say, an equally developed intellect and an equally developed emotion, but you just give a bit more attention `here' so therefore you react a bit over `there' - No! Your intellectual development is up here, your emotional development down there. So after you've given a certain amount of attention `up here' there is a pull from `down there'. It doesn't simply pull you to the complementary side, but pulls you down, as it were, into the depths.

Nagabodhi: Yes. I have the feeling of a period of being quite positive and outward-going, suddenly followed by a period of resentment and tetchiness.

S: Yes, because the undeveloped emotions are being left out. They are not being satisfied, so they start becoming very disgruntled and they start reacting. So it is therefore very important to develop a very positive emotional counterpart to one's intellectual understanding, and this is where the development of `mettā', `karuna', `mudita', `upekkha', to say nothing about faith and devotion, all come in.

Because, probably, as regards our understanding of the Dharma, we've understood enough to get us, well, very nearly all the way to Enlightenment, actually. (Laughter) Yes. Even if we didn't learn anything more about Buddhism, what we know at present is probably quite enough to last us almost up to Enlightenment. What we know already, despite the big gaps in our knowledge and being shaky about the different kinds of `sunyata' and the different kinds of conditionality and all that kind of thing. It's almost as though we need to work **entirely**, at least a couple of decades, on our emotional side - a couple of decades of puja, and mettā bhavana probably wouldn't be amiss!

**[End of side one side two]**

It wouldn't really matter if we didn't read another book, or attend another lecture.

Lokamitra: That's one aspect of the mental side or thinking side, another is working in the world, as it were. I mean I know that I spend most of my time `in my head'. [S On your head?] (Laughter) ... **In** my head. I was just thinking about fundraising or running a Centre and so on, but it's all in the head. [S: Mm. Mm.] So if we're going to ...ah ....

**[S]:** But is it? Or need it be?

**Lokamitra:** ..... Well, no, it's not **all** in the head, but a great deal of it can get too much that way. [Long Pause]

**S:** You see also the growth of individualism in as much as it is accompanied by, initially, this over-development of the intelligence, does make possible an intensification of selfishness, because this one-sidedly developed intellect can be harnessed for the implementation of the selfish purposes of the unregenerate individual, for lack of a better term. Do you see what I mean? Maybe the ordinary tribal member is too stupid to be able to further his own very selfish purposes. He doesn't know how to go about it. But once you've developed your intellect well, then, you know how to do things, how to get round people, how to plan, how to plot, how to contrive, and this is also how individualism and the individualistic pattern of behaviour does develop more and more.

So it is the development of intelligence, it seems, that disrupts the primitive harmony, so that is very, very positive inasmuch as it paves the way for the development of true individuality, but it is also very negative inasmuch as it also opens the door to the development of unrestricted individualism. [Pause] You may have the intellect of a man but you still have the instincts and emotions, as it were, of a child. And your intellect is at the service of your emotions, more often than not.

So it's the intellect itself that has to understand, the intellect itself that has to devote itself to the development of the emotions. And, in a way, understand that it needs to 'undo' itself, or to counteract its own onesidedness. We usually understand all this intellectually before we put it into operation, don't we? Which is what we're doing now. It's comparatively few people that grow as whole persons, whose development is an all-round development from the very beginning.

I was reading a book the other day which had a chapter called 'The Pathology of Thinking', and it said - (and this is one of the things I agreed with, in fact I've been saying it lately) - that excess thinking is pathological. [Pause]

**Nagabodhi:** That's that not the same as what you term neurotic thinking?

**S:** Yes. Yes. It's more or less the same as that. Yes. It is 'pathological' - pathological is a stronger term of course than neurotic.

**Vessantara:** Are there any other activities or things that you think we should lay stress upon, apart from say mettā or puja, which would help this whole process?

**S:** I think keeping in contact with nature plays a quite important part. In a way, what one might describe as a wide cultivation of sense experience. Do you see what I'm getting at? When you're in contact with nature, especially perhaps, when it's a very fine, sunny day, or something of that kind, and you're out in the open country. But there is a certain experience of restfulness, isn't there? Do you see what I mean? That it does seem as though the activity, especially the more feverish activity, of the mind is stilled, and obviously, the city-dweller is cut off from that broader and deeper contact with nature. Also contact with the elements. If for instance you're sunbathing, you are in contact with the elements; if you're swimming you're in contact with the elements; and I think different kinds of physical activity - possibly yoga - I say 'possibly' because there is a danger sometimes with regard to some physical activities, that you just drive yourself, and the organism is just being forced to keep up because the will has set itself a goal. For instance, to give you an idea: supposing you think of say running, now suppose you enjoy running, well this is quite natural and healthy and to enjoy running can be quite positive, even from the spiritual point of view. But suppose then



you start studying various records, and you learn that so-and-so ran a hundred yards say in one minute, or whatever it was, so then you start .... your mind starts thinking: well supposing I could cut down that to say fifty eight and a half seconds, and you put yourself into training, and you think about it a lot, and you gear your performance to that, well you are no longer are enjoying the running. Your running is geared to a goal, to a sort of pseudo-ideal that has been set for you by your thinking mind, and your will. You see what I mean?

So there's also, I think sometimes that sort of danger with yoga or any of these physical sports: you cease to engage in them because you enjoy them, and you engage in them for other mind-dictated reasons. So they cease to be a means of contact primarily with nature or with the elements. So I think one of the ways in which one can say counterbalance one's excessive thinking is simply through contact with nature and contact with the elements, and the development, broadly speaking, of one's sense-consciousness, for want of a better term. [Pause] I'm not, by the way, including sex here, for obvious reasons: It is a form of sense-consciousness or sense contact, but there are so many other factors involved - but just contact with nature, contact with the elements, contact with `earth', (Transcriber's note - leaves out water) `fire', `air' and `space'. It's as simple as that. And this will take a lot of the tension and one-sidedness out of one's mental development, and out of one's will.

So that is one way. [Pause] Also there is such a thing as `relaxation', or leisure, or learning to do nothing sometimes; or **allowing** oneself to do nothing just like a cat. Not always having to do something. If you look at it you notice that you very rarely allow yourself not to do anything at all in a quite positive and happy fashion. You always have to be doing something. Even your leisure has to be filled with leisure activities. That's almost a contradiction in terms in a way: well, do things by all means if you enjoy doing them, but surely, sometimes, you ought to enjoy not doing anything at all. [Pause] in a positive sort of way, not just sort of uneasily wondering, sitting there, what to do next, but just being quite happy and content not to do anything at all. Primitive people are able to do this, maybe to excess even, but that's not our problem, so we won't bother about that.

\_\_\_\_\_: This seems to be one aspect that we've overlooked in the Friends.

[S: What] .... doing nothing.

**S:** I haven't! (Laughter) I sometimes quite happily do nothing, but by `doing nothing' I don't mean not doing anything. I mean not sort of just sitting there in a slightly negative mood feeling that you're not doing anything but you maybe ought to be doing something. If there is something to be done, well of course do it, but if there is nothing to be done, well sort of positively enjoy that state of not doing anything.

Also I would say in the early days of the Friends there were far too many people around who weren't doing anything in a really negative way and who needed to be got doing something. The question of not doing anything in a positive way came very, very far ahead indeed, as far as they were concerned. So, admittedly our emphasis so far has been more on energy and activity, because there was so much sloth and torpor around in the earlier days.

\_\_\_\_\_: ..... sort of constructive leisure. We could compromise that ? ? )

**S:** Well, except that the word `constructive', that suggests you're constructing something.

\_\_\_\_\_: I was thinking more like country walks, that sort of thing, where you are sort of exposed to nature, and there's no sort of pressure on you.

**S:** Well, Australia would be a fine place for that. You could just `walk-about', couldn't you?

What do you call it? ... in the `outback'. There is plenty of desert, you could just lose yourself if you wanted to for days and weeks and months on end. The great hinterland.

Nagabodhi: I was just wondering about the link between this idea of enjoying learning to enjoy leisure, and learning to avoid just driving yourself by the will, and a kind of healthy asceticism, by `asceticism' including the possibility of working, forbearance.....

S: I don't see how you can do it except through constant study and examination of oneself, and constantly checking up that all the different parts of your being, as it were, are functioning properly and in harmony with one another. I think you just have to do this all the time. [Pause] It is a very tall order, in a way, to combine as you say, spontaneity with leisure, with healthy asceticism, and so on. [Pause]

Lokamitra: Another important thing is to be in contact with other positive people.

S: Oh yes! This is very important indeed! If you're too much in contact with people who are emotionally negative, it can be very, very wearing, as some of you may possibly know. [Pause]

Lokamitra: Yes, I find that the hardest thing - if I find I'm not getting much inspiration from people around me I find it by far the hardest thing to overcome.

S: Are you using the word `inspiration' literally, or loosely?

Lokamitra: Loosely. .... S: Or is it just the sympathetic contact?... .... Sympathetic contact.

S: ...which you can sort of take as inspiration, as it were. Mm. Mm.

It's very difficult when others around you are emotionally negative, or not very positive, because that means you have to make an effort to be positive yourself and counteract their negativity, and that means inevitably almost bringing in the will. So your positivity then becomes a willed thing. It's having almost to become a willed thing in order to survive in the face of so many unfavourable factors in your environment, instead of it just being a spontaneous thing.

But if your positivity is very, very strong, well then it will flourish independently of the environment, and not have to depend upon an effort of will, but this means a very high degree of natural positivity indeed, such as not many people possess.

So the whole discussion points to one thing, that is to say that inasmuch as our emergence as individuals, or at least the beginnings of individuals, has been via the development of independent thinking, what we have to be on the lookout for above all, perhaps, is that our one-sided thinking doesn't develop too disproportionately, and that we give a great deal of attention to the development of all the other sides of ourselves, especially the emotional, and we reinforce that as much as possible, and lift our emotions to a correspondingly high level. Otherwise there will be no development, no emergence of true individuality and we'll all be, then, `dragon head and serpent bodies.

Lokamitra: Yesterday you talked about the mundane and transcendental Eightfold Path, and right effort in the mundane sense and right effort in the transcendental sense, and the transcendental sense you said it would just be energy spontaneously arising ..... S: Yes. Or more of that nature.] ... Yes. In the mundane path how does this relate to say will?

S: You have to keep up an effort all the time there, but the effort should be, as it were, ideally, the effort of the whole evolving being, not just the effort of the will, as it were. There is a

difference between being wholly into something, and one part of you being into it, and, as it were, dragging the rest of you along. The second may often happen, or even have to happen but you should, as much as possible, see that it is the first which is happening, even though you are still a mundane being, at least on that mundane level you are relatively integrated, and are willing, if that is the correct expression, as a whole. [Pause] Some people obviously are more split and divided than others, and therefore are more 'will-full' rather than 'power-full', in Chintamani's sense, than others.

Lokamitra: So in a way, it's a question of being drawn on not by will but by inspiration.

**S**: Yes! That is very important, yes. Going along happily, dancing along, rather than being flogged on from behind.

Lokamitra: In a way that is the only way one can go on.

**S**: Over any length of time, I think, so far as most of you are concerned. [Pause]

So it's as though Trevor Ling sees 'individualism' emerging, but doesn't see what part that plays in the overall, the total process, and instead of thinking in terms of developing the emotions and bringing them up to the level of the intellect, and having an all-round development of the person as a preparation for the higher development of the individual, he is in a hurry to nip that individualism in the bud by submerging it in some new kind of group which he calls 'the new society', and thus in fact he virtually prevents the development of the sangha in the sense of the spiritual community.

Nagabodhi: Very dangerous .... it is a very dangerous approach, because, in a way, it's the approach of say Nazi Germany. The idea of developing a super race based just on an idea of will. [**S**: Or, of course, Communist Russia] .....yes. [**S**: Mm.] .....a denial of the whole human side that makes it possible to think you're a super race and kill people in horrific ways. [Pause]

**S**: It seems a bit ironical that poor Chintamani should have been described as a Fascist, when his whole diatribe is directed against the 'will' in favour of 'power' in the sense that he defined it. Anyway let's carry on.

**Text**"*The primary form which this process takes is the life of the Buddhist community, the Sangha. The members of this community were in India called Bhikkhus (Pali) or Bhikshus (Sanskrit). In Western languages they are most usually referred to as 'monks' or the equivalent, and the aramas, or local institutions which provide the physical setting for their common life are often referred to as 'monasteries'. But this terminology, borrowed from European practice, is misleading. The word 'monk', derived from the word monachus, 'originally meant a religious hermit or solitary'; later on it came to mean 'a member of a community or brotherhood living apart from the world'. In neither of these senses can the word be applied appropriately to a member of the Buddhist Sangha.*" p.150

**S**: "The primary form which this process takes" ..... Presumably is the method of eliminating these limits, i.e. of individualism.

".....is the life of the Buddhist community, the Sangha." Well, again, there's this ambiguity. The spiritual community, the Sangha, is a spiritual community of individuals, not of people who are hasting to merge their newly emerged individualism in a new kind of group.

"The members of this community were in India called 'bhikkhus'. They weren't called 'bhikkhus' right at the beginning, but we'll let that pass, or bhikshus. "In Western languages they are most usually referred to as 'monks' or the equivalent, and the 'aramas', or local

institutions which provide the physical setting for their common life are often referred to as 'monasteries'. But this terminology, borrowed from European practice is misleading. The word 'monk' derived from the word 'monachus', originally meant 'a religious hermit or solitary'. Well, a Buddhist 'bhikkhu' can be that. He can live by himself. There are many instances of this in the Pali scriptures and elsewhere. But from time to time the solitary-living monk would come together with others who might have been living solitarily or might have been living in small groups. And they would celebrate the full moon day and the new moon day together. But in any case the English word 'monk' and the English word 'monastery' has got connotations which have got very little to do with Buddhism. So it's true that these terms are best avoided, though not perhaps exactly for reasons that he gives.

So he fails to understand what the 'Sangha', the 'spiritual community' really is. It's an escape from individualism on the part of those who have not succeeded in moving from individualism to individuality: this is how Trevor Ling, in fact, sees it. He doesn't see it as a community of individuals but a community of people who, terrified by individualism and unable to find their way back to the tribal group, try to find their way into another kind of group, which is still a group: but a newer group, a bigger and better group, as it were. This is how he seems to see it.

Anyway let's go on.

**Text** *"The word bhikkhu means literally, a 'sharesman', that is, one who receives a share of something. The Buddhist bhikkhus were, in fact, a special case of what had been a common feature of Indian civilization from a very early period. In general, as Sukumar Dutt has pointed out, the almsman or sharesman in India is 'differentiated from an ordinary beggar by the sacramental character of his begging. His begging is not just a means of subsistence but an outward token' - an outward token of his renunciation of private or personal sources of livelihood or ownership of wealth, and his dependence instead on the 'common wealth', the public resources of the society in which he lives. Certainly the Buddhist 'sharesman' has not contracted out of society. The life he leads and the goal he seeks is not for his own private benefit, for this would be directly contrary to the Buddhist repudiation of individualism. By being what he is and by following the life he does, society will benefit. The nature of the relationship between the bhikkhu and the householders clearly demonstrates that the Buddhist professional is integrally involved in society."*

**S:** Mm. Well, again, there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding here. I'm not even sure that the discussion should be conducted in terms of begging or not begging. It's as I mentioned the other day: what usually happened was this - a stranger turned up, do you see what I mean? If you were living in a little village away in the wilds, and somebody happened to turn up unexpectedly, a stranger, what would you do? You'd feed him, he'd be a guest, whether he was a travelling merchant, or whether he was one of the wanderers. So it wouldn't be a question of him begging, or a beggar coming, or a beggar turning up: a stranger, someone from the outside world, someone who didn't have a home in your village, would turn up, and would obviously be dependent upon you for hospitality. I don't think it was a question of begging really enters into it very much, except perhaps in the big cities. And there has never been in India, I think, certainly there isn't in the present day, a very hard and fast line between the so-called religious beggar, the religious mendicant, and the ordinary beggar. Sometimes it is very difficult to tell which is which.

**Vessantara:** At what stage did the formal way of begging, of going and standing silently outside and receiving food and .....

**S:** (breaking in) This seems to have been more distinctively Buddhist, though again, the Buddha did permit his disciples to be invited for meals. This shows also that the sacramental

begging was not all that important. People would invite the monks to their homes as guests, and just feed them. I mean, this is still very widely done, especially in the Theravada countries, well, the Tibetans have this institution too: you invite a certain number of monks to your house and you feed them on some special occasion.

But what about this : "The life he leads and the goal he seeks is not for his own private benefit, for this would be directly contrary to the Buddhist repudiation of individualism". Well, no, he accepts his share, if that is what it is, of the common wealth so that he can devote himself to his own individual development. Certainly that has got social repercussions, because if he develops positively as an individual then he can help others to develop too. He will have a positive effect on them, but he is not a 'professional'. You notice that Trevor Ling makes that point - "...clearly demonstrates that the Buddhist *professional* is integrally involved with society". Well he just **isn't!**

It's almost as though, under the influence of Sinhalese Buddhism, Trevor Ling is trying to make out that the bhikkhu does have a part to play, that he isn't out-of-date. I've touched upon this quite clearly, I think, in my review of Rahula's book. I've said that in Ceylon the bhikkhus have, on the whole, become just a clericy. And now that traditional clericy has been superseded by the modern Western educated clericy, and since the bhikkhus in Ceylon, by and large, have repudiated their original purely spiritual role, and became merely a clericy, they've nothing to fall back on. So if there's a clericy they have superseded, what will they do? Well they just have to start trying to compete with the modern Western educated clericy, in other words they have to take up social work and so on and so forth, and educational work, which is exactly what they're doing. So this seems to be providing them with a rationale. Do you see that? You see that in all those countries where Buddhism has become an ethnic religion, has degenerated from a universal religion to an ethnic religion, the bhikkhus, or the monks have tended to become 'professionals' - professionals in Buddhism - and have ceased to be individuals devoting themselves to their individual self-development. So when as 'professionals' you are superseded, when your particular brand of professionalism becomes out-of-date, when you are no longer functioning as an exemplar of spiritual self-development, what can you do? You can either give up altogether and just go into ordinary lay-life, or you can compete with the new 'professionals' on their own terms. So this is what many bhikkhus in Ceylon are certainly doing. They are just 'professional' men, and they're going increasingly into social work, into psychology, even into medicine, all of which are very good things, but which are not the special work, as it were, of the bhikkhu. And a book like this provides them, it seems, with a rationale and is, perhaps, partly the result of studies in Buddhism conducted among such people. This is how they try to see Buddhism, because then they can provide themselves with a rationale, a justification for their own existence: that this is what Buddhism is really all about. I've met so many of these busy, bustling bhikkhus who are into this, and into that, and the last thing think about is spiritual self-development. That's all old-fashioned stuff. As I quoted in my review Rahula refers most contemptuously to those bhikkhus who only spend their time meditating and chanting and occupying themselves with religious things. He is most contemptuous of them: that it's out-of-date, - old fogeys he virtually calls them. There are a few of them left in Ceylon, fortunately.

So this book seems to be very much a product of this sort of way of thinking: it's a desperate attempt to make Buddhism relevant and to show that the Buddhist monk is useful to society. And, as I pointed out in my review, this is parallel to what has happened in Christianity. The Christian clergyman in many cases, especially the Protestant clergyman perhaps, has lost faith in Christianity, this is what **really** has happened, but he's still a clergyman. He's unable to preach Christianity with real conviction: he doesn't know what he believes any more. So what does he do? He falls back on social work - the 'social gospel of Christianity' - that this is what he believes Christ would like him to do. No doubt there are some people who, fully believing in Christianity, do engage in social work out of deep Christian conviction, there is no doubt about that; but for many clergymen who've lost their faith, social work becomes

then the easy way out. They can remain clergymen, remain respectable professional people with all the prestige and so on, though somewhat diminished, that that entails, but they can feel they are doing a useful job of work for society, not feel cut off, not feel irrelevant to the society of today. They want **to belong**. They want to belong to the group, and have an honoured position in the group as they used to have. This is what it mainly boils down to.

I think I referred to, before, an article I read in one of the Sunday colour supplements, shortly after my arrival in England. This was an article written by Nick Stacey I think it was, who afterwards became - what was it? - was it the Bishop of somewhere or other? No. He was associated with the Bishop of Woolwich. He was one of those 'bright boys' of that sort of period. So anyway, he was writing about I think either a young people's centre or a boy's centre he started up somewhere - I think it was in the East End - to try and get young people interested in Christianity. And he wrote this article explaining how they had failed. He wrote that they had tried absolutely everything. They'd tried indoor games, they'd tried bingo, they'd tried boxing, they'd tried dancing, they'd tried pop groups, but they hadn't been able to get the people, the young people, involved in Christianity. So my comment on this which I made in a public lecture was: "Pity he didn't try Christianity". (Laughter)

It was so clear: he'd tried everything except Christianity. That was the one thing he didn't try. So luring people in with the carrot, what would you give them when you've got them, anyway? Because you've become a professional 'lurer with carrots'. That's your job, you don't know anything apart from that. So **of course** it failed. So now he's got a job with the Kent County Council as a social worker, seven thousand a year. This is what he went into. It really does give the game away, doesn't it.

So I think a situation is developing in some Buddhist countries, and I think Ceylon is in the forefront here, where the poor old bhikkhu is looking for a role. It's centuries since he's thought in terms of spiritual self-development. So he has not got that to fall back upon, his traditional 'hocus-pocus' has been superseded, so he has to compete with the modern 'hocus-pocus'. And he has to become a psychologist, or has to become a sociologist, and then he has say: 'Ah! but this is what the Buddha really was - the Buddha was secular, you know, the Buddha was devoted to the public good; the Buddha was a sort of super, freelance civil servant, someone of that kind, who hobnobbed with kings, and was thinking all the time about the public good; and that the Sangha was a sort of vast social service agency going about doing good.' In this way the whole thing is misinterpreted. And Trevor Ling seems to have latched on to this. I am sure there are quite a few bhikkhus in Ceylon that the English know who will really gleefully read a book like this and feel that by doing social work etc., etc. they are really doing the true work of bhikkhus, and that this is what Buddhism is all about.

Nagabodhi: In the lecture you talk about the time when the Buddha looked after the elderly monk, who the other monks ignored and said 'Whoever wants to follow me let him tend to the sick'. How does one take that phrase? Because one doesn't take it as a kind of .....

**S**: Well, it's a sick monk. Well, what did he say? 'Monks, you have no fathers and mothers, you have no brothers and sisters. In other words you are a spiritual community. If you don't look after one another, who will? Because you've cut yourself off from the world, from the group. So in situations like this if you don't look after one another, well, who will look after you? But it wasn't a sort of exhortation to go forth into the group and nurse the sick in the group. He wasn't suggesting that the bhikkhus or even the bhikkhunis should all become Florence Nightingales. But if a monk falls sick, if a member of the spiritual community falls sick, and you're not living in the midst of the group, well, who's going to look after him? Well, other members of the spiritual community, obviously!

Nagabodhi: So you could say that there's observation of the precepts, then there is the spontaneous overflow of mettā and positivity brought about by spiritual practice, but as far as one's duty goes, the only absolute duty the Buddhist has is to himself as an individual.

**S:** Mm! Very much so. Admittedly, in many Theravada countries, in more traditional circles, this is fully recognised. A bhikkhu is not expected to do anything for society. I've known many a bhikkhu who has lived out his whole life for forty, fifty years, without raising his finger and doing anything! (Sound of chuckling) He always had his meals provided, been waited on hand and foot, and has not even written a booklet, or preached a sermon; maybe a bit of chanting every now and then; but the idea is, well, that the mere fact that he is a bhikkhu, he is leading a higher kind of life just by observing the rules, well, that is sufficient; that is all that is expected of him. And this is a very correct attitude, even though it may be abused: the monk you might say may be living a very lazy life, but at least he's observing the precepts; at least say he isn't eating after twelve o'clock, he isn't doing this and he isn't doing that. So he is, in a way, leading a higher life than anybody else, and that can be regarded from the point of view of the group as an end in itself. The group exists for the sake of the individual, not the individual for the sake of the group.

Nagabodhi: One other thing is the .... I don't know where you said this but in a short study session, I think, talking about when the bhikkhu goes into meditation he makes the vow that if there's a call from the sangha he will disrupt his samadhi. So does this mean that there is some kind of.... within the community there is some kind of idea of..... ?

**S:** Well, the **community** has a claim on you, **other individuals** have a claim on you, that the group as such does **not** have on you. This is what it really means. For instance: what sort of call from the sangha? Well, somebody applies to be ordained, and you are needed to make up the quorum. If you are not present to make up the quorum that person can't be ordained. So it is important that someone should be ordained, should be admitted to the spiritual community, so, therefore, you are to heed that call so that it is possible for that person to make his individual commitment. So it's as though you don't have any duty, to use that term, towards the group, but you do have a duty towards other individuals, which means the sangha, the spiritual community.

Nagabodhi: If you're operating within the sangha - I'm being difficult but it's because these things nag me I suppose - if you are operating within the sangha say, .... I can see the difference between disturbing your samadhi to help ordain someone to join some others and going over to open a Centre, say somewhere. Ultimately, it's going to be individuals who benefit,..[ **S:** Mm !] so in a way, to the extent you are an individual anyway, all you recognise is individuals, there is no group, ..... [**S:** Right.] .... so any call from anywhere is a call from an individual, or potentially at least.

**S:** You just have to weigh possibilities. I mean a call from a group as a group is not a call from individuals. [Pause] You are, for instance, allowed to break your rainy-season retreat if a brother monk gets into difficulties and needs your help - I mean gets into spiritual difficulties - you are allowed to break your rainy-season retreat for the purpose of going and helping him.

But I think probably the fact that there is nowadays so much emphasis on the group means that, probably, we need a corresponding emphasis, or correspondingly strong emphasis on the individual, and on the fact that the individual does **not** have this **absolute** obligation towards the group. Or put it this way:

[End of tape 22 - tape 23]

the individual has towards the group only such obligations as he himself determines. [Long Pause]

All right, let's carry on.

**Text***The 'share' which the bhikkhu received and which gave him his name was, primarily, the portion of food which was set aside for him by those householders who supported him. But it was more than this that he received; the share of food was representative of other things - the robes he wore, the shelter in which he lived, and the other material necessities of life, all of which were provided by the lay people of the neighbourhood. His acceptance of those things from the 'common wealth' so to speak, was a symbol of his own renunciation of private property. In return the Buddhist bhikkhus had important contributions to make to the common life of society, as we shall see. These were not material or economic contributions but they were sufficiently important for the bhikkhus to be able to accept the material support which they were offered as something which was their proper 'share'. If what they received is sometimes referred to as 'alms', it must be remembered that these were offered in a spirit of deference and gratitude; the bhikkhus were not, and are not, 'beggars' in any sense of the word. The bhikkhu was certainly not, therefore, someone who lived apart from the world, like the Christian monk. One of the important achievements of early Buddhism was that it developed a new context for the spiritual quest. Traditionally in India, the search for salvation from the evils of human existence meant a life of solitude. For the Buddhist it meant a life in the community. For a time, however, in the earliest period of Buddhist history, the old idea seems to have survived. So strong a hold did the Indian tradition of solitude have that even among Buddhists there were those who tried to practise the Buddha's teaching by the old method, and, as an ancient text puts it, 'fare lonely as rhinoceros'. But it was among the Buddhists that there soon emerged, for the first time in Indian history, an ordered community of those who were seeking for salvation from the human malaise as they saw it."*

**S:** Mm. Mm. Yes, this question of the `share', the bhikshu as a `sharesman' - this is quite important in fact. The idea that the bhikkhu doesn't work himself, he isn't economically productive, is supported by others in the sense that he takes his share, or a share, of the `common wealth', which of course obviously assumes that there's a surplus. And that his contribution to society, if you like, if you care to put it in that way, is of another kind, and even on another level. And he exists to devote himself to, and exemplify that for the sake of which the group itself exists: in other words the production of individuals, or the creation of facilities for the production of individuals, the self-production of individuals, even, you could say.

But in a secular society, in a society like ours, is that sort of thing possible? Can you, as it were, as someone devoting himself fulltime to spiritual self development appeal on those grounds alone to society at large, the general public, in other words the great British public, for your `share' of the `common wealth'? And would they give it?

[Voice: No.]

**Siddhiratna** What was the first point? I think you said that if you were entirely occupied with your own self-development .... ?

**S:** Mm. Yes. I mean could you do it in Australia even?

\_\_\_\_\_: No. Even less.

**S:** Even less. Well could you do it in any secular state, any modern Western state?

**Nagabodhi:** You can do it but people in that you can go on the dole but....

**S:** No, I was saying that you sort of you state, as it were, openly, at least by implication, that



you've no intention of working. Your work is your own spiritual self-development, because this is of great value to society, and humanity, as a whole, at least indirectly, you are, as it were, entitled to share in the `common wealth' and to be supported: to be provided with food, clothing, shelter and medicine for the rest of your natural life.

Siddhiratna: If you could demonstrate in what way you would be useful to society you might stand a chance.

Voice: You'd have to come down to their level though, wouldn't you?

S: Mm. Yes.

Siddhiratna: Well, I think that seems valid.

Voice: (Speaking all at once )

S: No but then ..... (Others speaking all at once) No. But supposing you're going to devote all your time to meditation and you don't even intend teaching meditation, you're just going to meditate, because you believe, for instance, well, if there is any benefit it will be transmitted via the vibes that you send out, even if you don't open your mouth, so could you appeal for a share of the `common wealth' on those grounds alone, without having to justify yourself in secular terms? **Could you?**

Siddhiratna: I shouldn't think so. I tend to wonder on what grounds you could do that anyway, because you may understand that there is the possibility of enlightenment, that enlightenment is worth having for yourself and for other people, but there's something I can't resolve there, and that is unless you can **demonstrate** that ..... I'm not sure who, like, you know, it .....

S: Well, you can't demonstrate it because you haven't yet got it! You're working towards it, so all you can demonstrate is the spectacle of somebody working towards it, who hasn't yet achieved it. You can only demonstrate that, and no more.

So actually the position is that you can't get your share of the `common wealth' just because you're devoting yourself to the task, fulltime, of spiritual self development. So you can't get your `bhiksha', so you can't be a `bhikshu'. This is what it really boils down to, isn't it? You can't be a bhikshu. I mean if bhikshu is defined in this way, and looked at in this way. [Pause]

So what does that mean? [Pause] It means that in a secular state, or secular society, for want of a better term; or even in a non-Buddhist society - begging the question of whether a Buddhist society is possible at all - there can't be any such thing as a bhikshu. Do you see this? So what is possible? [Pause] Can you not have `fulltimers' at all then? [Pause]

\_\_\_\_\_: Well maybe in self-supporting communities.

S: Ah! Mm! Yes! You have to think in terms of self-support don't you? Mm? Yeah? But **how**, as it were? Just having a job like everybody else? [Pause]

Nagabodhi: Well, we have to work within our own .... in that the general society won't give that support it's the `share' we have to create our own society.

S: Yes! Exactly! Yes! This is the real point. We have to create our own society which has a certain amount of `wealth', as it were, of its own, a `share' of which is taken by those who are

recognised as the `full-timers'. Either working full-time on themselves or who are rendering some useful service, spiritually-oriented service, within that smaller society, or even towards society as a whole, even though society doesn't recognise the value of that service, and isn't prepared to support it.

So, in a way, the FWBO is the society within the larger society, and those Order members who are full-time workers, and take their share of the total wealth in the form of expenses, they are bhikshus, in a way, in this sense, aren't they?

And then there is also this question of the economic enterprises, because these economic enterprises are the creators of wealth for the Movement as a whole, and part of that wealth may be taken as a `share', not as a salary, by those who are actually creating that wealth for the Movement. [Voice: Could you say that again] ..... Well, I'll illustrate it: supposing for instance, someone is running a printing-press. Say that is the Friends' printing-press, supposing he makes, just one person, a hundred quid profit a week. It doesn't mean that he takes all that hundred quid as a salary, or even the greater part of it, No, he pays that hundred quid into the general exchequer, the general fund, and he takes only what he needs for expenses. He takes his `share'. Do you see what I mean? So on this sort of basis, in this sort of way, one can have bhikshus.

So a `bhikshu' in this context is one who is, as it were, certified, by the community as a whole, as having no sort of `group' connections, who is completely devoted to his own spiritual development and/or directly or indirectly, the spiritual development of others, and is therefore to be supported. So this also implies that you can't be married and can't have a family, because the support is given only to you. And this was the case with the original bhikshus. First of all they had to be mobile, they were wanderers, - well, how could you wander around with a wife and family? - that was impossible; though it very occasionally did happen. There are one or two references to non-Buddhist wanderers with wives and families in the Pali texts, possibly some kind of `brahmins'.

Siddhiratna: Would that not be considered one of the `expenses'? (Sound of chuckling ) **[S:** Rather `heavy' expenses!]

**[S:** No, traditionally it doesn't come under the heading of `expenses'. (Laughter)

Nagabodhi: So, in time, we're aiming for the position where we are not only supporting people who work, say, as printers .....?

**[S:** Well, no, if we support people who are working, how much more should we support people who are not working? Mm? That's when we really get going, when we start supporting the people who don't do anything `useful' at all, that one can see. I mean not just `layabouts' obviously, to use that rather uncomplimentary term, but those who are very **positively** not doing anything at all.

Siddhiratna: It must, presumably, arise when there is an excess of surplus that that has to be defined in some way.

**[S:** Well, you might consider it more important to maintain people who are doing nothing at all than to maintain people who are doing something. You might consider that, in principle, more important.

Nagabodhi: It's going to take quite, for a lot of us, quite a radical change in our conditioning to accept that, even within the Order.

**S:** Mm. I think one can ..... for instance, supposing it's understood that someone is devoting himself fulltime to meditation: I think most people would accept that he should be supported. But they might want to justify it to themselves in such terms as: if he spends many years meditating then he'll be really deeply experienced in that, and well, possibly, later on be a very good meditation teacher, and in that way help others. They probably would have to justify in some such way, rather than accept that he might be there simply meditating in a hermitage all by himself until he died. (Chuckling ) ... And perhaps never see anybody, and never teach anybody.

In other words, unless one can accept that, it means that one isn't really accepting that the individual has a value in himself apart from any contribution to society. It is accepted in the East. Not that there are all that many of these hermits who are solitary meditators, but it is accepted. It was accepted in the West in medieval times, wasn't it? But until we can accept that, you can say, you don't really value the individual as such for his own sake. It's like the artist: you should be willing to support the artist in his, say, painting of pictures, or writing of poems, even though they've got no social relevance at all. You shouldn't insist that he spends his time writing scripts for propaganda films that are going to help the country, etc. etc. He might be devoting himself to refinements of prosody, etc. etc. which have got no social utility whatever! He might be devoting himself to painting pictures, the significance of which nobody can appreciate. He might of course, be having you all on, you just don't know. On the other hand he might be a genius that only future ages will be able to appreciate, you just don't know. You have to take it very much on trust, but at least you should be willing to do that, in some cases.

But in the case of the religious or spiritual hermit or solitary meditator, well usually he exemplifies in a very extreme and single-minded form, values which the community as a whole does in fact accept, even though it may not be able fully to understand them or fathom them.

**Siddhiratna:** I think, Bhante, that where somebody is .... I'm not sure about how this works out..... where somebody is willing to work to support somebody else to meditate all of their life, or even just study or whatever, all of their life, that seems fair and even good, in its way - just positively good - but where, I think, you've got a situation where somebody's working but they also want to try to do that, but they know that they can't rely on someone else to support them, and where you get, say, a number of those individuals together who then form as a collective to support each other in that way - I think that's quite a good idea as well.

**S:** Yes, but where it's the case of supporting the solitary meditator, obviously this is someone that the community as a whole is happy to support. You realise, for instance, that you couldn't do that, but you're happy that somebody should be able to, and are willing to help them.

**Siddhiratna:** Mm. But that willingness is there, isn't it because you may not feel you are able to do that yourself fulltime, but you may feel you would like to do that part of the time for your overall development and you'd much rather work with somebody else who feels like you and that you can .....

**S:** (breaking in - Siddhiratna and Bhante speaking at the same time ) Yes! But then you as a community ..... you as a community have to decide whether it's more valuable to have, say, a larger number of maybe less developed people, or at least a very few very highly developed people. You have to decide that.

**Siddhiratna:** We then come onto this problem individualism, in that you may feel in fact (words slurred together) ... as an aspiring individual it is better for you to concentrate on yourself rather than support this person.

**S:** You may decide that, well then in that case you just withdraw your support from that other individual. As an individual, it's an embryonic one, you've got the right to do that - it's an essential feature of the spiritual community that no one is forced. It is not a group thing. But if you really do look at it objectively you may see that a certain individual needs to be supported, even at your expense, in a sense, so that he can get on with what he is doing which far transcends anything that you could do.

Siddhiratna: Your expense in terms of your own personal development rather than financial .....

**S:** Yes, **in a sense**; in a sense; if you did it in the right spirit, perhaps, it wouldn't even be at the expense of your own development. There is that aspect too.

Siddhiratna: I'm not sure about that, because .....

**S:** Only you can decide that! You may decide wrongly, but it's you who have to decide in the long run. For instance even in the Buddhist East sometimes a monk goes off by himself and maybe some people think he's very eccentric or he's not following the rules strictly and they withdraw their support. They may be wrong in so doing but he says nothing about it. No one can stop them withdrawing their support. No one can say that they must, but they may well have made a mistake. There is no built in guarantee because it is not a legal sort of system. Therefore it's the greater risk. You've got the right to do this or do that, you've also got the right therefore to make a mistake, at least involuntarily.

But the important thing is the principle to be accepted which is that the group exists for the individual, not the individual for the sake of the group, in the sense that the group has no right to **demand** that the individual shall devote himself to the group. If the individual sort of freely chooses to do that, that's all right.

Nagabodhi: There's a story - I've heard it, I don't know where, it's probably in one of these Zen anthologies - about a woman who for years gave alms to a monk who sat in a little grass hut near her garden, near her house, - after years, her daughter, who was in very bad emotional shape, ... she suggested to her daughter to go and visit the monk and get advice. She went but the monk was meditating or something, so he wouldn't give advice. The girl comes back and the mother goes and burns the monk's hut down. Now I've heard this quoted several times .....

**S:** (breaking in) It's been misquoted.

Nagabodhi: ..... the story being that - 'look at this monk, he didn't have compassion, you know, this is why the woman burnt his hut down.' You could take it that way, but what you get is Westerners **immediately** kind of using their Christian conditioning to understand the story, and not for a moment thinking, well, maybe the monk had his reasons.

**S:** Yes. Right. Yeh. No. The original story is that she wanted to seduce the monk. (sound of chuckling) That was the original story, which again justifies, or seems to justify, from the Western point of view, something even more extreme.

Siddhiratna: 'Extreme' in that because he wasn't seduced she was justified in burning the hut down?

**S:** Well no, the Western idea that sexual imperatives are absolutes.

Siddhiratna: I don't follow that.

**S:** Well in the sense that sexual demands are of such a nature, they have got to be fulfilled; they come first, regardless of all other considerations. This seems to be the message, doesn't it, from a Western point of view.

Siddhiratna: ( too faint to be heard)

**S:** Anyway, that's the little story.

Nagabodhi: When I've heard this quoted it's interesting how that's found its way into anthologies ..... **[S:** Yes. Mm] ... because it can only be, in a way, a confirmation of a very Western, Christian conditioning.

**S:** Yes! The message that seems to come across is that your own individual development doesn't matter. If there's a clash between that and something else, some as it were, social demand, well, your own individual development must be sacrificed. This seems to be the message doesn't it? and presumably that is why this little story is quoted so often. [Pause]

So anyway, what I'm pointing to via this discussion of 'the share' is that I don't think that there can be bhikkhus in the old traditional sense, that is to say, depending directly on society at large, because society at large does not 'share' the assumptions, or the ideals upon which your life is based, so how can you expect a share of their property, a share of their goods, a share of their wealth. You can only expect a share of the wealth of those who accept the ideals to which you personally are committed. So this means that... I think, it looks to me, as though we shall have to develop our own sort of 'brand' if you like, of 'mini-bhikkhu', depending not on society at large but upon the Movement itself, on, as it were, the society within the society. [Pause] Anyway we've gone somewhat over time.

What about this 'solitude'? It's true that before the Buddha's day there were these solitary people, but do you think that those monks, those bhikkhus in the Buddha's day who continued to lead a solitary life subject to a call from the spiritual community, at least of a later date, were in fact just throw-backs to an earlier stage of development, earlier stage of **historical** development?

It seems in the Buddha's teaching itself there is an emphasis on solitude as well as on spiritual companionship. It seems that many monks alternate the two, which would seem to be the more sensible arrangement. Don't forget that the bhikkhus were wanderers and they were wandering most of the year, and more often than not, it seems, they wandered on their own, or at least in twos and threes, and settled down in communities, relatively permanent communities, only at the time of the rainy season retreat. So it was a very sort of scattered community, and the bhikkhus were certainly in contact with one another, and there was certainly a sense of spiritual companionship, but at the same time they spent quite a lot of time on their own. And you get in the Pali texts repeated references to the Buddha saying to the bhikkhus - 'Here oh bhikkhus are the roots of trees'. "Idani mulani rukani" in Pali - 'Here are the roots of trees. Oh monks, sit and meditate.' Presumably each under a separate tree. And there are frequent references to monks meditating alone in seclusion, and references to the Buddha sitting alone in seclusion, or going off into the forest on his own, not even with Ananda, - there are a number of such references.

So you rather get from Trevor Ling's discussion the impression, that once ordained, the bhikkhu spent all his time in a community, in a quite literal physical sense. But that was by no means the case! The bhikkhu to begin with wandered a lot, and often wandered on his own, and he stayed with others during the rainy season retreat. Though again, he might even spend the rainy season retreat on his own. And in any case he spent a lot of time meditating

on his own, and in the forest on his own, even though there was a sense of spiritual fellowship, and though the monks, or bhikkhus, came together quite frequently, at least after some years, - that is some years after the Buddha instituted the observance - for the full moon day celebration, or the new moon day celebration.

So I think one can't say that those bhikkhus who spent a lot of time on their own were simply throwbacks to an earlier period of historical development. Throughout Buddhist history quite a number of bhikkhus have spent time on their own as hermits. And even when one is on one's own one can feel very much in contact spiritually with other members of the spiritual community. You don't necessarily feel cut off, do you? Or not in contact.

Any further point on what we've done this morning? Poor old Trevor Ling again, eh.

Vessantara: The word 'spiritual' you were talking about the other day, in terms of developing positive mental states - when we talk about say a 'spiritual' link, or feeling in 'spiritual' contact when you're on solitary retreat, the word seems to be used in a different sense or implies some kind of different meaning.

**S**: I would say that, in a way, when one speaks of a spiritual contact in that way it means that say when you're on your own you think of others, so you think of other Order members, and what comes to mind, or what you feel is not, say, how well you get on with them in the ordinary sort of human way, but the fact that you do have something spiritual, as it were, in common: that you've got your commitment to 'the Three Jewels' in common or you've got your commitment to spiritual development in common. So the feeling that you get then about those people of whom you're thinking, those say fellow Order members, is quite a different sort of feeling, you can say, it's a 'spiritual' feeling, from what you would get if you were thinking about them just in the ordinary way, as say good friends or people that you've met, or people that you've known. And you feel spiritually in contact with them. You feel that where you are on your own, you are getting on with just what they are getting on with elsewhere, even though you can't see them, you can't hear them, you can't touch them, but you are in contact. You don't feel separated from them. Has anybody ever felt this kind of thing? I think that some have on solitary retreat.

It's quite different from thinking of your mother, or thinking of your girl-friend, or thinking of some old chum, or just someone that you happen to know and get on well with.

Lokamitra: It's almost as if you can not only think of them but pick up vibrations from them sometimes.

**S**: There is **that** - almost sort of semi-telepathic. Although of course that can happen again on the mundane level between people who are just connected in quite an ordinary way. There's supposed to be a sort of telepathy between all living beings, in a way, especially between parents and off-spring, especially mothers and off-spring. There was this rather terrible experiment, virtually, with rabbits. Did you read about that in..... I think it's in 'Supernature', about in Russia there was an experiment, - more than an experiment - because they used this in connection with submarines. They arranged for a female rabbit to give birth to babies just before the submarine departs, and the baby rabbits are taken away on the submarine, and then electrodes are planted in the brain of the mother rabbit, and then it is prearranged that on certain days at certain times in the submarine one of the baby rabbits will be killed. They are killed at intervals. And they had found experimentally that at the exact instant that the baby rabbit is killed something happens in the brain of the mother rabbit which is registered through the electrode, so that they are in communication with the submarine - the fact there is no radio communication possible through the water. So they know that pre-arranged signal has been sent, and that the submarine is O.K. Have you heard

about this? This is really quite extraordinary, isn't it? It seems to have been verified. This sort of telepathic contact - well, more than telepathic, in a sense less than telepathic, but definitely a contact between the mother and the off-spring. And it is said that during life this sort of contact exists between all living things and their off-spring, or between parents and off-spring, especially the mother that is, not the father. So therefore it suggests it is important to have a positive attitude towards the female parent. You are in contact all the time, on a certain level. Perhaps it's much stronger when one is very young and wears off somewhat as one gets older. But it is said that it is only finally and fully disrupted only with physical death. [Pause] Are there any further points?

So to get back to Trevor Ling - we've got rather a long way from him - Yes, the bhikkhu receives his 'share', but it's not his sort of stipend as a professional. It's freely given to him to pursue his own spiritual development. That's the traditional Buddhist view, and if he voluntarily chooses to do things for other people, for society, even for the group as such, well, that's up to him, but there's no force exerted, no pressure, - at least not under ideal Buddhist conditions - no pressure is put on him to make himself useful. Where that happens the value of the individual as such has been lost sight of. [Pause] All right let's leave it there and go on in the afternoon.

[BREAK]

### **Text** *THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BUDDHIST ORDER*

*The reasons for having an ordered community, organized in local settlements, in close touch with the neighbourhood, are to be found in the nature of the new wisdom itself. The occasion for the actual coming into existence of such organized local settlements was, as it happens, a phenomenon peculiar to ancient India. We shall look at each of these aspects in turn.*

*The reason for the Buddhist community life is inherent in the nature of the Buddha's teaching. We have seen that this teaching consists of diagnosis and prescription: diagnosis of the human malaise as consisting essentially of the disease of individualism, and prescription for its cure as consisting primarily of the undermining or erosion of the notion that individuality is something permanent and of great importance. It is in the life of the Sangha that the prescription can most effectively be applied. Here is the community of being which comes into existence when the walls of individuality are completely and permanently broken down. And here too, are found the optimum conditions for those who are seeking to achieve that state of life and consciousness where individuality is no more, but who have not yet arrived at that state." P.152*

**S:** Mm. That's alright provided one reads a little bit between the lines. Anyway there certainly was in a sense a breaking down of walls, but more in the sense of a widening of perspective, and expansion of consciousness. [Pause] All right, let's go on.

**Text** *"The process of meditation which is prescribed in the early texts gives something of a glimpse of the community of consciousness which was aimed at in the Sangha. The method was one which began from the recognition that, in its normal state, the mind, and particularly the surface of the mind, is constantly being fretted and distracted; it is in a state of continual upheaval, like the surface of the sea, tossed into countless waves by the buffeting of the wind. The first stage of meditation, or the first jhana, to give it its technical name, is the calming of the mind by detaching it from the bombardment of the senses, and from discursive thinking. This makes possible the second stage in the process, namely concentration: that is, the concentration of the consciousness upon one point."*

**S:** Yes. Ah, yes. There's a bit of a need for clarification here. Not what I called a forcible

fixation of attention on a single point, but more like the one-pointedness of all the energies, in the sense that they are all converging, as it were, on a common goal. Do you see the difference between these two? [Pause]

Vessantara: Could you repeat the second of those. Not the forcible fixation but the concentration on one point, but....?

**S**: ... but the converging of all the energies upon a common goal. The emphasis being on **all of the energies**. The more energies are involved the more integrated you are, and therefore the more concentrated you are.

Vessantara: After yesterday about Transcendental Meditation and the mantras that they use and you were you saying that the mantra not having any sort of emotionally positive connotations, it would be difficult for you to get into the dhyana state using it, because your emotions wouldn't be particularly involved. What about then for instance the mindfulness of breathing which equally doesn't have any emotional connotations to it?

**S**: This is quite an important point. The mindfulness of breathing seems to have worked quite well for the early Buddhists, or at least some of the early Buddhists, and seems to have been a self-sufficient method, or at least, was regarded as such. But I get the impression nowadays that it is no longer for people a self-sufficient method, in the sense that by concentrating simply on the mindfulness of breathing you are not able to involve the emotions and all those deeper energies simply by using this particular technique. This is one of the reasons why we combine it with the mettā bhavana. Now it may be that with people who are exceptionally well integrated and balanced that the mindfulness of breathing will be enough, and when they put their concentration on a particular object in that sort of way, then, because they are relatively unified already, their emotions will naturally follow. This seems to be what happened with many people, with many followers of the Buddha in the Buddha's own day.

But it seems that with quite a number of people there is such a cleavage between, well, for want of a better term, the intellect and the emotions, and the intellect can do so much without involving the emotions, that the mindfulness of breathing by itself isn't, in practice for such people, always enough. They can get on with it quite well up to a point but inasmuch as the emotions aren't becoming involved, and the deeper emotional **energies** aren't becoming involved, after a while they come to a stop: they come to a halt. And this is where the mettā bhavana and the puja and so on come in very useful.

Manjuvajra: Does this explain why sometimes after a mindfulness of breathing you can feel alienated because you can be concentrated but the emotional energy is not there.

**S**: I think so. As I've said the tradition is that the fourfold satipatannas is a completely self-sufficient method and can take you all the way to Nirvana. But my own personal impression is that for many people, certainly in the West, nowadays, this is not so. It's as though, in the case of this method, the mindfulness is the spearhead, and it sort of assumes that the emotions will, as it were, follow. And in the case of relatively well integrated people that no doubt will happen. But if you've got a rather deeper split between your intellect and your emotions, or your conscious mind and your unconscious mind then it just won't happen. And maybe there's a very strong resistance from your emotions even while you are getting on with your mindfulness of breathing and your counting of the breath, and passing through the stages. You'll be doing it, as it were, only with a part of yourself, and you won't feel that you're really as a whole person completely behind it. So you will feel a little bit thin, yes - a little bit alienated even.

Ratnaguna: I thought early Buddhist monks were told to do the mettā bhavana.



**S:** Yes, they were, but those texts like the *Satipatanna Sutta*, which deal with the mindfulness of breathing make it clear that that is regarded, or was regarded, as a self-sufficient method. That is to say that if one practised the four satipatannas you did not need to have recourse to any other particular method of meditation.

Though, it is true, yes, in many passages of the suttas the Buddha has taught the mettā bhavana. But when the satipatanna teaching is given usually as far as I remember this is made clear. In fact in the beginning of the 'Mahasatipatanna sutta', the Buddha is in fact represented as saying, "Ekayana bhikkhave maggo(?)": 'There is just one way.' And he goes on to explain that that 'one way' is the four-fold 'satipatanna', that is to say the mindfulness of the physical body and its movements, the feelings, the thoughts, and 'the dharma' as expressed in different conceptual formulations, and not a word is said about mettā bhavana. [Pause]

**Lokamitra:** But then doesn't mindfulness of feelings perhaps necessarily involve metta bhavana to get in touch?

**S:** One could very well say this but it is not explicitly taught in the tradition in that way. It is not said that you should develop for instance the skilful mental states, the skilful emotions - you should observe them. So in practice it does seem as though this particular teaching does not in fact function as a self sufficient means to enlightenment for the majority of people, perhaps in the West. And therefore this needs to be supplemented by other teachings, especially for instance the four Brahma Viharas. It is noticeable that if you do the mantra recitation and visualisation practice, especially if you do the full or relatively full practice, you get quite a different feeling from that which you get with the mindfulness of breathing. Has anybody noticed this? you feel as it were much more fully involved. It's much more of a total practice because the emotions are involved via the devotional feelings.

But again this, as it were, limitation of the Satipattana tradition need not apply to everybody. A relatively integrated and balanced person doing the mindfulness of breathing would feel at the same time happiness and goodwill towards others, as it were quite naturally and spontaneously. So for such a person, the Satipattana method would be quite sufficient. They would not need to take additional help from other methods.

**Manjuvajra** Just recently when I've been started teaching in that manner, I've been emphasising the fact that concentration is a warm feeling. That it's not just something cold. Do you think it's a good idea to talk in those terms or to let people discover it for themselves.

**S:** No, I think it's quite good to talk in those terms actually, because it is so easy for people to think of mindfulness in the terms simply of a cold clear sort of looking. It is clear, certainly, but it is not necessarily cold. No doubt people do have this tendency so strongly to alienation and just looking at themselves from the outside in a split off way, but possibly one couldn't start warning them against the dangers of alienated awareness too quickly. It doesn't seem to have been a difficulty that arose in the East, because you remember I pointed out when I gave the talk on Alienated Awareness and Integrated Awareness, that I found it necessary to make that distinction simply on the basis of my experience with people in the West, and I mentioned therefore that this was not a traditional distinction between alienated awareness and integrated awareness. It was a distinction that I had learned to make myself as a result of my experience with people here. And that that distinction had not been made in the East, presumably because nobody did in fact develop that kind of alienated awareness. That people's feelings went along quite naturally and smoothly with their mindfulness.

**Vessantara:** This would explain why I've heard things like say Zen teachers coming and

working with group like London Zen Studies and being very disappointed that nobody seemed to be really making any progress, because the only way in which they seemed to get any sort of emotional involvement is by a strong emphasis on the possibility of enlightenment or some kind of satori happening which also has its disadvantages presumably.

Nagabodhi: What you do get in the early scriptures surely is the Buddha emphasising that the practices are done in the context of Kalyana Mitrata and in a generally positive environment. Is it Meghiya in the Udana who goes off alone when he's not ready and he's just assailed by his own negativity so the Buddha said well you've got to start by developing positive relationships.

**S**: And also we mustn't forget the well nigh permanent presence of nature in the background. That if you're living in the midst of nature or spending at least a lot of time in the midst of nature, and it's there that you do your meditation in a forest glade, and it's very pleasant and there are no irritating factors in the environment - no noisy people, no interference - you feel in a very much more relaxed and serene and happy sort of mood. If in that mood you do the mindfulness of breathing and so on, it certainly can't lead to alienation. But if for instance we, say as it's probably in the case of some people, at the end of a day's work and we have to shut ourselves off from people to some extent, just because we can't bear perhaps taking so many of them, taking so much in, so we have to shut ourselves off to some extent from our environment and we have perhaps to be sort of painfully aware of it at times and we haven't been able to develop much positive emotion in the course of the day, and we take up the mindfulness of breathing, we're almost bound to do it in a slightly alienated fashion, unless we are exceptionally healthy. So again the metta bhavana is most necessary as a sort of supplement, even to the mindfulness, let alone leaving quite aside the benefits of the metta bhavana as a method in its own right.

And again of course people do seem to find quite a bit of difficulty with the metta bhavana and tend to fall back sometimes on the mindfulness, forgetting the metta bhavana.

Nagabodhi: In a way when I am particularly alienated if anything I find the mindfulness of breathing the most emotional of the two. It's like absolute agony. As soon as I get the beginnings of concentration it's accompanied by incredible resistance and emotional reactions.

**S**: Because it's as though the system senses that the mindfulness of breathing is pushing you in the direction of further alienation, and is resisting that, which is in a way a healthy resistance.

Nagabodhi: Is there a time when it might be best simply to not practise mindfulness of breathing and simply stay with the metta.

**S**: Well under those circumstances even if one says stay with the metta, but if you've reached that sort of point where you can't do the mindfulness for that sort of reason, there's no question of establishing immediate contact with the metta, you've got to go back, you've got to retrace your steps. You may have to establish contact first with your environment, even with your physical body, with your self, and sort of feel yourself a bit more and be conscious of yourself breathing a bit more as it were, and then get some feelings and then get some positive feelings, maybe via a few negative feelings! And then when the positive feelings have developed a bit, then take up the metta bhavana, and when you feel relaxed and ready to do so, and then perhaps think in terms of mindfulness of breathing.

Otherwise for someone who's in a sort of rather cut off condition, due to their experiences during the day, to take up the mindfulness of breathing is almost asking for the experience of

alienation. It's almost bound to intensify it, even the 'successful' practice, 'successful', inverted commas of the mindfulness, is almost bound to increase your experience of alienation. You are better off chanting for half an hour probably. Or arranging the shrine or putting some fresh flowers down or something like that.

We perhaps mustn't forget that our overall tendency is in the direction of alienation. In some people more than others.

Lokamitra: Can you go into that a bit?

**S:** Well our whole way of life, especially in cities, tends to have an alienating effect. For instance when you walk in the streets, you have to pass so many people. You have to make a forcible attempt to exclude those people, as it were. Not to let them have an effect on you, not to take in any impressions from them. You have to deliberately keep all that out. It's too much, you can't take it all in. So you have to shield yourself from, you have to cut yourself off from it, in your own, in a sense, interests, but this is alienation.

And perhaps you have all sorts of feelings that you can't allow yourself to become conscious of. Perhaps you feel very cramped, very resentful, very much under pressure. So you have to, before you go into meditation, you need to allow time for relaxation and unwinding as it were. This is why, when I was taking the classes at 'Pundarika', I used sometimes to start people off with a relaxation and awareness of the body. Do you remember that? Just to put people back in touch with themselves and out of the alienated state.

Vessantara: Can you say what you did?

**S:** Well that is to say I used to do it as a guided group practice, asking people to be aware, first of all of the toes, one by one, then the whole of each foot, then the ankles legs and so on, working one's way up the whole body, down the arms and round the head until one actually felt and experienced the whole body; and this usually gave people a feeling of sort of warmth and relaxation and security and being in touch with themselves. Sometimes people felt slightly sleepy, but that was in a quite positive sort of way. And then - we spent sometimes ten, fifteen minutes on this - and then went into the mindfulness of breathing or metta, whichever it was.

Manjuvajra: I've sort of found from experience that I like doing the mindfulness in the mornings and the metta in the afternoon, and that would tie in in a way because in the morning you are more free from alienation, and in the afternoon, certainly when I get home from work, I need to develop some positivity.

**S:** Of course in the morning you've just been sleeping, you've just been dreaming, so in dreams one is in contact as it were with the unconscious or whatever you like to call it. So when you wake up you are in as it were a more balanced and less alienated state. Maybe in a completely non alienated state. So for this reason as well perhaps as for others, the morning does seem to be the time to practise the mindfulness of breathing, if one is working during the day.

Anybody else noticed anything of that kind?

Lokamitra: I find I can wake up in pretty foul moods too!

**S:** That's not alienated. At least you have a mood.

Lokamitra: Yes, but I can't get down to anything unless I do the metta first! To sort of clear

it a bit as it were.

Manjuvajra: I sometimes find a bad feeling, so called negative feeling, is good for mindfulness, particularly if I'm feeling a bit angry.

Nagabodhi: But if I'm doing metta in the morning it has such a good effect on the day, really, even if it's a painful metta, a difficult metta, it doesn't seem to matter how 'successful', in inverted commas the metta is in the morning - it just transforms the whole day. It just adds a kind of lightness and things seem to click. I just feel more in touch with myself.

**[End of side one    side two]**

**S:** We're not suggesting that one shouldn't do the metta in the morning, but only that the morning is the more suitable time to do the mindfulness. If you can do both, so much the better of course. If your metta is your mindfulness, well that's better still.

Anyway let's go on. (Pause) Oh yes, just one little thing I wanted to comment on. "Something of a glimpse of the community of consciousness which was aimed at in the Sangha". This "community of consciousness" - don't you think that's slightly dangerous?

Manjuvajra: It sounds like the collective unconscious.

**S:** Well it suggests a group consciousness, doesn't it, and one must really guard against that sort of suggestion.

Lokamitra: Further down he seems to get the dhyanas wrong I think, isn't it? Maybe he doesn't, but he speaks almost of the dhyanas as techniques.

**S:** Well this is because he's speaking of concentration of the consciousness upon one point. He is thinking of concentration and meditation very much in terms of technique, and just concentrating, rather than in terms of the experience of a totally different level of consciousness.

**Text** "*When this has been achieved, and only then, the next stage can begin, the stage of experiencing clarity and equanimity. Consciousness, thus purified and calmed, is then able to expand, and the experience becomes that of 'unbounded space'.*"

**S:** That is of course the first of the four arupa dhyanas.

**Text** "*The final stages of the process do not concern us here. What is of interest at this point is the sequence: a narrowing down of consciousness, followed by expansion. The underlying theory seems to be that when consciousness, normally restless, wild or even uncontrollable, is brought to a single point, it can then be dealt with effectively (like the bringing under control and harnessing of a wild horse). Thus controlled, by concentration, it then begins to exhibit the pure qualities which are always waiting to be manifested, namely joy and equanimity. In this way the concentration of consciousness produces, of itself, a subsequent broadening out into unbounded dimensions of the inherent qualities which are now given their rightful place.*"

**S:** What do you think of this concentration followed by expansion?

Lokamitra: In a way it seems quite good.

**S:** Yes. In a sense this is in fact what happens, except that he has got it quite wrong in a way

in thinking of concentration as concentration on a point, sort of fixation of consciousness on a point. It's more like the unification of all one's energies. And once one's energies have been unified, then of course they can expand, or consciousness can expand.

Lokamitra: In a way that's just what we do in the metta.

**S**: Yes. I don't think really he's got much idea of what expansion of consciousness is really like. I think this is all very theoretical. The "consciousness thus purified and calmed, is then able to expand, and the experience becomes that of 'unbounded space'" He makes it sound very simple and easy, but actually it isn't at all! You've by that time gone through all the four rupa dhyanas and have entered upon the first of the arupa dhyanas, which is very difficult indeed to do.

[Long pause] All right, let's go on.

**Text** *"Now, it is evident that the process of meditation carried on by more than one 'individual' will begin, in each case, from a state where each is conscious of a multiplicity of sense objects and desires, and that it will lead to a state where all are sharing in the same consciousness of joy and equanimity, which is infinite and the same for all. When the impurities have been removed, then there can be a fusion. Incidentally, this raises the question of the Buddhist view of the fundamental moral nature of man. In Buddhist philosophy, human nature is seen as fundamentally good, rather than evil. This discipline which the life of the bhikkhu entails is likened by the Buddha to the process of refining gold. Stage by stage impurities are purged away: first the coarse dust and sand, gravel and grit; then the finer grit, then the trifling impurities like the very fine sand and dust. At last 'the gold dust alone remains' and this is placed in the crucible and melted together, until it can be run out of the crucible. 'Then that gold is melted, molten, flawless, done with, its impurities strained off. It is pliable, workable, glistening, no longer brittle; it is capable of perfect workmanship.... Just in the same way in a monk who is given to developing the higher consciousness there are gross impurities of deed, word and thought.' These too, are gradually purged out, first the coarser impurities, and then the finer, subtler impurities, until there comes a time when all this dross has been removed and the basic pure state of consciousness is reached. According to the Buddha, this level of permanently pure consciousness is achieved when all the common distinctions and ways of differentiating human beings have been purged away - such considerations for example, as family pride, national pride and personal reputation. 'We note here,' writes a modern Buddhist, commenting on this passage, 'how our preoccupations with thoughts concerning our race or state are considered harmful to the concept of a common humanity.'"*

**S**: This is on the whole all right, but you notice he says, "According to the Buddha, this level of permanently pure consciousness is achieved when all the common distinctions and ways of differentiating human beings have been purged away" which suggests it's a sort of common collective group consciousness.

Manjuvajra: Isn't that right in a way? I would imagine in a state of pure consciousness, one wouldn't be particularly associated with any particular family or nation or.....

**S**: Well no you wouldn't be, but not because you had achieved a consciousness which was common to them all. But because you were completely an individual, which is almost the opposite, sort of thing. You see the difference?

Manjuvajra: Go into it a bit more.

**S**: It's as though he is suggesting that there is a sort of common substratum, which he calls this 'permanently pure consciousness which is achieved when all the common distinctions

and ways of differentiating human beings have been purged away'. So this suggests a sort of reduction of individual differences to a sort of lowest common denominator if you like, so that when you realise this lowest common denominator, then you no longer differentiate in that way. But it isn't really a lowest common denominator that one is concerned with at all. It's rather the opposite. It's the other end of the scale, the opposite end of the scale. You are so intensely an individual, that you transcend all differences of family pride, national pride, social reputation and so on. So in this sense it's completely the opposite. Admittedly one is faulting to some extent just on language, but language is important. Someone reading this passage not very carefully, could think it was a sort of group consciousness, or common group consciousness to which everything had to be reduced. Again this sort of ties up with the idea of returning to an undifferentiated sort of tribal consciousness.

So it's not that you sink your difference of family status and national pride and so on in the great collective group. It's not that at all. What happens is that you are so intensely an individual that you no longer belong to a group at all. So your meditation is not submerging yourself in the common consciousness of the group, it's transcending all the differences within the group and the group itself. But he seems to be suggesting by his language the first of these.

So anyway, "We note here, writes a modern Buddhist commenting on this passage, 'how our preoccupations with thoughts concerning our race or state are considered harmful to the concept of a common humanity.'" You're not concerned with the concept of a common humanity. You're concerned with being an individual, and if you are yourself an individual, then you will treat others as individuals. It is possible to treat them as individual.

Manjuvajra: Isn't there something similar about individuals though?

**S:** Yes and no. This is what I was saying the other day in connection with the Buddha. The Buddha, having become a Buddha, is as it were, more of an individual than ever. He is more than ever recognisably different from everybody else. Therefore you must be very careful about this sort of language of one merging into something common, as it were, the common substratum, a common reality. No, it's not at all like that, you may say. Though that's all right as a manner of speaking, in a fashion, if one doesn't misunderstand it.

Otherwise you get the impression say, well supposing you've got this lump of gold and it's made into different ornaments, well, you destroy the ornaments, so you've got big undifferentiated lump of gold and this is what you do, as it were, when you attain this higher state of consciousness. You sort of melt down all the difference, but what you have got in fact then is a lowest common denominator, a group consciousness. So, as I've said on some other occasion, the individual is the most universal. The more individual, the more universal, the more universal, the more individual. Not the more individual, the less universal. So universal is not common. Common is not universal, and here, there's the expression, 'the concept of a common humanity'. So 'Thoughts concerning our race or state are considered harmful to the concept of a common humanity.' As though just as you have to merge your individuality in your particular group, those groups again in turn, in the same way, have got to be merged into bigger groups and the biggest group of all is the common humanity in which every one and every thing is merged. This seems to be what is suggested here, and again that seems to link up with getting back to the tribal group, or as it were recreating a bigger and better group which here seems to be humanity. Humanity becomes your group, but that doesn't mean that you're an individual.

Siddhiratna: Can you make the same mistakes as Trevor Ling seems to be making if you were to say look at the Dhyani Buddhas with - I've forgotten the sequence - the Buddha that sees everything as differentiated and Amitabha sees the sameness in everything. I'd maybe make the same mistake there of saying sameness but I understand it's seeing the Buddha

nature as the possibility.

**S:** Well the point here is, as I've mentioned in lectures, that you've got these five Buddhas, each Buddha is all the Buddhas of course, each individual Buddha represents a particular aspect of Buddhahood. So there's the All Discriminating Wisdom balancing the Wisdom of Sameness. So it is not a sameness which destroys difference. It is a sameness which coexists with difference. You see things as all the same, at the same time you see them as completely different, you see them in their unique particularity. But this sort of language suggests that you take only the equality or sameness aspect as real, you melt everything down into a common substratum, as it were.

So the Buddhas are all the same. I mean they're all Buddhas, they've all reached enlightenment, but they are all also quite different. They're individuals.

Manjuvajra It's like you've got two ornaments made out of gold. It's recognising that each ornament ( ) but it's essentially made out of the same stuff.

**S:** But even this analogy mustn't be pressed too far. It only holds good to some extent. Because otherwise you get a sort of substantialism or eternalism which would be very unbuddhistic indeed. There's a sort of common substance in which every thing or every body shares in different ways. So when you become enlightened, and somebody else becomes enlightened, it's not that the two of you are sort of sharing a common substance or a common thing. It's not like that at all. It's more like that you're functioning in the same kind of way. Do you see what I mean? For instance supposing - let me try and think of an example - supposing you are interested in the Dharma, what does that mean? - you are practising the Dharma. So somebody else is practising the Dharma, so you could in a manner of speaking say, that the Dharma is what you have in common. But it is not a sort of thing in which you both as it were participate. When you say that you have the Dharma in common, what you really mean is, that you are functioning in the same sort of way. Not that you literally share a common substance.

So it's just the same with two Buddhas. It's not that they both share a common substance called Buddhahood - they are both functioning in the same sort of way, the completely spiral fashion, not a circular fashion. This is what you really mean. So we have to avoid taking this substantialist sort of language literally, but it seems to me that Trevor Ling has been misled by it, and also the gentleman from whom he quotes. (Pause) Language is a very dangerous thing, a very two edged weapon indeed! So when you speak of sharing in a common humanity, is there a sort of thing, a sort of substance called humanity that we all have a share in? No, it means we just live and function in the same sort of way. This is all that it means.

So if we are all thinking in the same sort of way, does it mean that there's a sort of thought existing out there as a thing or a substance that we all share in? It doesn't mean that at all, does it. Supposing we're all in the same state of mind, does it mean that there's a common sort of consciousness in which we are all quite literally sharing? No, once again. We are functioning in the same sort of way. Do you see what I mean? If you think otherwise it's a sort of species of *atmavada* which as I said would be very unbuddhistic. But we're constantly misled by language. So in the same way we think even of reality as a sort of thing in which we all share when we get there as it were. But if you are to think about it at all, it's not so much that there's some thing which you have in common, if anything is common it's a common mode of functioning.

Siddhiratna: Couldn't you also make the same mistake about you were both functioning from the Bodhichitta or something like that?

**S:** Yes you could, yes. Again you are functioning in the same sort of way. You mustn't substantialise the Bodhichitta. You can speak of it in that sort of way poetically, but not to take it literally.

Siddhiratna: That there is a thing.....

**S:** Yes, a Bodhichitta which is manifesting through..... oh yes, one can speak in this way, as it were, poetically. What it really means is that everybody's functioning in the same kind of manner.

Siddhiratna: Independently.

**S:** Independently and also interrelatedly. If there wasn't a question of interrelatedness you couldn't even use this language of the one Bodhichitta manifesting through all. The point of interrelatedness is what that sort of language is meant to draw attention to.

Nagabodhi: On a lower level of the group, in a way there is participation or sharing in the same thing in that a lot of ideas almost have that quality. They're so common. Even maybe great ideas, great myths on the level of the group, but with individuality.....

**S:** Even Jung makes it clear - one mustn't regard the archetypes as things. The archetypes are sort of common patterns of behaviour, common patterns of response, not things existing in a sort of collective unconscious like objects in a box. He makes this point very clearly. Though he often uses that sort of 'objects in the box' language.

Nagabodhi: I've heard him talk about them or read him talking about them as crystallisations. It is very close to that.

**S:** He is very poetic at times.

Nagabodhi: But if you have a whole nation that's motivated and inspired by a particular myth or legend, to an extent on that level each individual does have a share in that thing. Part of his property as a member of the tribe.

**S:** It's a common pattern, you could say. a common pattern of response. Not that there literally is a thing, though of course the pattern may be almost embodied as it were in a group of symbols or something of that kind. Whether in the totem pole or the figure of the monarch, the flag and so on. But then that is the focal point of a common behavioural trend as it were.

Anyway let's go on.

**Text**"The stage at which purified consciousness begins broaden out has also a social structure: this is the life of the Sangha. The experience of new purified consciousness beginning with the experience of the Buddha, is in this theory, to expand continually through human society in the form of the new community, the Sangha. Moreover, it is not only that the Sangha provides the right conditions for the practice of meditation - the restructuring of consciousness along non-individualistic lines; it also provides the maximum facilities for continued conditioning of consciousness away from individualism in all the ordinary, everyday actions of life. Both Buddhist meditation and Buddhist ethics have the same end in view."

**S:** So once again there's this confusion about individualism and non-individualism and the



individual. It's almost sort of Maoist in tone. You take these individualistic people and you put them into a sort of training camp and you recondition them so that they are no longer individualistic and happily merge with the group. It's almost that sort of suggestion, isn't it. You restructure their consciousness along non-individualistic lines. It seems to have a very Maoist sort of ring. But the truth of the matter is, one may say, that the Sangha provides the right conditions for the practice of meditation, yes, the development of the individual, not along non-individualistic lines, so much, as by way of a sort of expansion of consciousness beyond the group. When Trevor Ling talks about getting away from individualism, he usually seems to mean returning to the group. (Pause) All right let's go on.

**Text** *"This can be seen in connection with the ownership of property. One who becomes a member of the Sangha ceases to own any private property whatsoever. This has been a feature of Sangha life from the earliest times. Even those few articles of personal use, the robe, the alms-bowl and one or two other requisites, were in theory vested in the Sangha, and made available for the use of its members."*

**S:** So yes this is true. There is no private ownership of property within the Sangha, but why do you think this was? Well essentially there was no need to because you were devoting yourself to your individual development and you were provided with everything. You were provided with food, clothing, shelter and medicine, so why should you bother with owning anything individually. So the motivation, the reason for the members of the Sangha not owning property individually was spiritual rather than socialistic, you may say. Not that the holding of property individually was wicked, so much as it got in the way of spiritual development. Anyway carry on. We're going to come to something really paradoxical in a minute.

**Text** *"However, it is interesting to notice that while the Sangha was, from a juristic point of view, the corporate person in whom property was vested, and while no bhikkhu had legal property rights, nevertheless, as K.N.Jayatilleke pointed out, 'some rights such as the right to life, to free speech, to personal freedom etc., cluster round the notion of individual personality'. He acknowledged that this would seem to be an inconsistency, for the doctrine of anatta would appear to be incompatible with the notion of personal responsibility."*

**S:** This really gives the game away, doesn't it? It's almost saying well there's no such thing as individuality. You are really a non-person, quote 'anatta', therefore you can have no rights, which is exactly in a way what the Communist States say, that Totalitarian States say - you are essentially a member of the group. You belong to the state. You have got no rights as an individual, including no right of free speech etc., etc. You ought to be completely subservient to the group, the state. So therefore this Buddhist authority is saying that yes, admittedly the bhikkhu has got some rights such as the right to life, to free speech, but this would seem to be an inconsistency - that he ought not really to have those rights at all because according to the doctrine of anatta there's no notion of personal responsibility. So this really seems crazy doesn't it, and in a way this really gives the game away and shows that Trevor Ling and perhaps this authority too, is really thinking in terms of a return to the group and a complete subordination of the individual to the group and the fact of his group membership. This seems in a way a quite terrible misinterpretation. This is almost exactly what a totalitarian ruler would say. That any attempt to assert your rights as an individual is just unrestricted individualism and must be suppressed in the interests of the group. The group knows what is good for you. You don't need free speech.

**Lokamitra:** It's totally opposite isn't it, the doctrine of anatta means personal responsibility absolutely.

**S:** Yes, well they've taken anatta or Trevor Ling has taken anatta to mean non-individuality

instead of no restriction upon individuality by the false belief of ego. You restrict individuality by the false belief of ego when you think that individuality is something fixed and unchanging, not something that is unfixed and changing and therefore capable of development. (Pause) Anyway let's go on and see how he resolves this inconsistency that he has discovered.

**Text***"But since the psycho-physical processes of human life maintain a relative and temporary 'individuality', it is useful to distinguish one of the relatively individual series of processes from another and to refer to each by the term 'person'. Where the Buddhist analysis differs from most other views of human nature is in denying any absolute and permanent substratum, 'soul', or 'person', in these temporary psycho-physical processes."*

**S:** This is of course quite correct.

**Text***"In the Buddhist view of things it seems that the concept of individuality which is primarily and most emphatically denied is that of the private property owning individual."*

**S:** No, it seems it's the private sort of emotion and fixed unchanging identity owning individual that is denied. Anyway let's go on.

**Text***"This is a practical, institutional expression of the basic doctrine that greed or grasping (tanha) is the root of human ills."*

**S:** I'm afraid he's showing the cloven hoof here.

**Manjuvajra:** It's just popular Communism.

**S:** Isn't it. Which may or may not be correct but it doesn't represent an authentic interpretation of the Buddha's teaching. You may fully agree that the ownership of private property is an evil or injustice, but it doesn't follow from that that an individual or a member of the Sangha fulfils his 'destiny', if you like to use that term, simply by giving up the ownership of private property. You can be just as undeveloped without private property as with it.

It seems a really strange sort of reasoning, that according to the anatta doctrine there's no real person or individual, therefore you don't really have any rights. You are completely identified with the group, in this case the Sangha, which is conceived of as a sort of ( ) tribal group apparently into which one has been completely submerged. It really is extraordinary how he can look at things in this way. Anyway let's go on.

**Siddhiratna:** Was there any notion of this when you were at the Hampstead Vihara, this sort of thing? I ask because I met somebody at college who was associated with that and I can now remember him having said something very similar to this in fact.

**S:** What do you mean exactly?

**Siddhiratna:** I remember talking to him about Buddhism and I can't remember exactly how the conversation came round to the notion of free speech or ( ) etc., but he said something like if there's no soul, if there's no real self, there can be no freedom of speech etc. He was saying that as a sort of positive thing.

**S:** I certainly never heard about this before - this line of thought. I don't remember anybody thinking or reasoning like that when I was there.

Manjuvajra: You say you find it quite amazing - I don't think it's that uncommon.

S: You don't.

Manjuvajra: No. I've come across it.

S: You mean this sort of view within the context of Buddhism, or misunderstanding of Buddhism?

Manjuvajra: Yes.

S: Oh, that's very strange.

Manjuvajra: Even these sort of things 'well, you know if you haven't got a self then you ought to agree with me.' Those kind of comments. (Laughter)

S: I must say I haven't personally come up against that.

\_\_\_\_\_ : That's sort of one person has but the other hasn't because he says he's a Buddhist or something like that. Well if you experience them yourself you must apply to everybody.

S: Of course I have heard of people saying to Communists, that you don't believe in private property therefore you ought not to worry if I borrow your pen and keep it. You might say that that was justified in relation to communists. They usually seem as hurt as other people when you don't respect their property rights. They don't seem at all prepared to usher in a revolution in that sort of personal, practical way.

It seems really that we have to go into this question of anatta and individualism, individuality and personal development much more than we have in the past and sort out some of these confusions.

Nagabodhi: It is one that's thrown at you a lot.

S: Which one.

Nagabodhi: 'You're a Buddhist, therefore.....'

S: Yes of course one is expected to live up to all sorts of ideals as a Buddhist by people who don't share or don't seem to share those ideals at all. You have an extra slice of bread and they say, 'I thought you were supposed to be a Buddhist and be all ascetic and self-denying.' Or 'do you have jam on it too!' (Laughter) Or 'sugar in your tea, I thought you were a Buddhist! You had a holiday, oh I thought you were a Buddhist!' If you aren't absolutely utterly mindful all the time, 'oh I thought you were a Buddhist.' Or if you aren't meditating at least ten hours a day, 'oh I thought you were a Buddhist!' by people who have no intention of meditating and no belief in it, or faith in it. You are expected to live up to their quite imaginary picture of what a Buddhist is supposed to be like.

Vessantara: There seems to be a tremendous resentment, as if by saying you're a Buddhist you're setting yourself up as something. Because you're trying to develop, they really try and put you on a pedestal and make you live up to .....

S: Well here is the so-called danger of elitism. Another danger that we are sometimes being warned against - the danger of your becoming an elite. Well why not?! What's the danger?

The danger is only to those who don't belong to it! Like the man who went along to the psychoanalyst because he had an inferiority complex and the analyst gave him a few sessions and in the end he said, 'I'm afraid the trouble is you really are inferior!' (Laughter) (Pause) Anyway let's go on.

**Text** *"The Sangha, therefore, provides the environment in which a new dimension of consciousness becomes possible as a result of the denial, not only in theory, but also in practice, of the idea of absolute and permanent individuality."*

**S:** Well that's not too bad is it? If one reads it in one's own way instead of in his. The Sangha does provide 'the environment in which a new dimension of consciousness becomes possible as a result of the denial, not only in theory, but also in practice, of the idea of absolute and permanent individuality.' That's quite correct.

**Manjuvajra:** We can read this in a way and agree with it, and say well that's right, that's perfectly OK, but we know that that's not what Ling means, and what he means is actually wrong, so again this really points out, as you say, the danger in words. That could be quoted somewhere.

**S:** It could be quoted by me out of context and be quite innocuous. Though in context it isn't innocuous.

**Text** *"In the earliest period of Buddhist history the Sangha seems to have existed as a wandering sect, a movement with which a man identified himself with the minimum of formal ceremony. 'a unitary organization of monks hailing from all quarters irrespective of regional provenance.' If European terms are to be used at all, such a wandering brotherhood was more like an order of friars than of monks. But this very fluid stage of its history seems to have been brief and transitional. The nature of the doctrine combined with historical circumstances soon resulted in the development of settled, local communities of bhikkhus. We have already seen that it was necessary in the conditions which prevail in the monsoon period in India for wandering sects of all kinds to seek shelter during the rainy season. But where Jains, Brahminical wanderers and other such schools neither required nor (in the case of Jains) allowed any specially set apart 'retreat-houses' or lodgings in which in which all the members of the school in a given locality were to reside together for the period of the rains, in the case of the Buddhists it was precisely this which came to be prescribed. 'The Buddhist idea of 'rain-retreat' seems to have been not to live [just] anywhere, or alone and companionless, or in promiscuous company, but to settle in a congregation of fellow monks.' The fact that this was the practice of no other sect of shramanas may be connected with the other feature which was unique to the Buddhist order - their adherence to the doctrine of anatta, or non-individuality. Perhaps the local settled communities were bound to have come into existence, the Buddhist view of life being what it was. Nevertheless, it happened that historically it was a particular feature of Indian life which precipitated the matter, and provided the actual occasion for the formation of local communities."*

**S:** Well the obvious reason doesn't seem to have struck him. "But where Jains, Brahminical wanderers and other such schools neither required nor (in the case of Jains) allowed any specially set apart 'retreat-houses' or lodgings in which in which all the members of the school in a given locality were to reside together for the period of the rains, in the case of the Buddhists it was precisely this which came to be prescribed. 'The Buddhist idea of 'rain-retreat' seems to have been not to live [just] anywhere, or alone and companionless, or in promiscuous company," that is to say with those who are not bhikkhus, "but to settle in a congregation of fellow monks." What would seem to be the obvious reason for this, which the Buddhists realised but others did not?

\_\_\_\_\_ : The idea of Sangha.

**S:** The idea of Sangha - spiritual fellowship. But Trevor Ling says, "The fact that this was the practice of no other sect of shramanas may be connected with the other feature which was unique to the Buddhist order - their adherence to the doctrine of anatta, or non-individuality." That seems complete nonsense. The other sects did not attach any importance to spending their rains retreat in the company of fellow members of the same sects because they did not attach the same importance to spiritual fellowship, and perhaps because also they didn't have the same conception or ideal of individual spiritual development, and individual spiritual development is something which is very much encouraged if people get together and just encourage one another.

So there's no need to find the explanation in this other 'unique feature', that is to say the anatta doctrine. The reason would seem to be quite simple and straightforward. When you think of it it is really quite interesting and perhaps quite surprising that the Buddhist were the only ones who did consider it important to gather together, to live together in this way during the rainy season retreat. You should not ideally stay on your own, you should not ideally, or not even at all, put up for the period of the rains with those who followed another way of life and had another ideal, because if you did that then you'd have no opportunity of strengthening your devotion to, and your practise of your own path and your own ideals.

Lokamitra: One of the benefits of Sangha is clarification of wrong views which is the basis in a way for spiritual life, and couldn't it be said that the basic wrong view is thinking in terms of an atman or getting stuck due to a subtlety of that sort of idea?

**S:** Well the Buddha called it coming to a halt and resting satisfied with the lesser attainment when the greater attainment was still to be realised. People are more likely to come to a halt when they're living on their own than when they are living with others, especially when they're living with others more developed than themselves, and who may be in a position to draw attention to the fact that they have, in fact, come to a halt, and to spur them on to achieve something more.

Manjuvajra: There's a little bit of a contradiction in what you said before Lokamitra asked the question that bothers me, and that is that if the Sangha is a collection of individuals or, people growing towards individuals, now if you say that the Sangha is useful in that when those individuals come together they get mutual support for their own ideals and direction, that sounds to me very much like a group support for their ideals and direction, and that distinction is never made very clear.

**S:** But here again, one is substantialising the Sangha. One is reifying the Sangha. There is no such thing as the Sangha, there's only other individuals, and one individual can, as it were, 'sharpen' the individuality of another. When individuals come into contact, when they come into - what shall I say? - not conflict; but when there's a sort of dialectical relationship between them, by that sort of interaction and inter-relationship they sharpen one another's individualities. Do you see what I mean? And it is **this** which constitutes the spiritual fellowship.

Manjuvajra: I think that is misunderstood quite often in the Order nowadays. I think it's important to draw that distinction, in that sometimes I get the impression an Order member is invited along to an Order meeting so that he can be put back on line, you know, to have his own wrong views corrected, brought back within the sort of, um ....

**S:** Well that may be, because the correction of wrong views is one aspect of that interaction between the individuals who make up the spiritual community.

Manjuvajra: Yes, but there's a difference in attitude. If you're inviting someone to come along to an Order meeting with the express purpose of correcting his wrong views that's very different to inviting an individual who is meeting with other individuals so that there can be mutual benefit.

**S**: But it may be that somebody **has** a wrong view, which definitely **is** a wrong view, and that it is seen that he will not be able to get over that wrong view by himself, and he needs that sort of contact with other people. In a way, to the extent that he's got that wrong view he isn't an individual.

Manjuvajra: It's a very narrow line, isn't it ? [**S**: Sure, it is.] between a wrong view and falling out of line with current interpretation.

**S**: It's not even current interpretation, it's the sort of basic foundations of the very life that he's supposed to be living. He's got to the extent in his wrong view, out of touch with those. So you are not wanting him to get rid of **his** view and adopt **yours**. It isn't that at all!

Manjuvajra: Well I think it is in some cases.

**S**: Well, in that case it shouldn't be. But that shouldn't cause us to overlook the fact that there may be a situation where someone **has** a wrong view and is unable to see it, and needs to be brought into contact with those who've got the right view, so that as a result of the contact between them, his wrong view can be clarified. [MANJUVAJRA: Yeah.]

Lokamitra: If someone isn't going to an Order meeting - I mean if they have to be invited, and they are in an area where there are Order meetings, then surely it means that there's something gone a bit funny somewhere anyway.

Manjuvajra: I don't necessarily agree, because I think - supposing there's an Order member living in an area where there are a number of other Order members, - this isn't purely hypothetical, I can think of three examples this expresses - and there is an Order meeting going on in the area, now that Order member has got a difference of opinion - what I would regard as a difference of opinion about how they should be going along - now all the rest of the Order members in that area somehow collectively adopt another opinion so that that other Order member feels very much pressurised to accept this group opinion that has been developed. Now ... and the group also tends to put that opinion on quite strongly. Now that means that the Order member who is trying to come, and trying to have himself accepted as an individual with his own opinion which is different from the group opinion, after a while you just have to give up.

**S**: You've changed now from wrong view to individual opinion.

Manjuvajra: Well I think sometimes people can't really distinguish between them. I mean I wouldn't ( ? )

**S**: Ah! Well in that case this is to be sorted out only by discussion. Yeh? Also the fact that say a number of Order members happen to think the same thing doesn't necessarily mean it's a collective phenomenon.

[Manjuvajra: Not necessarily] **S**: No. So the fact that everybody sees things in the same way doesn't necessarily mean that they are thinking as a group.

Manjuvajra: Not necessarily.

**S:** I mean, just as everybody goes for refuge, but that' doesn't make you necessarily a member of a going for refuge group. Not that, if you don't understand matters you may not, in fact, be thinking in that way, but that is not how you should be thinking.

**Manjuvajra:** I can see that concept but I still think that this other kind of thing does happen, and I think it does tend to drive certain people away when in fact that wouldn't be necessary. And I don't think it is considered sufficiently.

**Lokamitra:** I think you're overstating the case, because if you have regular communication with members of the Order, if they have a regular practice, if they meditate together, then maybe group things develop, but they soon get washed out of the way. Because one of the greatest things about Order members coming together regularly is a very direct approach to each other, and very honest. Now this can be a great threat to someone who is not coming along that often. And I think when something like what you've just said is said, usually it's a case of rationalisation; occasionally not maybe, but my experience is that it usually is. [Pause]

**Siddhiratna:** Yes, it's quite a tricky problem. I've been to a number of Order meetings where I think absolutely 100% it was a group. ( ? ? ? ) **but** a specific example is where we were talking at Aryatara last and that joke was going round and you got to the point where you were going to get up and walk out. And you came up to me afterwards and said you were sufficiently disgusted with everyone and wanted to get up and walk out and have nothing more to do with it.

**Lokamitra:** It was a silly thing!

**Siddhiratna:** Yes. It was. Very! It was a group .....

**Lokamitra:** For ten minutes there was silly behaviour among people which some of us got fed up with, but we changed the situation in ten minutes. You changed it by saying, "Look, this is all silly behaviour, let's get on with something serious", so it lasted only ten minutes.

**Siddhiratna:** But it is in operation and without your or me there presumably it would have carried on further.

**Lokamitra:** Well, somebody else would have got fed up with it. I think you have to rely on that.

**S:** But I would say if someone really feels himself in the right and that his view is the right view and all the others collectively have got a wrong view and that is a sort of group situation, I think a person in that situation would be all the more determined to continue going along, and wouldn't break off. This is what I feel. Because he sees so clearly his own rightness, his own right view and that the wrong view of all the others, and he sees so clearly that they were just functioning as a group. I think he wouldn't be afraid, I'm quite sure of that. And he'd be determined to let them see that their wrong view was a wrong view, even though he was in a minority of one. I mean, my personal experience is, or rather personal observation, because I'm not all that much in personal contact nowadays, - that where one particular person has sort of broken away, or stopped coming, I don't know a single case where this has been, as it were, for positive reasons, that he's the one person with the right view, and all the rest are with wrong view. But usually, I think the person who has broken away, or stayed away has been in a very defensive and sensitive position about something which he is rationalising.

**Manjuvajra:** I still don't think it's quite as easy as that Bhante, because we've already been

discussing today that most of us have got kind of intellectual freedom but we still have a kind of emotional dependency on the group, and for most of us that group is the Sangha unfortunately. So when one feels very criticised or 'out', then .....

**S:** But then you're not an individual to begin with.

**Manjuvajra:** I know, but neither is the other part.

**S:** But I don't think that there's a lack of individuality to that extent. My own experience has been that when a group of Order members really get down to it, and there isn't any silliness, what emerges is usually pretty correct. This has been my experience so far.

**Siddhiratna:** Would it not also that Order member that feels that 'there is a group there and I'm an individual and I think that I can't work in this situation' wouldn't he in fact have their welfare at heart, **[S:** Yes, indeed !] ..... and he would certainly try to get rid of that group consciousness?

**S:** Yes. If that sort of person - if that was in fact the situation, if he didn't succeed, what would be his next step? He'd come and see me and tell me all about it, talk to me about it, be really concerned for those people. But there's never been a situation like that.

**Manjuvajra:** I can explain that as well because I think that person would usually feel that,.... um ..... let's say that when one of these group opinions arises it's usually arises around something that you've said, you know some little snippet of information. And so the odd person out would feel that you were already.... that in a way, he wouldn't get any support from you....

**S:** Well then he wouldn't be functioning as an individual.

**Manjuvajra:** Alright! I'm not saying that this person is always a great individual, I mean this person does have their weaknesses, but their weaknesses may have nothing to do with the thing that's being discussed at the time. It might be just purely to do with that person's dependence on the Order as a group.

**Vessantara:** One thing that I feel perhaps does happen in that kind of situation where you've got somebody who say, does have a wrong view is that the other people who hold the right view tend to relate to that person solely as a kind of walking wrong view. It's as if when they talk about him or see him .....

**S:**(breaking in ..... the two speaking together) ..... Well, yes. Well to be quite honest in a few cases I can sympathise with them! (Laughter) [S. chuckling]

**[End of tape 23 Tape 24]**

Because in one or two cases something happened and that is exactly how it looked to me! (Louder laughter) Because usually if you have a wrong view you are a walking wrong view. You exude your wrong view! It influences everything that you do, everything that you say - it's not just a little sort of idea that you have in some corner of your brain that just stays in that corner - no! If you have a wrong view you are a walking wrong view, (chuckling) if it's a really extreme wrong view, just as if you've got a right view you're a walking right view if it really is a right view.

At the same time I do know what you mean, and I know there have been one or two cases of, as it were, scapegoating, but I know at least in one case the unfortunate scapegoat didn't ever



stay away. He continued to go along and put up with it all, and he didn't break off, and he didn't go away, and in the end it was all sorted out. When it came to my notice I found that I agreed with that particular person. This was about three or four years ago. And so everybody else eventually came round. [Pause]

I am very, very much on my guard against people rationalising their breaking off and breaking away. I **don't** think I know yet of a case, or have experienced a case of someone staying away or breaking away for positive reasons as an individual, as it were. I don't think there's been such an instance yet in the course of the last nine or ten years. I don't think this has ever happened. So I think this is also something to bear in mind even though, sometimes yes, a number of the Order members together **may** sort of adopt a common point of view, even the **'right'** point of view in a group sort of way. But even this is not a sufficient explanation, what to say a sufficient excuse, for anyone really getting out of contact.

Lokamitra: One of the difficulties seems to be that someone who is having a wrong view or whatever, will experience, probably, a lot of guilt with it, and this can be reinforced by then attitude of ..... it can be a two-way process here; I think this is what Manjuvajra is meaning more than anything, .... [Manjuvajra: No it's not]. .... and it can be difficult for someone guilty to ..... you know, they've got to really sincerely want to .....

**S**: I think one has to accept that there are some situations in which whatever one says is going to be misunderstood. [\_\_\_\_\_: Yeah]. ..... and this is all the more likely when a number of people are saying that thing. It may be that they are saying the **'right'** thing even, and that they are not saying it as a group, but the person to whom they are saying it may sometimes find it impossible not to take it in that sort of way, and react accordingly, and therefore one has to be so careful. But even sometimes with the utmost care it doesn't do any good. I have found that myself sometimes just dealing with people on an individual basis. Be as careful as you may and tread as delicately as you may, they take it in the wrong way. And it seems that we can't always avoid such cases.

Anyway where did we start from, or where did **you** start from? Or introduce .... ?

Manjuvajra: I originally asked you to clarify the difference between a meeting of the Sangha being a meeting ..... I mean I liked what you said about the Sangha being a number of individuals coming together and rubbing up against each other should be what an Order meeting, or a meeting of the Sangha is, but an Order meeting in terms almost of a kind of judicial where a party opinion is derived should be sort of kept clear of.

**S**: That's true. At the same time I will say that certain individuals have to be very, very careful that they don't take a genuine unanimity among individuals as a sort of party-line when it isn't experienced in that way at all by the individuals concerned. The fact that certain individuals as individuals think alike doesn't mean that there is a party-line. I have heard this objection raised - 'Oh, it's a party-line' when certainly it was **not** a party-line, and I know this from my own observation of the people concerned. But this has been brought up - 'Oh it's a party-line'- when in fact it wasn't at all. It was brought up in a sort of defensive way.

Manjuvajra: I personally find it really difficult to draw a distinction between those two, and .... I mean even some of the things you have said this afternoon I'm sure may be quoted or passed on or whatever, such as things like there has never been in the past any case where there's been a disagreement between one Order member and a chapter of the Order that has proved .....

**S**: I didn't actually say a chapter of the Order.

Manjuvajra: No. .... an Order meeting , or the Order. You know the comment I'm referring to. Now those kind of comments if just taken blanketly can be used. I mean comments that you say do have an awful lot of weight behind them.

S: Well anything that I say can be used, because the black sheep also will quote me no doubt. (Laughter)

Manjuvajra: That's the point actually. I don't think they do. You know I think they .....

S: I think they do. I sometimes find it in my correspondence.

Manjuvajra: In lots of situations, I mean I've only observed them, but I've heard a lot of quotes from what I've considered in the particular situation to be a party-line and few comments from the odd Order member or two to whom these things were directed. They do tend to just kind of wither away.

S: Mm. Mm. What I often find is that something I've said on one occasion is quoted against something that I've said on another occasion, maybe in another context and that the two quotes are made by different people. Or even something I said say ten years ago is quoted against something I said yesterday. And sometimes there is a difference. Someone brought up quite recently something I'd said in a very early lecture - I don't remember saying it but I take it he was quoting me correctly - he said that in an early lecture I had advised that people should look for their boyfriends and girlfriends within the Movement rather than go outside, which is not at all what I'm saying now! And he said, "I think Bhante that that lecture should be amended". So this is quite true. One has to take according to context. Jinamata mentioned that in a lecture they had played on the European retreat I was referring to housewives as having a lot of free time in which to meditate, and she said that all the women who were sitting there in the audience were working women. They might have been housewives but they had full-time jobs and they certainly didn't have more time than the menfolk for meditation. Well this obviously in my original statement was directed to an audience of people that included lots of housewives who did have lots of spare time compared with the men. So that also must be borne in mind - the context.

\_\_\_\_\_: It's going to be quite a skill future times ....

S: But then the question arises, well, **how does one distinguish?** Suppose there're these two different situations: supposing you've got a number of Order members - say a number of individuals - who agree about something as individuals, their views happen to coincide, there is a cohesiveness of view, not a party-line, how does one distinguish between the two? [Pause] ...in general terms?

Manjuvajra: I think there's usually less emotive power behind the individual view than behind the party-line.

S: Yes. That is true. Or less emotive power of a certain kind. Yeah. Mm. This is true. So how would one sort of detect this, or how would it show itself do you think?

Manjuvajra: I think the individual line just comes across as an individual line quite objectively, but the party-line comes along as - "This is what you ought to be doing". "This is what you **should** be doing".

Siddhiratna: If you question it there's sometimes even a hysterical kind of response with them trying to reinforce it. ( inaudible ).

**S:** I must say that I have known cases where A has accused B of being hysterical when they were simply being enthusiastic. You don't think there's that danger too?

**Siddhiratna:** Well I suppose that's another variation: how you distinguish between hysterical and enthusiasm.

**S:** I think if one is reasonably aware and sort of really listens, there is a certain note in people's voices when they are, as it were, putting across a party-line. Of course some people may even put across a party-line which **is** a party-line, in such a subtle, skilful way, it may seem quite reasonable. And I think with proper awareness you can detect that too. But more often, perhaps, people put across a party-line with a certain kind of emotion that is not present when they are just speaking as individuals.

I think one has to learn to listen for that sort of tone, that sort of note in oneself as well as in others. If you detect it in others then just go very carefully and be extra careful to be reasonable and to put things across in a very sort of calm and objective fashion. Not sort of react oneself, because this is what usually happens - the party-line on one side sparks off the counter party-line on the other. If you reject a party-line you're not necessarily being an individual. One must also remember that. But it is a very important point, because if the spiritual community becomes in effect the group, well, where **is** your spiritual fellowship to come from? So it is vitally important that the spiritual community should remain a spiritual community. [VOICE: Mm.]

**Siddhiratna:** I was reading somewhere, I think it was even in here about the principle of schism ...**[S:** Yeah.] .... where you have two opinions about one question and the correct thing to do if the antagonism is too great to bear in one community is to split into two.

**S:** Yes. Right. This is assuming that is a sort of **positive** difference of opinion.

**Siddhiratna:** I can't really see how it would work.

**S:** That you are still within the framework, you are still within a common framework. Neither of you has, as it were, departed from the Dharma in essentials, but you've just got different views about certain things. Well then if there's a sufficient number of you, you just divide into two sanghas. This is provided for in Buddhism. Because not only are you both wrong, in a way, well you're both right in a way, but you may hold certain views quite strongly and it may not be therefore possible for you to share a common way of life holding such different views as you do. So what your `sanghabheda', division of the community - this here means the local community residing in the same spot, as it were, under the same roof - provision for positive separation is made.

**VOICE:** Can you give an example?

**S:** I can't give any historical example .... well you might have a difference of opinion about the hours of meditation. This has got nothing to do with the rules of the community. The Buddha has after all advised everybody to meditate, if possible, every day. Well all right, supposing there's a strong difference of opinion in the community whether you should all get up early and meditate, say at six o'clock in the morning, or whether you should all leave it till later in the morning, say nine o'clock; and there can be quite strong difference of opinion, and neither side may be willing to give way. Suppose for instance some people are naturally morning people, and the others are naturally night people. So it's a quite important point. Some people say well 'I just **can't** meditate in the morning, I just am not **awake** until nine o'clock.' And others will say, 'I just can't meditate late in the evening; I just have to go to bed

early, that means getting up early in the morning'. So there's this irreconcilable difference - they're neither right, they're neither wrong. Well, they just might form two separate communities. It's more that sort of thing. Or very fine points of interpretation of the Dharma that don't make any difference to fundamentals but which people still feel, rightly or wrongly, are of importance to them.

These schisms, I think, are usually based on practical arrangements - differences over practical arrangements.

Siddhiratna: Presumably for us it may be in the **nature** of the community, in which you wish to live.

S: Yeah. Whether you want to live say in a single sex community, a mixed community, a craft community, a meditating community, a city community, a country community and so on. If for instance there's a **big** community formed and say half want to live in the city and half want to live in the town, obviously you don't take a majority vote, you just split into two different communities. One goes off and lives in the city and one goes off and lives in the town.

So this would seem to be a sort of a principle of organic fissure, as it were. I think as you get bigger such polarisations of opinion are bound to develop. You see what I mean? And therefore there must be a provision all the time for a larger unit being split into smaller units, otherwise within the larger unit there will be tensions. But if the larger unit splits into the smaller units each of the smaller units can function in its own way and keep up friendly relations with the other smaller units. A community of meditators can get on quite well with a community of studious folk, when they happen to meet. But if they're living together, and if they step on one another's toes, well, a different situation develops.

Manjuvajra: That brings up the interesting general point that there can be two opinions which doesn't necessarily mean that one is right and one is wrong. [S: In certain respects - yes.] ... which is what happened in (Scotland?). [S: Yes - in certain respects.] ..... in certain respects, yeah.

S: My own observation is that differences of opinion are strongest over very minor matters, or comparatively minor matters. You don't get people, certainly not within the 'Friends' differing over major questions of doctrine, say on what is the true meaning of 'sunyata'? Or even whether there was an 'atman' or not an 'atman'. They don't differ about these things, but say whether you should have red flowers on the shrine or yellow ones; or whether you should have a class on a Tuesday or a Wednesday; whether it should begin at six-thirty or seven. These are the things that make people really heated I believe! strangely enough.

Vessantara: Why should that be?

S: Well why do you think? [Pause]

Siddhiratna: Is it anything to do - to go back to the chapter to the idea about 'anatta' and ego ( ? )?

S: I think very often there is a sort of ego affirmation, and people usually think that when it's a very ordinary simple matter they've as much right to their opinion as the next man. [Siddhiratna: Yeah.] ... If it's a question of the interpretation of 'anatta' of course they are diffident: they realise their limitations, but whether the meeting should begin at seven or seven-thirty, well, they've just as much of a right and opinion as the next man. They know about that matter just as well, so they are much more confident that therefore, to the extent

that they are confident, their ego assertion starts coming in. This is why in connection with Art, everybody believes that he's got as much right as anybody else to say what is Art, because they believe it's a purely subjective matter. 'What you like -that's Art'. If you think it's beautiful it is beautiful, who can tell you otherwise. [Siddhiratna : 'In the eye of the beholder'.] ..... Yeah.

Siddhiratna: What you're actually saying is that's wrong or right?

S: No. I'm merely citing that as the example, I'm not, at the moment, making any statement about the nature of Art, but only about the fact that people **seem** to be most confident .... or seem to be more confident about ordinary practical matters than they are about basic philosophical and spiritual matters, and therefore there's a greater tendency to ego-assertion in connection with very small practical matters that everybody considers themselves qualified to speak on and therefore more possibility of a clash in those sort of fields.

Manjuvajra: Mm. Presumably as that confidence develops in other areas then there will be clashes in those other areas as well.

S: It could be. But on the other hand as your **real** confidence develops you don't feel any need for a clash. [M: Mm. Right.] You may be quite convinced, well, that seven-thirty will be better than seven but other people seem to want seven, well, O.K. you don't mind all that much, you'll go along with that. It's not worth getting excited about. You've said what you feel, fair enough, they don't agree, it doesn't really matter very much you think, there's only a marginal difference. All right, do it their way. That is the attitude of the more mature person, in that sort of situation. You've given your view but there's no question of ego-assertion. He might present his case quite strongly if he thinks the point is relatively important, but if it does go against him he just shrugs his shoulders and says that's alright.

Manjuvajra: There does come a time though, doesn't there, supposing you've given way on lots and lots and lots and lots of little things then I find there comes a time when I just don't want to give way any more.

S: Ah, then you have to be careful that you don't do that with regard to some minor point. You mustn't let your accumulated resentment gather behind some quite minor point, where then you become unreasonable and obstinate. Do you see what I mean?

Manjuvajra: You then come back to the original point?

S: No. It's like for instance when someone annoys you and you don't say anything for maybe ten different times, but the eleventh time you explode. So behind that explosion there is the frustration of those previous ten or twelve incidents, but in relation to that particular person, or it may be a different person, your explosion is quite disproportionate. [M: Yeah.] So it's really just not called for. So you must be careful not to do that sort of thing. [M: Yeah.] ... Just because you've given way on eleven points not be twelve times as obstinate on the twelfth point. What difference does it make? If you do dig your heels in, dig your heels in over some really important issue which does amount to a matter of principle, and wherein you are in the right. Keep your obstinacy for that occasion. Not for some trivial matter. [Pause]

Lokamitra: One of the things I experience is that my first reaction to something is usually quite emotional, and it takes quite a time to really let it sink in and really think about it. But often one sort of calls for immediate decisions, or answers, or whatever, and it's quite difficult in that situation.

**S:** Mm. Mm. [Pause] Anyway let's carry on. We're nearly at the end of the session so let's read a bit more. There's one more paragraph left. All right let's finish this.

**Text***"It is noteworthy that these were not established in remote places, in the depths of the forest and far from the busy centres of travel and trade and government; this was the environment which Brahmanical ascetics sought, but not the Buddhists."*

**S:** Obviously the reasons for this was that you needed support. So if there was a large community it needed to be near a substantial village or small town at least, as we saw earlier on.

\_\_\_\_\_: How would the Brahminical ascetics support themselves?

**S:** Ah, well they just lived in ones and twos. There was no question of a community. So they could either just live on fruits, or they could just live near a village, and the village could support just one person, or two or three people. But the Buddhists, as has been already made clear, started living, certainly during the rainy season retreat, for purposes of spiritual fellowship in relatively large communities. And that meant substantial sources of support.

**Text***"The latter, on the contrary, established their typical settlements on the edge of a town or city, partly as we have already seen because it was from among the growing urban population of the time that the Buddhists found most of their recruits, and partly, too, because the size of the Buddhist communities required a substantial number of householders near enough to provide the necessary economic support. This therefore soon became the normal location for a Buddhist arama, as the local institutional settlement was called, although there was a minority of bhikkhus, of more conservative disposition, who preferred to have their dwellings in forest glades, and who were known by the general designation, 'Aranyakas'(forest dwellers)."*

**S:** They weren't necessarily of a more conservative disposition. That would seem to be rather misleading.

**Text***"They were in this way conforming to the more traditional Indian view of the proper setting for a life of meditation; but the majority of Buddhist bhikkhus was characterized by the more radical attitude, one which was more consistent with the special nature of Buddhist ideas, and which recognised that close proximity to the important centres of the world's business was where the communities belonged". P.157*

**S:** Well that may even be so but what was the need for this close proximity? Not that you could interfere with the 'world's business' but that you had access to contact with a larger number of people and could influence them in the direction of your own ideals. Encourage them to become individuals.

**Manjuvajra:** Is that not what he is saying?

**S:** No, he seems to suggest, in view of what he said earlier on, that your business is, as it were, with the world, on the world's terms. But no, really it's just that that proximity gives you access to potential individuals. [Pause] I find in Trevor Ling, on the whole, 'rightness' and 'wrongness' are sometimes so sort of closely intertwined it's quite difficult to separate the one from the other. It's on these sort of misunderstandings, well, misunderstandings of this sort, that are all the more difficult to unravel. Truth and falsehood are so close to each other. Whereas if there is a book on Buddhism written by a professed Christian - from an orthodox Christian point of view - it's very easy to sort out where he goes wrong. But not in the case of this sort of book written by someone who is, in a sense, a sympathiser. This is why

someone once said, 'God defend me from my friends, I can look after my enemies myself.'  
(Sound of chuckling) [Pause]

'A propos' of what we were saying earlier on, and 'a propos' of quoting out of context and in context, I've started thinking recently that I ought to do more writing, partly because writing enables one to say much more exactly what one in fact thinks, and also the writing when published and printed is, as it were, there for all to see. I think this may be quite necessary in the future. No doubt there's always the question of interpretation but maybe that will be a minor one, at least for the time being.

Manjuvajra: At least you've got something in front of you that you can work with. **[S: Yes. Mm.]**

**S:** I even wrote something, or I think I even published something some time ago saying I should not just be quoted in a general sort of way, unless something that I'd actually said can be produced, as it were. Because this sort of thing does happen; that one is quoted, not only out of context, but sometimes ... well sort of just a general line of thought is appealed to and attributed to one, and maybe it's certainly not. Sometimes people do genuinely misunderstand, or miss a sort of nuance that makes all the difference. Anyway any further point about what we've done today? "*The Beginnings of the Buddhist Order.*" [Pause]

Well probably the most striking point that has emerged is that the Buddhists were the first in Indian history to think in terms of spiritual community, and to realise the value of spiritual community in living of the individual's spiritual life. [Pause]

Manjuvajra: He hasn't actually said anything about the reasons for that at all.

**S:** No But he seems to assume it as self-evident that they would want to submerge individualism in another kind of group, a newer kind of group, a better kind of group.

Vessantara Have you read Trevor Ling's "Buddha, Marx and God"?

**S:** No, I haven't. Perhaps I should.

Vessantara: It would be very interesting to see what line he takes in that, but here, as you say, it seems to be quite Maoist.

\_\_\_\_\_: There's a section on Marxism coming up. I don't know what page it's on .....

\_\_\_\_\_: It's one eight three in this one - "The Ashokan Buddhist State". "Religion : The Buddhist and the Marxist Critiques".

Nagabodhi: Something you said was very useful - not to reify the idea of the Sangha, and turn it into a thing because it struck me that I think that happened also with the group, one reifies 'the group', it's a thing. If one just sees it that if you choose to be with people who help you become an individual then you're in the 'Sangha'. If you're with people who make you less of an individual then you're in a group whatever that's called.

**S:** Yes! Right! That's a very good criterion.

Nagabodhi: So whether it's called a 'Sangha' or a 'group', if it helps if it conduces.

**S:** There may be a bit of misunderstanding because someone who is not an individual may feel that he's being hindered from being an individual when he's really being restrained from being individualistic. I think that some of the cases that you were referring to, if they

coincide with some that I can think of were cases that at least involved that element to some extent.

I think there is generally a confusion between being an individual and being. I have even known cases where people seem to have thought of themselves as the only individual around when they were simply being very individualistic. And then you see other individuals, just because they happen to be thinking alike, as a group, and yourself as the only true individual. In that way you rationalise your individualism. So this happens on occasions. You're not necessarily an individual just because you differ from everybody else.

NAGABODHI: It's a paradox really that in order to become an individual you very often need people. [S: Mm. Yes.] Because sometimes you can tell in retrospect but you might have to wait years for that!

S: .... `but please help me to be on my own.' [Long pause]

All right let's end it there then.

**END OF SESSION**



## NEXT SESSION.

**S:** (first words missing) ..... affinities with the Sangha."

**Text** "THE POLITICAL AFFINITIES OF THE SANGHA"

*One point that is frequently emphasised is that the Buddha had firmly rejected the notion of authoritarian rule in the new community which he had brought into existence. The Buddhist Sangha, whatever else it might resemble, would not resemble a monarchy. The Buddha himself was not in any sense a personal ruler, nor was any member of the community to think of himself in this way after the Buddha's death: 'Surely, Ananda, should there be anyone who harbours the thought, "It is I who will lead the brotherhood", or "The Order is dependent upon me", it is he who should lay down instructions in any matter concerning the Order. Now the Tathagata [The Buddha], Ananda, thinks not that it is he who should lead the brotherhood, or that the Order is dependent on him. Why then should he leave instructions in any matter concerning the Order?' The implication for the members is clear: 'Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves .... Hold fast to the Dhamma as a lamp'".*

**S:** Mm. Is what Trevor Ling says here quite correct do you think? [Pause] Let's go through this point by point: "One point that is frequently emphasised is that the Buddha had firmly rejected the notion of authoritarian rule in the new community which he had brought into existence". What do you think is meant by 'authoritarian rule'?

**Siddhiratna:** In the sense of somebody being a dictator or dictating rather.

**S:** Yes. What does that imply and what **enables** him to dictate? And why do people accept his dictation?

\_\_\_\_\_: Because of his personal authority.

**S:** Where does he derive that personal authority from?

**Vessantara:** It's invested in him by the other members of the community, and they, as it were, accept that he..... They almost give it him.

**S:** This is for instance if one accepts this earlier contract theory of government, which has been touched upon earlier. In a sense that is true: the government is, as it were, by the consent of the governed, but up to a point.

But could you speak of a non-authoritarian rule? What does 'authoritarian rule' suggest?

\_\_\_\_\_: It's usually suggests a single person or group of people maintaining the rule. And it's not .....

**S:** (breaking in and speaking at same time) .... But why do you have to have one person, or why **do** you have one person exercising authority, or a small group? [Pause] [**VOICE:** Power.]..... **S:** Power. So what does one mean by power? [**VOICE:** Power over others.] ..... Power over others. That power may be given to you by the others themselves to exercise over them, or you may seize it. But supposing they give it to you, why do they give it to you? [Pause]

\_\_\_\_\_: For the order and good government of the Sangha.

**S:** Sangha in the sense of the community. We've not come on to the Sangha yet. This is the

state of affairs described in the `Aganna sutta' from which Ling quoted earlier on. All right maybe there's no need to go into that any further. Why then does the **new** community that the Buddha has brought into existence not require an authoritarian rule?

Ratnaguna: Because they are all individuals.

**S**: Because they are all individuals. So are you saying then that rule, or authority is required, or even authoritarian rule is required in the usual type of society just because people are not individuals?

Lokamitra: They're not **prepared** to be individuals and that is an aspect of it certainly. They're quite happy to give up their responsibilities.

\_\_\_\_\_: It needs someone in ordinary society to take an overall view.

**S**: Mm. There is that too. Yeah.] ..... and to direct that.

**S**: Mm. To direct affairs, to co-ordinate everything. There is at least that, the as it were, organisational and administrative aspect of things. And also in times of emergency as in times of war, invasion, famine, natural disaster, you need very prompt action, and that is more easily taken by one capable person than by a number of people, or by everybody. So there are those considerations too.

Yes, the Sangha ideally is a community of individuals so they, in a sense, rule themselves, and there is a sort of coincidence of wills as I've called it. They are all, after all, striving for the same thing; they are all trying to develop themselves; they are, as it were, all more or less on the same level. But where does the Buddha come in? Don't you actually find in the Pali suttas the Buddha telling the monks what to do; reproving them for doing wrong; encouraging them when they do right? Don't you find the Buddha ticking them off?

Ratnaguna: That's from one individual to another.

**S**: Mmmm. But no one ticks the Buddha off. Mm?

Siddhiratna: They attempt to do. Ananda sometimes does.

**S**: Not exactly ticks him off, but expresses .... for instance when Ananda says, "Well, are you really going to die here in this dreadful place?" (Laughter) So the Buddha, disclaim it as he might, the Buddha does exercise a sort of leadership, doesn't he, in a way? Mm? Mm?

Nagabodhi: On account, really, just of his clearer vision . **S**: Yes!] where people are happy (to have him leading them?) He says 'it is not seemly' and things like that. He doesn't say 'don't do that.'

**S**: Right! For instance there is this very interesting episode in the `Parinibbana sutta' where, just before the Buddha's `parinirvana', the question is brought up of how the bhikkhus, how the Sangha, is to deal with a certain monk who had apparently misbehaved himself. So the Buddha says that the extreme penalty is to be applied to him - `brahmadanda', which literally means `the big stick' - (laughter) - `brahma' means `big', `danda' is `stick'! Punishment! The extreme penalty. So then he is asked, `What is that extreme penalty'? And the Buddha replies that the other bhikkhus are not to speak to him, and not to admonish him. Now what is the significance of **that**?

\_\_\_\_\_: There's no spiritual fellowship.

**S:** There's no spiritual fellowship. But it also suggests there's no other kind of punishment. This is the **worst!** The very worst thing that you can do is to cut off contact. That's the extreme punishment, the extreme penalty. If somebody is really badly misbehaving you're not bringing any sort of pressure to bear. You're not shutting him up. You're not locking him up as they used to do in the Middle Ages in the Catholic Church if someone misbehaved, or he broke a rule, well, he was locked up, he was put in a dungeon and fed on bread and water until he came to his senses: but not in Buddhism: there the other monks if they feel he is a hardened case, they simply don't speak to him, they don't advise him any more. That is all that happens. We say 'all that happens', but that is the extreme penalty.

**Siddhiratna:** Would that mean denying him access to meetings and things like that ?

**S:** Yes, it presumably would mean that.

**Siddhiratna:** Although, I mean, presumably not talking to him would not necessarily include that, would it? **[S:** Ah, it would certainly imply that.] ..... to take the analogy of somebody who's not performing in a strike, they mightn't be happy to stop him from working but they wouldn't communicate with him.

**[End of side one side two]**

**S:** Right. But in the case of the monk who is not being spoken to if he did turn up for a meeting, say, he'd just be regarded as utterly shameless and people would not `see' him even. No one would take any notice of him. They wouldn't speak ... act as if he wasn't there. Because if he doesn't listen to others, if he doesn't take advice, well, he is, in fact, `not there'. So the point I'm making is that there is no sort of **material** penalty. Do you see what I mean? So, in a way, there's no exercise of power. You could say that politics is really concerned with power, the exercise of power, however one may dress this up. But within the spiritual community there's no power, and therefore there's no exercise of power. No one has any power over anybody else. But a sort of natural weight attaches to the words, or the advice, or the recommendations of those who are recognised as being more experienced. And if you are truly an individual, or trying to be an individual, you will be able to recognise that superior degree of individuality in somebody else, say in your own kalyana mitras or people who have been in the Order for a very much longer time than you have.

But this is not a sort of power of authority which they exercise. I think we have to be very careful about this notion of `authoritarian', if you see what I mean. Because it does seem that some people react at times quite unnecessarily, to what they see as authoritarianism where it is simply another individual presenting his point of view quite strongly. Do you see what I mean? This point has been discussed with reference to the Order itself, and I've said, that within the Order, no one can exercise any power, because there isn't any power to be exercised; and no one, therefore, can be authoritarian, because no one has any authority in that sense. So if someone speaks up very strongly putting his own point of view, don't take it that he's being authoritarian. He can't be! It's quite impossible! He's merely expressing his point of view very strongly, and you are entitled to express your point of view equally strongly. But not feel that somebody else is being `authoritarian'. That sort of feeling is quite out of place. [Pause]

So there is really therefore no analogy between say the Buddha in relation to the Sangha, and the monarch, the ruler, in relation to the State. This also, by the way, cuts the ground from under the feet of Trevor Ling's whole way of thinking about the `Community', the `New Society'. Because it isn't some sort of replica, or duplicate, or even improved version of the old, it is founded upon a completely different principle, that even this brings out. If he had gone more deeply into the matter and asked why the Buddha was not a personal ruler, then he

would have discovered, well, that it was because it was a community of individuals: a state which an ordinary society just was not. An ordinary society perhaps needs a ruler, needs a monarch, because they are not all individuals, but a spiritual community doesn't, just because it is composed of individuals. [Pause]

But don't you think it's rather odd that the Buddha says `Why then should he leave instructions in any matter concerning the Order.'? But has not the Buddha not been giving instructions to the Order all his life - since his Enlightenment that is? What do you think of that?

Lokamitra: No he hasn't.

S: ..... it's rather late in the day.

Lokamitra: I mean he's never given any instructions concerning the Order, only concerning individuals within the Order.

S: No that isn't really correct. [Lokamitra: He's given guidelines] Well, no, he's laid down directives: they shall do this and not do that. So why do you think that is?

Siddhiratna: That is peculiar because didn't he ... Is it the vinaya that agreed to these rules?

S: Yes.] ..... he made those up as and when the circumstances needed them .... [S: Ah! Yes! Right!] ..... and when he's died, it doesn't necessarily mean the circumstances are going to cease. [S: Right !] ..... so perhaps it is quite..... I mean why have them?

S: Yes. The majority of the rules were made out according to circumstances. That is to say the Buddha did not have any sort of preconceived ideas that there should be such-and-such rules, and proceeded to lay them down to cover any future possible contingencies, no! Something happened and he was asked what shall we do about that. Then he said this is what we should do about it. Or someone raised an objection - the bhikkhus are misbehaving, or they are doing this, or they are doing that, then the Buddha called them together and said, `You should not do this, or you should not do that'. But he didn't, as it were, draw up a list of rules in advance.

This is, in effect, what Ananda was asking him to do, and it is **that** that he refused to do, because it would be those who were actually faced by the contingencies that would have to decide what to do about them. There is also the point that by that time the Order included a number of Arahants. According to tradition the 500 who assembled after the Buddha's parinirvana with the exception of Ananda, were all Arahants. So, in a sense, they did not need the Buddha's advice any longer, they were quite capable of dealing with any contingency that arose themselves, by that time. They did not need the Buddha to lay down instructions in advance about possible contingencies that might arise.

Nagabodhi: What was it the Buddha said about people being free to make minor adjustments to the less important ..... ?

S: This is in the same sutta, Mahaparinibbana sutta. After the Buddha's death Ananda was blamed for not asking the Buddha which were the major and which were the minor rules, and so therefore - this at least is the Theravada position - they agreed that none of the rules should be changed. This seems a bit ... what shall I say? .... almost like a failure of nerve, eh?, a lack of confidence in a way, which seems very, very strange. But of course in effect, in practice, certain things were quietly abrogated or quietly changed. The Theravadins nowadays tend to claim that they preserved the rule exactly as it existed in the Buddha's day, and they never

made any changes, but this is, in fact, not so: quite a number of changes have been made. In fact there is a little work composed in the Middle Ages in Ceylon, in Pali, listing - it's a very technical vinaya work - all the changes introduced since the Buddha's day. They are quite minor in a way, but still the theory is that no changes have been made at all.

Nagabodhi: Something I remember very vividly from the `Mahaparinibbana sutta' is: soon after the Buddha's died there is a monk who almost seems relieved. [**S**: Yes.] He says it's quite good he's out of the way, after all it is not seemly, and it gives quite a good picture of what the Buddha must have looked like to somebody who was placing the Buddha .....

**S**: Well they probably saw the Buddha as an authoritarian figure.... [**Nagabodhi**: Yeah.] .... placing restrictions upon them. Such people at least.

Nagabodhi: I think there are times maybe within the Order where one feels that something authoritarian is being laid on you. I find I have to and I see this in others - you have to fight quite hard with yourself to accept that even if the person may be wrong, it isn't authoritarian, and that if I'm experiencing it as authoritarian it's because I'm responding to a **group** experience.

**S**: Even if he's right it isn't authoritarian.

Nagabodhi: Yeah. Well yes, but in a way that's almost irrelevant whether he's right or wrong.... [**S**: Yes.] It's if I'm just afraid of being excluded ..... [**S**: Or over-ruled, as it were.] ..... Yeah.

**S**: Or as it were forced to recognise that what he says is right. I want to keep up my little end, my little pseudo-independence, my freedom to disagree even unreasonably.

Nagabodhi: You can be right for the wrong reasons. [**S**: Mm. Mm.]

**S**: So what the Buddha seems to be repudiating is any sort of parallel between the group and the spiritual community. The group has a leader, or leaders, who exercise power, who exercise authority, either power, authority, that they have seized by force, or which they have, as it were, with varying degrees of consciousness and willingness, been given. Or which they have simply inherited perhaps with the tacit approval of the people, or **tacit** acceptance of the people. At least no one has openly resisted.

What are the sources of power in modern life, in modern society?

Nagabodhi: Wealth.

**S**: Wealth. Mm. Wealth.

Nagabodhi: Ownership of the means of production.

Vessantara: Out of the barrel of a gun. [**S**: Mm. ] [Pause]

\_\_\_\_\_: Psychological manipulation.

**S**: Social prestige.

\_\_\_\_\_: Scientific knowledge.

**S**: Knowledge - well that's professional expertise, isn't it?

Nagabodhi: I think that scientists are, on the whole, used by the people with the power, rather than actually having the power.

S: Where do you think that power lies really in this country, in this society? Can it be located? Where does its principally lie, or where does a lot of it lie?

Nagabodhi: Our society feels almost too insipid to use the word power.

S: Mm, yes, but there is power, there is! Where does it principally lie do you think?

\_\_\_\_\_: In the hands of the sort of advertising and the media.

S: Do you really think so? I really doubt about that. I personally think it lies principally in The City of London on the one hand and in the Trade Unions on the other. They seem to be the two main centres of power.

Manjuvajra: I think they are subservient to something else.

S: Do you? What is that something else? Or is it even a power?

Manjuvajra: The need to extend consumerism.

S: Well in that case they're co-operating. [Manjuvajra: Yes.]

Actually they're co-operating. Whether they'll continue do so is another matter. But that means you're saying that the real power is greed, which obviously goes beyond the economic and the social to the psychological and makes, practically, a value judgement. That they are both the slaves of greed. They serve the same master, really. If you look at it from that point of view it's not a question of power but of a common weakness.

Siddhiratna: Why do you think power lies with the Trade Unions? Because as far as I can understand that situation there are Trade Unions and there are employers and they more or less reach a common understanding about who .....

S: The trade unions, even quite small unions, acting individually have got the power to bring the industrial economic life of the nation to a complete halt. They have that power.

Siddhiratna: Yeah, but they usually ..... that's the sort of `wildcat' strike.

S: No, it's not. Well, whether `wildcat' or not `wildcat' they've got that power. [Siddhiratna: Mm.] ..... `Wildcat' means it's not sort of openly approved `from on high', as it were within the Trade Union Movement. Sometimes they sort of tacitly condone it, but are not actually officially saying so. They allow a `wildcat' strike as part of the overall manipulation, as it were, in some cases.

Siddhiratna: Mm. I think that would mean then that the `wildcat' strike leaders, as it were, who form a very small part of a larger union and I don't think they have the agreement of the larger unions because they are, perhaps, trying to do something else and they're merely being interfered with by a `wildcat' strike. I think maybe you could extend that, you know, the power being in small minority of people to things like terrorism and hijacks, and ? extreme.

S: Mm. Well, yes. Power is increasingly going into the hands of such people. This is another quite disturbing feature of the whole **international** political scene of the last ten years, which means definitely a step in the direction of anarchy quite definitely.

Vessantara: I think even though Trade Unions could bring about say a general strike, if one looks at the last one in `Twenty-six, I think the people who control the Army..... still about 90% of the wealth of this country in the hands of about 8% of the people. They seem to be the people who ultimately have the power.

Siddhiratna: Because they have access to `Might', as it were.

Vessantara: If you like, yes. That is what backs up their economic power.

S: I doubt very much whether there's sufficient `Might' of that kind left to do any serious backing up in this country. The Armed Forces are very small. The Armed Forces are not that much out of touch with the ordinary population, including the Trade Union members and workers, as in some countries.

Vessantara: I certainly feel the leadership of the Armed Forces is well out of touch with the Trade Union movement.....

S: (breaking in) That may well be so .....

Vessantara: ..... whether the rank and file .....

S: In the old days the rank and file would obey orders, whatever the orders. I doubt very much whether that is any longer the case.

\_\_\_\_\_ : Yes. They are more like workers now, aren't they? They get involved in .....

Siddhiratna: It seems to me that those sort of questions are tied up with the Wellesleyan idea of the ( ? ) - somebody who's very middle, average kind of a person that gets power invested in them somehow. They have a certain degree of education, and they're able to manipulate from a sort of level.

S: Yes. But anyway let's not get off the track. Why we are we exploring the whole question of power, really? It is simply to make it clear that within the spiritual community there is no such thing as power. If the question of power does come up within the spiritual community, and if power begins to be exercised, then to that extent it's no longer a spiritual community: it is in fact a group. So this means that within the context of the spiritual community any, as it were `collective' decisions that may be taken are taken as a result of discussion, and are taken unanimously. There's no question of a majority vote, traditionally, within the Sangha. You see the significance of this? You have to arrive at a consensus, otherwise you just amicably divide, and you set up, as we saw yesterday, two separate communities that within the same framework of ideals, just do things in slightly different ways and have amicable contact between themselves.

Siddhiratna: Is it ..... the idea of a majority decision: that wouldn't be a majority of all the Order would it, Bhante? Or would it be the majority decision of the **Council** of the Order - as I think we were looking at the other day.

S: What do you mean?

Siddhiratna: That there's a decision that needs to be taken and you said it would be the majority decision ?

S: No! I said there's no question of a majority decision. Within the spiritual community it must be unanimous. This is the Buddhist tradition. You only get majority decisions within

this context of say of Parliamentary democracy, where the question of power comes in.

Siddhiratna: So it would need to be unanimous, but it couldn't be the whole Sangha, could it, because it's too unwieldy and .....

S: No. This is why in practice it always comes down to the decision of the Sangha within a certain area.

Siddhiratna: You mean like the `elders' or something like that?

S: No! Within a certain area, a place within a certain.... well the technical term is *avasa* - within a certain **parish** if you like.

Manjuvajra: Geographical area.

S: Geographical area, yes. For instance, you might say in the case of `The Friends'- if we decided to follow this as we do more or less in fact now informally - the *avasa*, the area for this particular purpose would be, say, the Greater London area, the Greater London County. But it's the principle, leaving aside the details, it's the principle that is important, because if you have a majority decision, there is **always** a certain amount of dissatisfaction on the part of the minority that have been out-voted. It's very rarely that you get an outvoted minority loyally co-operating with the majority decision. This is very rare. So therefore, within the context of the spiritual community, it becomes very important to arrive at an agreement, and to do things unitedly, not by majority vote and majority decision. And if there is a sort of permanent split over certain policies or certain ways and means of doing things, - all right, then divide. You divide within a common framework of spiritual loyalties, and spiritual ideals. The points that you differ over are comparatively minor.

\_\_\_\_\_: I don't think I quite follow that. In don't see things always done by unanimous decision in `The Friends'. I mean what strikes me for instance as an example is for instance Sukhavati being an all male community. Is that a unanimous decision on the part of all the Order members?

S: No. All the Order members on those particular premises.

\_\_\_\_\_: Yes, but you said the Greater London area. (Laughter)

S: No. I am only saying that sort of hypothetically. Suppose you could say decide that that would be your area - we actually haven't ever done this formally. We haven't yet got to that degree as it were of organisation. This has never been done. We've never sort of delimited in this sort of way. But conceivably we might have to do this.

\_\_\_\_\_: Wouldn't that be like a `coup', when you start with an all male community and then they decide it's going to be an all male community.

S: In that case the `coup' has taken place before the `coup'. (Sound of someone chuckling) [Pause] Anyway there's been another `coup' because the ladies have decided to have an all women's community in North London. [Pause]

Anyway, what about this question which arises in connection with the quotation right at the end of this paragraph?: "Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves ..... Hold fast to the Dhamma as a lamp". Doesn't there seem to be a contradiction there? - Holding fast to yourself as a lamp, or `being a lamp unto yourself', and `holding fast to the Dhamma as a lamp'.



Nagabodhi: It depends on how you understand 'Dhamma'. Whether you understand 'Dhamma' to mean the Word of the Buddha as represented in the vinaya and the suttas, or whether you understand it to simply mean Truth, Reality, in which case holding fast to the Dhamma would be living as closely as possible to your own understanding and experience of reality.

S: (breaking in) Do you think, in this passage, the Buddha was using the word 'dhamma' in that sense?

Nagabodhi: Probably not! (Laughter)

\_\_\_\_\_: Is it something to do with substantialising the Dharma? [Pause] Making it into a thing.

S: Possibly.

\_\_\_\_\_: Could it just mean that the Dharma espouses the individual path. That there's no real contradiction.

S: There is really no contradiction. In a way they are different aspects of the same thing. If there wasn't a 'Dhamma', if there wasn't a teaching, if there wasn't a sort of moral and spiritual law, you couldn't even **be** a lamp unto yourself! You have the freedom, say, to jump up and down just because there is such a thing as the law of gravitation. No law of gravitation, you wouldn't have that freedom to jump up and down. So the 'Dhamma' is that sort of more or less spiritual law expressed in the actual teaching of the Buddha by living in accordance with which it is possible for you to **be** a lamp unto yourself. In other words there is a sort of conflict only when you, as it were, imagine the 'Dhamma' standing outside yourself, as it were, sort of bending over you like a sort of authority, rather than thinking of the 'Dhamma' as a principle which is, as it were, implicit in your own efforts to be a lamp unto yourself. Do you see what I mean? [Pause]

Just as when the Buddha advises, or the Buddha instructs - it's not somebody else outside you telling you what to do. The Buddha is, as it were, the voice of your own - to use the expression - 'better self'. You recognise that what the Buddha says is what you yourself would in fact say to yourself if only you were in a more positive state of mind, if only you thought more clearly: you can recognise that. So it's not something coming to you from outside. It **seems** to come from outside, but it only makes clear something which you see is coming, or **could** at least come, from inside, if only you were, as an individual, more developed. [Pause]

Nagabodhi: In a way you could say that by saying that He was giving an instruction on **how** one should relate to the 'Dhamma', He didn't say what it was, it was more a matter of method.

S: Yes. It is not a question of rejecting the Dharma and just doing things as you think best. On the other hand it isn't a question of slavishly following the Dharma as though it was something external to yourself. It's a question of seeing the principles exemplified by the Dharma as something **implicit** in your own life and in your own individual striving as a sort of law in accordance with which you **are** able to function, which makes possible your functioning. [Long pause]

One mustn't forget, in connection with this paragraph, a bit of background, as it were, and that is the case of Devadatta. Devadatta, you may remember, wanted to lead the Sangha. As far as I recollect, this is the actual term that he used. He said, "I will lead the Sangha": 'I will

lead the Community'. And the reason he gave was that the Buddha was too old, and he suggested that the Buddha, as it were, went into retirement, and did not lead the Sangha. That **he** would do all the work. And then the Buddha said, "I would not even hand over the leadership of the Sangha to Sariputra and Mogallana, what to speak of handing it over to a person such as yourself." And he used various quite uncomplimentary epithets. So from that time onwards you could say, Devadatta conceived enmity towards the Buddha.

So what does one learn from this? What does Devadatta represent? What sort of principle? What sort of tendency?

\_\_\_\_: Power

**S:** Power.

\_\_\_\_: Greed for power.

**S:** Yeah. Greed for power. And also it is interesting that we find Devadatta having relations with Ajattasatru, and doing his best to impress him. In other words Devadatta was, in a way, behaving in the way that Trevor Ling thinks members, or leaders, or would-be leaders of spiritual communities ought to behave: having contact with the king, influencing him, discussing politics with him, etc. etc. This is all ascribed to Devadatta, and he's even represented as working sort of miracles of a kind in order to impress the king and win him over, and gets his support. And he seems to have been very thick with the king for quite a long time. One can't help thinking not at all the sort of figure really that Trevor Ling would disapprove of.

But it isn't easy. It's all very well to say that the spiritual community is not a group, and that there should not be any such thing as power, or the exercise of power within the spiritual community, so from time to time there will **always** arise individuals who **do** want power, who are looking for power, and to that extent would like to make the spiritual community into a group. So how should, or how could be on one's guard against that? What is the first and most obvious precaution one should take?

\_\_\_\_: You could sort of devalue the whole concept of power, so It's not much point striving for it.

**S:** Well, this is basically true, but would that be very effective?

\_\_\_\_: Well there's not much point in power if nobody's going to do your bidding.

**S:** There's that, yeah. Right. This must be very frustrating for someone who really is in search of power to find himself in a spiritual community. Do you think there's even any **unconscious** tendency towards power, to gaining power, and exercising power and exercising power even though they may be quite well-meaning people. So how is that to be guarded against? I mean what is the basic precaution that one should take? The obvious one I would have thought? No, I don't mean shoot them. (Laughter)

Nagabodhi: Get on their right side . (Louder laughter)

**S:** No. I mean you scrutinise your candidates for admission to the spiritual community, don't you? The basic thing is that whoever is thinking in terms of committing himself to the ideals for which the spiritual community stands, and thus joining, in a manner of speaking, the spiritual community, should clearly understand that it is not a group. If he doesn't understand to begin with that it isn't a group, then sooner or later he or she will think in terms of power

and the exercise of power. I think this is inevitable, even if it's only in terms of thinking of being **subjected** to power, or being subjected to authority, even if they don't think in terms of winning or exercising power or authority themselves. So this is the absolutely crucial thing, the basic precaution. So this means that one must make as sure as one humanly can that whoever wishes to enter, as it were, the spiritual community, does so as an individual and is fully aware that he or she is entering the spiritual community, joining, so to speak, a spiritual community and that it is a spiritual community and not a group, and not just understand it theoretically but be deeply convinced of it, and by virtue of the fact that he or she is an individual be really able to act upon it to a great extent, or even if there is only a little backsliding in himself or herself be able to correct that, and to see it when pointed out. So this is the basic precaution, surely!

So therefore it becomes very, very important to be able to distinguish, as I've been saying in recent months, those who are devoted to the group from those who are committed to the ideal of individual development and through that to the spiritual community, and as we grow stronger, as the Movement becomes stronger, and as the Order becomes, as it were more solid, we are going to attract increasingly, people who see us as a group and who see the Order as a group, and will be very devoted to that group, and very sincerely devoted, but who will not be thinking in terms of individual development, will not therefore be truly thinking in terms of ordination, but may well think of the Order as the group within the group, and want to join that without any idea, really, about individual development and the spiritual community, and perhaps be a bit upset or bewildered by not understanding when they aren't able to, on their terms, 'join' that group within the group, when they are, as it were, not allowed to do so.

So as the Movement becomes bigger and stronger, and as the Order becomes more positive, and 'The Friends' becomes more positive, well, surely, we're going to attract more and more people with this sort of possibility, this sort of, even, danger. So it becomes more and more important to emphasise this. Well, even the Buddha, you might say, in a sense, made a mistake. After all he allowed Devadatta to come in, and look what trouble Devadatta gave Him! So there may even be mistakes. One may even think that somebody is genuinely committed as an individual when in fact they may be just devoted, or perhaps even they are commitment as an individual to begin with, but there is a sort of recession, there is a backsliding, and they lose that. They start behaving just as a member of a group, and seeing the spiritual community as a group, and seeing members of the spiritual community as occupying positions of power and exercising authority, and so on. Until one becomes a stream enterer, or stream entrant then the possibility of backsliding is always there. One can slide right the way back!

Siddhiratna: This person who sees the WBO as the group in some sense wants to join it to gain power of the group then, as a sort of vehicle for his dreams and wants to express in terms of power.

**S:** It could be that but I rather think not, very consciously. I think - my guess is, based on a certain number of observations - that most people will be looking more for a sense of security and 'belonging' rather than looking for power and the possibility of exercising power.

Lokamitra: Did the Buddha ever refuse to ordain someone?

**S:** I don't remember that He ever did.

Lokamitra: Maybe the texts don't talk about those people.

**S:** There were some who were put on probation.

Nagabodhi: When one reads the Pitaka and one reads of the Buddha saying, ('This is an offence entailing defeat?'), does that mean that there was a fairly brisk turnover? We may not hear of people who weren't accepted into the Order but does that mean we are hearing about people who, more or less, were on their way out?

**S**: We do quite often hear of people who **wanted** to leave, who became discouraged and who started feeling that the spiritual life was not for them, and then they say, - the sort of stock formula is: 'I do not experience zest and delight in this spiritual life. Let me return to the lower life of the world.' And then some kalyana mitra, either the Buddha Himself, or a senior member of the Order comes to know of this and discourages them. This is a much more usual pattern, rather than anybody either permanently dropping out, or even being expelled. The more usual pattern seems to be someone finding it all much too difficult **and not enjoying it**. This is very clear from the phrases used: 'I find no zest, I find no delight in this 'brahma faring' - in this spiritual life - let me return to the lower life of the world'. This seems to be the fairly common pattern, and then the Buddha intervenes, or Sariputra intervenes, or somebody else intervenes and encouraged that person, cheered up that person. This is why it is said that one of the qualifications of those accepting disciples for training as 'upajaya' or as 'acharya', and one of the qualifications was that they should be able to exhort people and encourage them when experiencing moods of depression. This is almost emphasised, one might say. It is recognised that those who have joined the Order and become bhikkhus may from time to time feel very depressed and very discouraged, and very gloomy, and very pessimistic about their own spiritual potential and would need very careful, as it were, nursing through that if they were to come through it, and that those who take on the responsibility of being 'upajaya' or 'acharya', or as we would say, 'kalyana mitra', should be able to help people through that very difficult period.

So it's this that we read about in the Pali scriptures as far as I recollect at least, much more than about people permanently leaving or being expelled, as it were. Expulsion, I think, was very, very rare indeed; or people permanently dropping out was very, very rare. [Pause]

There is a tradition that around the time of Ashoka when the Buddhist Sangha became well-known and became quite large, enjoyed a lot of royal patronage, became, as it were, prosperous, there was quite an influx of new members joining - here this seems to be the correct term - 'joining' - just for the sake of, not only for the material advantages, but because it was almost a sort of 'the thing to do', and it had become respectable and honourable and with some kind of cultural prestige attaching to it.

So this is the danger that one always has to face, or the spiritual community has to face, as it becomes more successful and better known, and in a sense, more respectable. There will be a tendency for people to join it just for those reasons. But when you are small, poor, obscure and maybe even a little bit looked down upon by others, well, then, in a way, you are in a much safer position. No one is likely to join you, or to want to join you for the sake of enhancing their social prestige, or being 'in the swim' or anything like that.

So we ourselves have to watch things as we become bigger, and better known. We are, of course, still very very small, numerically speaking, but still we are growing and there may well be in due course this tendency for people to want to join what seems to be a going concern. To sort of climb on the spiritual bandwagon. Well, there's no such thing as a spiritual bandwagon. If you climb on it under the impression that it's a bandwagon, well, it's some kind of group, not a spiritual community. So you have to be restrained from climbing on until you understand what it really is all about, which **may** mean that you're kept waiting for quite a long time, maybe quite a few years, or maybe all your life.

Sometimes, of course, it is very hard to say no to very good, sincere, devoted people but who

nonetheless **aren't** thinking in terms of individual spiritual development. They don't really see that there's a spiritual community, who just want to belong.

Siddhiratna: What do you do with people like that?

**S**: I think it's very difficult. I have had a few to deal with like that myself. Usually I've felt they can't see what the spiritual community is! They just can't see it! To them the spiritual community is just some kind of group. They can't genuinely see what a spiritual community is or how it differs. And they can't see the difference between just being devoted to a group and being committed as an individual to a certain spiritual ideal. They are unable to make this distinction. So they are quite unable to see why they should not be received into the spiritual community. And they just feel a bit hurt, depending on their temperament, maybe a bit rejected or not understood, or something of that sort, or not appreciated perhaps - that you haven't been able to appreciate their commitment. They use all the 'right' words, they'll tell you quite glibly that they want to commit themselves and they want to be an individual, but you can see with half an eye sometimes, that they just haven't a clue as to what those words really mean.

#### **End of tape 24    Tape 25**

[Siddhiratna: Yeah.] ..... But they'll trot out all the 'right' words and all the 'right' phrases. They are often anxious to please you and say all the right things and adopt all the right attitudes, and will do this, sometimes, quite skilfully.

Siddhiratna: Isn't there a sort of 'call', or a need in some way for some 'thing' which can accommodate those people. I mean ...

**S**: Yes. I quite agree! And we've got that. This is what we've got in the **FWBO**, and what we've got in the institution of mitras. [Siddhiratna: Ah ! Sorry] ... (S. continues speaking ) ... Yes, that's all there, but when someone, say, who is a mitra wants to become ordained, in their language, or be ordained, or join the Order, without **really** understanding what individual development is all about, or **individual** spiritual development is all about, or spiritual community is all about, then you just have to, with regret, and making things as clear as you possibly can, just not accept their request. And this may give rise to a certain amount of hurt and heartburn, as it has been in a few cases already. Because such people usually are not able to see, really, why they're not being accepted. So it almost appears as a sort of injustice.

Siddhiratna: Isn't there some sort of parallel one could make with the Zen tradition where you may in fact wait seven years, or eight years before you take a bamboo and things like that [**S**: Yes. Right.] ..... to phrase it in that kind of way.

**S**: So therefore also I think it's important that the position of mitra should be regarded as having a definite value of its own and not necessarily, not invariably, be regarded as a half-way house to ordination. [Siddhiratna: A spiritual waiting-room] ..... It's not just a 'spiritual waiting-room', no. For some, yes, in a sense. but we have to recognise that there may be many people, many more mitras than Order members, who are just mitras indefinitely.

Lokamitra: Some will want to be.

**S**: Some will want to be. Yes indeed! There is that. Some see quite clearly - a few - that they're not ready, or not in a position to make the sort of commitment that ordination represents, and so therefore they stay, as it were, happily being a mitra.

Lokamitra: And some may even just not want to make that commitment but want to express

their devotion to the Order. It seems to me that for those who have a very, very strong need for the security in a group, the mitra system, won't satisfy them, they will always want to go to, ah .....[S: ...the group within the group. The inner group.] .... Yeah. Those are the people with whom we have difficulties.

Nagabodhi: It's warmest at the centre of the `huddle'. (Laughter)

S: Well, that's a good way of putting it, if rather cynical. Or at least they think that is where all the `heat' is. Yeah. Mm.

Nagabodhi: It's the opposite in a way, isn't it, really?

S: There's a sense in which it's true, but it's not the heat of a group cuddle, it's the heat of the individual, or the joint individual spiritual effort. It's not just a cosy warmth, it's a fire that may burn you up. [Nagabodhi: Right.] .... Or that is intended to burn you up. It's not a sort of domestic hearth. It's a funeral pyre! (Loud laughter) Mm. All right let's go on.

**Text***"In this respect the Buddhist community was perpetuating the tradition of the tribal republican sanghas, which 'knew nothing of personal rule', as S.Dutt points out: 'they deliberated and acted together, were communistic in their property-relationships, republican in their conduct of affairs, and had the tribal council as their organ of Government.'"*

S: Mm. Yes. Well they still weren't really very much like the spiritual community because it was, of course, the Elders ... it was a sort of oligarchy that **really** exercised the power. Republican forms of government are usually aristocratic, certainly in ancient times. So you mustn't think of all the citizens participating in the conduct of affairs. No. It was a small group of Elders, who really exercised power. So there isn't really much of a parallel between the Sangha and the republics. [Pause] All right carry on to the next short paragraph.

**Text***"As another recent and more specialist study of the tribal republics of this period observes 'each member of the assembly was called a raja (ruler), but none had the individual power to mould the decisions of the assembly'."*

S: Yes, this is all true but in the case of the republican state you had the whole population for instance consisting perhaps of several hundred thousand people, or even several million, and then you had the assembly consisting perhaps of a few dozen, or at the best a few hundred. So it's true that 'each member of the assembly was called a `raja' and that none had the individual power to mould the decisions of the assembly', but what about the rest of the people? What about the rest of the population? On the other hand in the case of the Buddhist Sangha, the assembly, as it were, was conterminous with the whole population, as it were, if you see what I mean. They didn't decide for anybody except themselves, whether it was the larger Sangha or a smaller local body. Whatever they decided they decided for themselves. Whereas in the case of the republican assembly, though there wasn't a king, though there wasn't a leader, they decided for the whole people. So the parallel really breaks down. In other words the Buddhist Sangha doesn't resemble the tribal republic as closely as Trevor Ling would like us to think it does. [Pause]

And again the Sangha consisted only of adults. It consisted of either men or women, usually men - because there were fewer bhikkhunis than bhikkhus - whereas the population of the republican state comprised people of all ages, and both sexes. Women apparently were not represented in the tribal assemblies, or republican assemblies.

Manjuvajra: I'm a bit confused - just now you said that it was the elders who controlled the affairs .... [S: Yes.] .... but then you're saying that the assembly that controls the affairs was

dealing with things for nobody other than themselves - does this mean that there were two sorts of assemblies: one is the elders, and one .....

S: No. I'm comparing on the one hand the republican state with the Sangha, the Buddhist Sangha. Trevor Ling is saying that they are very similar in as much as there is no ruler, and each member of the assembly was called a ruler but none had the individual power etc. etc. So I'm pointing out discrepancies between the two. In the case of the Buddhist Sangha, you had say a number of bhikkhus, a number of individuals, they met. There was no ruler. Each member of the assembly had, as it were, equal rights. Whatever they decided they decided for themselves. There was no sort of population outside that they were deciding for. In the case of the republican state the assembly was not made up of all the people but only of the elders, or only of the members of an oligarchy, so they made decisions not only for themselves but on behalf of, or with regard to, the whole population. So there is an important difference between the republican assembly which was not conterminous with the whole people, and with the Buddhist assembly which was, as it were, so conterminous. [Long pause]

All that I'm doing is simply questioning that there is this close resemblance between the republican tribal assembly and the meetings of the Buddhist community, the Sangha. All right let's go on and see what more he says.

**Text***"It is clear that the Buddhist community inherited certain forms and methods of organisation from the tribal republics. The question which was raised earlier must now be considered more fully, namely, whether the Buddhist Sangha was simply a reproduction of the old tribal collective or sangha, or whether it was a conscious and deliberate improvement on the older model, which was in the Buddha's day disappearing before the advance of the great monarchies, Koshala and Magadha. Was the Buddhist Sangha organized in imitation of the older political sanghas for no other reason than that the Buddhists were politically behind the times, or was it done, perhaps, in order to preserve something which was felt to be of value but which could be preserved in no other way (just as private enthusiasts in Britain today get together to preserve as a going concern some local steam railway)? On the other hand, was the Buddhist community organized as a new style Sangha, one in which the defects which had made the old political model obsolete were corrected; was it a new and improved version that was being put forward as a serious contribution to political experimentation and development? Was it a version which would remedy, too, the weaknesses and disadvantages apparent in the monarchical system (just as, to continue the analogy, a reorganized and rationalized railway system of diesel locomotion might be seen as the most effective solution to the traffic and transportation problems of a country which is being slowly stifled by private motor cars)?"*

S: So what do you make of that? (Laughter) Even if you take a look at the Sangha as compared with any other kind of body, I mean there are certain things at once that strike you, and which would surely ought to put you on your guard against thinking and speaking in this sort of way. Because for instance the Sangha is all recruited but entrance into it is voluntary, whereas you're born into a state, you're born into a social group and so on. And also the Sangha doesn't perpetuate itself in the ordinary way, that is to say by means of biological reproduction. It perpetuates itself by taking in fresh people from the outside. But what do you make of all this? [Pause]

It seems as though he's got his terms all askew, because he just doesn't see the nature of individual development, and see the fact that the Sangha is a spiritual community, a community of those individuals. It may certainly make use of ideas derived from the tribal republics for practical organisational purposes, but which were not therefore trying to preserve that old tribal republic for its own sake, etc. etc. [Long pause]

I mean all the, as it were, novel features of the Buddha's Sangha can be explained on the basis of it being a spiritual community for individuals. The fact that you don't have a sort of monarchical ruler doesn't mean that you are influenced by the example of the tribal republics, it simply means that individuals don't need a leader.

Anyway perhaps the way in which he goes astray is so obvious we don't really need to discuss it very much. Let's go straight on.

**Text***"The questions resolve into two main issues. The first concerns the internal government of the Buddhist community, the Sangha. The second concerns what form of government was regarded by the Buddha as desirable for society in general, outside the Sangha.*

*The answer to the first part of the question is relatively straightforward. The pattern which is represented as being laid down by the Buddha for the regulation of the affairs of the new community was one which has been loosely described as 'democratic'. Democracy is an ancient word, but as it is now understood, it is, of course, a political concept which emerged somewhat later in history and implies the existence of certain political institutions. The Buddha-Sangha has been described as democratic largely because there was no monarchical head, no authoritarian chain of command and responsibility, and because a recognized procedure existed for decision-making by the whole community corporately. Certainly every member of the Sangha was regarded as having equality of rights in any deliberations concerning the life of the community. K.N.Jayatileke has argued that 'even the cosmic perspective is for the Buddhist democratic, for any man of his own free will may aspire too and attain the status of a Buddha', and that democracy was of the essence of the early community. The Sangha has been described also as a 'system of government formed by the Bhikkhus for the Bhikkhus and of the Bhikkhus', and therefore a democracy. But the principles of government in the Sangha differed from those of a modern democratic state in one important respect, which needs to be carefully considered."*

**S:** Alright, let's go on and find out what that one important respect is.

**Text***"The ideal for the government of the new community is described by the Buddha, as we have seen, in connection with the Vajjian confederacy. 'So long, O bhikkhus, as the brethren foregather oft, and frequent the formal meetings of their Sangha, so long as they meet together in concord, and carry out in concord the duties of the Sangha.... so long may the brethren be expected not to decline but to prosper.' It is expressly stated that 'concord' or unanimity is essential for the proper functioning of the Sangha, otherwise its life will decline. The corpus of rulings on its life and organization and the conduct and discipline of its members, known as the Vinaya-pitaka, contains similar injunctions for the community. The principle which seems to have been regarded as of supreme importance was that of the maintenance of unity of view within each local company or sangha. For as soon as permanent local settlements had been developed each of these was regarded as a sangha in itself, a complete microcosm, so to speak, of the whole Sangha. And while it was accepted that differences of opinion were likely to develop, what was regarded as of greatest importance was that each local fellowship, which provided the actual, day-to-day experience of common life, was to be a unity, undivided by any controversial issues. If controversy did arise - and it was recognised that it could and would - the method laid down for dealing with the situation was that the dissenting group should remove itself and form a new settlement. This 'law of schism', as it was called, was a matter of discussion at the second Buddhist Council held at Vaishali a century after the Buddha's death; it was very important that this procedure should be agreed upon because the maintenance of the essential principle of unity in the sangha depended upon it. It was recognized that honest differences of opinion had to be allowed for, but not at the expense of the structural unity of the local sangha. As Sukumar Dutt has put it, the unitary character of the local sangha was 'the basic principle of its*



*functioning'. All other considerations were subordinate to this basic principle of local structural unity."*

**S:** Well this is more or less what I've been saying, and it has been put here quite well. I think the really important point is :`And while it was accepted that differences of opinion were likely to develop, what was regarded as of greatest importance was that each local fellowship, which provided the actual, day-to-day experience of common life was to be a unity, undivided by any controversial issues". So why do you think that that was so? [Pause]

**Vessantara:** Well if that's not the case, you just can't get on with your own spiritual practice.....

**S:** Right, indeed! There is constant friction, constant irritation even. So it is quite interesting and quite significant, that Buddhism or rather the Vinaya, perhaps the later Vinaya does provide for this. Here the term used is 'schism'. In the context of Western, especially Christian, religious history, 'schism' has got a rather unpleasant connotation. 'Schism', I believe is a sin. To be responsible for schism within the church is a sin. But this is certainly not the case with Buddhism, with regard to 'Sanghabheda' which simply means 'the division of the Sangha'. It's like the division of an amoeba. It simply divides into two and the two halves, now wholes, go swimming off their own separate ways, but not really their own separate ways because both of the new Sanghas are part and parcel of an even wider structure, and even wider Sangha or spiritual community.

So you may agree in overall aims and objects and ideals but that isn't enough. You have to agree about matters of ordinary everyday living together and practising together. So the unitary character, as it's called here, of each local fellowship, which of course means a residential fellowship, must be preserved.

**Lokamitra:** Sanghabheda has other meanings, does it? I mean there are degrees of Sanghabheda, because I remember asking in the "*Dhyana for Beginners*" and we discussed it and it was one could be expelled from the order for.....

**S:** Ah! For creating a party, as it were, which merely means creating a group within the spiritual community and setting oneself at the head of that as it were. That is a rather different thing.

**Vessantara:** How do you spell bheda.

**S:** B.H.E.D.A. So we find during the hundred years after the Buddha's death, the Sangha dividing on various issues and various sort of local groups springing up. One might say that the law of Sanghabheda, or law of schism as it's called here is a sort of law of organic development. You give scope for individual differences but you maintain overall unity.

**Manjuvajra:** Wouldn't the unskilful schism be more of a kind of emotional thing?

**S:** Well again that would, as I said, be a question of a group, because it's only the group person as it were who reacts in that sort of way or who behaves in that sort of way. 'I can't get my own way, you don't listen to me, all right I'll go off and start up a little group of my own.' That's clearly emotional and new Sanghas are not to be formed on that sort of basis.

**Lokamitra:** The split with the Mahasanghikas - this was of a different nature was it, because the Theravadins didn't recognise it.

**S:** Yes, nobody really knows. There are all sorts of records, but what seems to have been

happening was from the Mahasanghika point of view that the elder bhikkhus of those times exerted as it were an undue influence and the Mahasangha did not agree with that. The elders of course were the 'Theras' and the 'Theravadins' became that school within which, as it were, the 'Theras', the senior members exercised, what according to the other party was, a disproportionate influence. There were also doctrinal developments associated with this, especially as regards the nature or the status of the Arahant.

Vessantara: Does in what way the 'Theras' exercised a disproportionate influence? How would that be possible? On what level?

**S:** We don't really know. Records are very scanty, but it would seem that the 'Theras', the older bhikkhus, insisted on a rather rigid observance of the Vinaya, in the sense of not only the Vinaya of the Buddha's time, but of the later coenobitical type of Vinaya that had sprang up after his death, and tended to exclude from the spiritual community, those who were not prepared to abide strictly by that more elaborate Vinaya. So this had the tendency of excluding many of the monks themselves, and also of course placing the, for want of a better term, monastic order, at a greater distance from, for want of a better term, the lay community. The Theravadins therefore insisted on a greater division of 'monks', inverted commas, and 'laity', inverted commas, whereas the Mahasanghikas tried to bring them together in the light of what was basically their common ideal. That of course led the way eventually to the Mahayana with its common ideal of Bodhisattva, but for all, whether technically monks or technically lay people.

I've written at length about this in a book I started writing - it was a continuation of a continuation of *'The Three Jewels'*, but I wasn't able to finish it, but I never will now I think. The continuation of course is *'The Word of the Buddha'* which I hope we will bring out sometime, and the continuation of the continuation is Volume Three in that series on the different sects and schools of Buddhism, but I did get as far as this. Those chapters may well be published independently sometime. (Pause) I had to break off to come to England.

So I think this general principle of as it were unity and diversity is very very important. Do you see what I mean? That you do retain your overall framework of spiritual fellowship. But if different groups say of Order members have got a common way of doing things which isn't quite the same as the way of doing things of other Order members or groups of Order members, well they can certainly get together and live within the framework of the common ideal very much in their own way, while remaining in friendly contact with all other Order members and all other groups of Order members, all other Chapters, if you like. You might get some people who are quite organisationally minded; some Order members getting together and five, six, eight, ten, twelve running a Centre. You might get others getting together who were of a more, as it were, quiet and contemplative temperament, and they might decide that they wanted to go away together into the country and just set up a contemplative community. But when the contemplatives turned in town they'd be very welcome at the Centre and made welcome by their brother Order members there, and vice-versa, when an Order member in the city, in the Chapter functioning there, wanted a rest and a retreat, he'd be very welcome presumably at the contemplative community, and they'd keep up friendly contact, even though they had their own definite, as it were, lifestyles, and way of doing things on a day to day basis. But they'd all be within the common framework of the Order and the Movement.

Five or six others might get together on the basis of a common interest in the arts or common artistic talents and they may set up something along those lines, again within the common framework of the Order and the Movement. You might get all sorts of possibilities, all sorts of developments of that kind. All these Chapters of different kinds keeping up contact with one another in various ways, either correspondence or personal contact, or mutual visiting,

and so on. But if you tried to put say three artists with three organisers, well they can't function very easily in the same local Chapter, they can't live together very easily on a day to day basis. They might in some cases with a great deal of mutual tolerance, and if there was say a common daily meditation or something like that, but the chances are they'd be happier, and also more friendly towards one another, separate. As the American poet - I think it's Robert Frost - says, 'Good fences make good neighbours'. We can transpose that, as it were, to the spiritual plane. It won't be a question of a fence but of a little golden cord round your section of the transcendental checkerboard! All right let's go on.

**Text***"In view of what was said earlier concerning the sangha as the necessary; context for living the new life of non-individualism, it will be easily understood why unity was so important. It is this aspect of the sangha's constitution, therefore, which in the final analysis distinguishes it from a democratic body. A democratic organization is one in which the majority opinion is honoured and prevails. The advantage of this method is that, if it can be followed consistently, the formation of schismatic, dissenting groups is avoided; but the price is the subordination of minority views. The Buddhist method is one which allows minority views to be held, and not disregarded, but the price to be paid is the multiplication of bodies with different points of view. The Buddhists, like others, had to choose between the two principles; that the choice was a very difficult one to make is seen from the fact that the matter was not settled until a hundred years after the Buddha's decease. However, once a principle has been agreed upon, allowances can be made for the fact that certain advantages accruing from the opposite decision have been surrendered. In this case what was surrendered was ideological solidarity"*

**S:** Do you think it was in fact surrendered?

**Manjuvajra:** Ideological solidarity was but not spiritual solidarity.

**S:** But even ideological solidarity, not questioning the word 'ideological' too much? I mean The Four Noble Truths remained common to all schools of Buddhism, didn't it? The principle of Conditioned Co-production or Dependant Origination; the three Characteristics of all Conditioned existence - all of these things did remain common, didn't they. So, to that extent, there was even a common ideology and therefore ideological solidarity.

**Manjuvajra:** Wouldn't you say that the Hinayana and the Mahayana have certain ideas that are not in common?

**S:** Well they do, but they also have ideas which are in common.

**Manjuvajra:** I would think solidarity means complete solidarity.

**S:** You mean monolithic.

**Manjuvajra:** Yes.

**S:** Well, that of course they did surrender. Well you could say that, not only did they surrender in this way, they would have regarded as unessential anyway, because that sort of monolithic ideological solidarity leaves out of account the unifying influence of a common spiritual ideal, above and beyond even the doctrinal formulation. All right let's go on.

**Text***"Other political and religious institutions faced with a similar choice have sometimes chosen the totalitarian way: formal organizational unity has been maintained at the expense of the rights of self-expression on the part of minority groups. The history of Catholicism in Europe, which is as much a matter of politics as religion, demonstrates what ensues when*

*total institutional unity is evaluated more highly than arrangements for the tolerance of dissent. Any group which threatens the formal unity of the total organization has to be regarded as something alien to the true nature of the organization itself; it is a sect, rather than true church. In the Buddhist case, the inevitability of sectarian differences has been acknowledged, with the result that Buddhism has not experienced the internecine wars of religion that have characterized some other traditions, where dissent or 'heresy' has been something to be stamped out."*

**S:** Don't you think that on the whole the Buddhist option is preferable? Isn't this monolithic doctrinal unity such as we find in the case of the Roman Catholic Church, but there's certainly a kind of spiritual unity, one may say. And also the importance of doctrinal unity is not so strongly stressed because it is recognised that the doctrinal itself is only an attempt to express on the conceptual level, in conceptual terms, on the level of the rational mind, an experience which really transcends that level. (Pause) All right, let's go straight on.

**Text***"This should not be taken to imply that the Buddhist Sangha recognized no canons or orthodoxy. The matter is represented as having been explicitly dealt with by the Buddha himself, who set out certain criteria by which authentic Buddhist doctrine could be recognized.*

*In the matter of the relationship between the sangha of the Vajjian confederacy and the Buddhist sangha, it emerges that the latter was modelled very closely on the former."*

**S:** This as we've seen is quite doubtful in fact.

**Text***"It is not properly described as democratic in the modern sense; its characteristics were those of the old tribal republic, in which unanimity among the assembled elders was the supreme requirement."*

**S:** Yes, but among the assembled elders in the case of the Sangha it is unanimity among everybody present, and also that everybody has to be present. In the case of the assembly of elders everybody didn't have to be present. Any minority was present i.e. the elders themselves, but in the case of a meeting of the Buddhist Sangha, the proceedings are not valid unless everybody is present or gives under certain circumstances, I was going to say his (sic), his consent to the proceedings through a deputy.

**Text***"Now it is clear that where this was the underlying principle of government, lack of unanimity would produce dysfunction of the system and possibly its breakdown, more quickly than any other single factor; the Buddha implied as much in the observations he made on the prospects of the Vajjian confederacy's continued well-being. Events showed that the Vajjian system was fallible. The reason adduced for this, in the Buddhist view, was the disease of individualism, which had now spread to the tribal republics, and was proving too much for the strength of republican solidarity. J.P.Sharma sees the collapse of the tribal republics, which took place soon after the Buddha's decease, as due to the intrusion of individualism. The old understanding was that no individual member of the republican assembly had the power to mould the decisions of the assembly; nevertheless, by the time that the Buddha was called upon to give an opinion on the prospects of the republican sanghas, a situation had developed in which it is probable, says Sharma,*

*that some councillors or leaders of the republic either wished to rise above the rest and become virtual rulers ... or that some preferred to betray the republic for their selfish interests, thus becoming lieutenants of a king. The latter could offer these betrayers substantial rewards either in the form of material gains or by entrusting them with important state offices which they could not expect while the republic continued and prospered.*

*The downfall of the republics was thus closely connected with the spread of monarchy and of the spirit of individualism, or, as Sharma describes it, of 'personal ambition'.*

**S:** We mustn't forget this is all highly speculative. Even Ling says, a situation had developed in which it is probable says Sharma. There's no certainty about this. There's no firm evidence, so one can't build too much upon it as in fact Trevor Ling does do. What it really amounts to is we really can't press this analogy between any of the republican states of the Buddha's day and the Buddhist Sangha. The one can't really be derived from the other. All right go straight on then.

**Text***"If the malaise which had afflicted the tribal republic system could be identified as individualism, then the remedy for individualism could serve as the remedy, or as means of reviving the sangha system - assuming that in all other respects it was worth restoring. That it appears to be the assumption implicit in the organisation of the early Buddhist Community as a sangha. What was being said in effect, was this:*

*The tribal republican system of organisation is preferable to monarchy, but lately it has been infected by the spread of individualism; this is the evil factor in the situation, Buddhist practice can remedy this evil, and so the sangha system of solid organization can and will be restored. The sangha system which is need now is the new Buddha-Sangha."*

**S:** This is really his thesis in a nutshell. So what do you think of that? It's quite clear that he regards the 'Buddha-Sangha', as he calls it as the tribal group reconstituted, and therefore as a group. It seems a really quite extraordinary misunderstanding. He leaves out of account the individual and of course the spiritual community. Anyway perhaps it's all become sufficiently obvious by this time. We need not spend further mental effort over it. Let's carry straight on till the end of this section.

**Text***"The Buddhist Sangha might be seen, then, in the context of the fifth century BC, as the Prototype social organisation of the future."*

**S:** There's truth in that though, though in a very different way from what Trevor Ling envisages.

**Text***"But there were serious difficulties in the way of such a prescription for the welfare of human society. Between the prototype, even as it could be seen in existence here and there, and the transformation of the whole of human society into a universal sangha, there was, so to speak, a large practicability gap. To organize what was still a relatively small sect or cult-association as a republican sangha was one thing; to propose that this form of politico-social organization could, by means of the therapy which Buddhism offered, become once again the norm for Indian society as a whole was quite another. Such a proposal would, in the circumstances of the time have been entirely impracticable, for a number of reasons. There is evidence to suggest that they were fully appreciated by the Buddha or at least in early Buddhist tradition, and that an interim scheme was envisaged which would make the best of the existing situation and encourage the development of a political and social climate more favourable to the full adoption of Buddhist attitudes and principles."*

**S:** Well there is some truth in this, though one has to, as it were, read a bit between the lines of what Trevor Ling says. It is true, one may say that the Sangha is a sort of prototype for the ideal society of the future, but society of course of individuals, not simply an improved version of the group. Anyway go on till the end.

**[End of side one side two]**

**Text** *"The two major reasons against the idea of the whole of contemporary Indian society becoming a universal Buddhist sangha were, first, the existence of powerful monarchies, and second, the unreadiness of the mass of the people for participation in the kind of society envisaged in Buddhist teaching.*

**S:** That almost gives the game away, because most people wanted to just be members of a group and didn't want to be individuals. If the Buddha's sangha was just another group, why shouldn't they be ready to join it?

**Text** *"The Buddhist mission to society, if one may call it that, appears to have had both of these problems in view, and to have developed appropriate policies in each case."*

**S:** Hm. Well what do you make of all this? He just got himself into quite a mess and he's floundering isn't he? We've just seen him sort of floundering along through these last few sections. His floundering is quite obvious and he's clearly heading in the direction of Mao's China. Maybe he really does think that Mao's China is the fulfilment of the Buddhist ideal. Well Mao himself, or at least some of the Chinese - what shall I say - Chinese Marxists, have in fact said, or Maoists perhaps I should say, that Mao's China is the Pure Land on Earth and they use the Mahayana phraseology. Not the Pure Land up in the sky as it were but the Pure Land on Earth as it actually has come about thanks to Chairman Mao. (Pause) Do you see this sort of approach, as offering any sort of bridge, however sort of shaky and ramshackle, as between the Dharma on the one hand and say Communist society on the other?

Nagabodhi: It can't be. Because the most important element is not here.

**S:** It would seem to be a really quite futile attempt and that is a plain and objective..... I know there are some Buddhists in the East who do consciously try to do this. I read many years ago a little book on Buddhism and Marx which tried to do just that very thing, and that must have been written about thirty years ago by a Sinhalese Buddhist.

Manjuvajra: I think the only way would be to try and develop Marxism, sort of say Marxism was OK as far as it goes but we would like to add this to it.

**S:** But is it a question of just adding something? And anyway what does mean by Marxism? Does one mean the teaching, to use that term, of Karl Marx, or the principles and practice of say the modern Communist State. Of course one has a variety of such states now, when you've got of course Soviet Russia; again you've got Yugoslavia; you've got Albania; you've got Mao's China; you've got North Korea; you've got Vietnam - these are all quite different set ups in a way. Even Poland is rather different.

\_\_\_\_\_: Didn't Lenin believe that his theory of Marxism was to reconstruct society so as to create a climate which would be more sort of amenable to the development of the individual.

**S:** I'm not sure if he actually said anything like that, he might well have done so. His own practice, though, doesn't seem to have shown all that much respect for the individual. [Pause]

Vessantara: If one simply takes the view of Marx or the Marxist view that everything depends on economics then there's no hope. [**S:** Yes. Right] If you can somehow get people to see that the Marxist view of things can be transposed to a higher level so that you're not simply trying to get hold of the means of production on a purely physical level, but you're trying to get hold of the well-springs of your own productive, creative energies ....

**S:** (breaking in) Yes. That is a very good point, yes indeed. Also I think we can freely admit

that for the average person, external conditions **are** important. It isn't a question of a pseudo-spirituality which is always 'in the mind', and if you improve yourself, if you are a better man, society will automatically become better. I don't think that's true at all. I don't think Buddhism says that. External conditions **are** important for the majority of people. They **can** help, and they **can** hinder, even from a spiritual point of view, and even though they may not be ultimately decisive. So it **is** important to pay attention to the structure of society. It **is** important to ensure social and economic justice. We **don't** undervalue such things. But we certainly don't confine our attention to such things, and we fully recognise the importance of the subjective psychological and purely spiritual factors.

Nagabodhi: On the level of society surely the trick has to be to devise a form of government or whatever in which, according to the Communist analysis, individualism is curbed - individualism can only for most people mean greed and so on - yet be open to the possibility of individuality. And this just doesn't really seem possible to me, actually, that you could have a society that imposes curbs on individualism yet makes room for individuality. The first symptoms of individuality are very often individualism.

**S:** You could even say, if you wanted to be a bit cynical, that society often places curbs upon individuality to allow free expression of individualism. [Longish pause]

Nagabodhi: Well, that would be true of a capitalist society more than a communist society.

**S:** Well perhaps. Yes. (Pause - Tea Break)

All right - "*The Buddhist Attitude to the Common People*".

**Text** "*The common people, or, more precisely, 'the ordinary man', is referred to by a word which occurs with relative frequency throughout the Pali literature - puthujjana. The basic meaning of puthu is 'widespread' and this meaning is carried into the usage of the word composed from it by the addition of jana, a person or a man. The word has thus been translated appropriately into English as 'the ordinary man', 'the common man' or 'the average man'. From the various occurrences of the word in the early literature, it appears that the Buddha used it to refer to the generality of man distinct from brahmins and recluses. It has to be remembered that the Buddha gives the word 'Brahman' a new meaning, apart from its technical caste connotation. The priestly class who had in the Buddha's day appropriated the term had no special, innate right to it, according to the Buddha. A brahmin is a brahmin by character, and not merely by some hereditary right. In the conversations of the Buddha with brahmins the latter are often represented as being led by the course of the argument to admit this point. Perhaps some real brahmins of the Buddha's day did so, in fact. In any case it is clear that this was the Buddhist view of the matter. So 'brahmins' and 'shramanas' becomes a phrase virtually equivalent in meaning to those who, from a Buddhist point of view, are genuinely in pursuit of the truth and of a righteous life. The generality of men who are thus distinguished from them are, in effect, the mass of mankind who are not members of the Buddhist community*".

**S:** Mm. It would in fact be more correct to say that the puthujjanas are distinguished from the ariyas - those who are spiritually 'noble'. And it's also made clear that there may be puthujjanas within the Buddhist community, that is to say those who haven't yet reached the level of Stream Entrants at least. So what Trevor Ling says on the basis of the scriptures isn't quite correct. You can have someone who is a sincere Buddhist and genuinely striving to become an individual, and who is a member of the Buddhist community, perhaps even a bhikkhu but still a puthujjana, not yet an ariya. The Buddha's usage of the words, or the expression of 'shramana, brahmana' is, quite as it were, loose and popular. Sometimes it seems to mean ariyas and sometimes it means just religious people in general, even in a quite

conventional sense. Let's go on.

**Text** "It is possible to construct from the references in the Pali texts a fairly detailed picture of the average man, or literally, man as he is commonly found, from the point of view of the Buddha, or of the early Buddhists.

*The ordinary man, we are told, 'is addicted to pleasure', and is at the mercy of his senses. He is enthralled by the eye with objects that charm, by the tongue with savours that charm etc. He follows his natural desires, 'uncontrolled in the six-fold sense sphere, and eats his fill with ravenous delight among the five sensual pleasures'. He welcomes personal fame and praise but resents obscurity and blame. He is easily provoked by deeds of a morally unwholesome kind; he will murder his own father or his mother, inflict wounds on a saintly man, and cause dissension within the Buddhist sangha. He is greedy and lustful. On the other hand, he resents any ill fortune; when afflicted with pain he is distressed and overcome with bewilderment about it; he finds that those things on which he sets his hopes frequently turn out to be a disappointment; he dislikes the sight of disease, or old age or death; when old age comes upon him he mourns and pines and is tormented by sorrow, and finally he goes to Purgatory. All this is because he is lacking in wisdom, and in knowledge of the truth. Not only does he adhere to popular superstitions, but he knows not, he sees not things as they really are, he takes no account of those who are holy, those who are true, he does not comprehend which things should and which things should not be attended to; he knows nothing of the origination of compounded things, and so is not set free from the power of ill; he fails to reflect adequately and to understand the experiences of life for what they really are".*

**S:** Do you think this is a fair picture of the average man, or man as he is commonly found?  
[Pause]

**Ratnaguna:** It's a bit one-sided. [**S:** A bit one-sided ?]

**Nagabodhi:** I don't know actually. (sound of chuckling)

\_\_\_\_\_: He mentioned earlier that the nature of man was essentially good. So this would be.....

**S:** This is what Trevor Ling said, he didn't quote any actual statement of the Buddha to that effect.

**Lokamitra:** A pretty good description I think. [**S:** You think.Mm.] Yeah.

**Ratnaguna:** What, he will murder his own father or mother?

**Siddhiratna:** Would these things .....there's something about descriptions like this which don't take into account something about `man' or `men', even `ordinary man', this is all true somehow but there's something more you could say about them which is not quite so negative or not altogether negative in some way. I don't know ... you can meet people in the street and you know they are like that but then there's something good about some of them. It never seems to get mentioned in things like this. [**S:** Mm.]

**Ratnaguna:** Isn't it a bit just like saying `Life is suffering' then. You keep on showing the bad side .....

**S:** Well what is that other more positive side?



Siddhiratna: I don't know, I mean .....

Nagabodhi: Potential.

**S:** Do you think it's just a question of potential?

VOICES: (speaking together) No. No not just that.

Nagabodhi: Well potential as demonstrated in the presence of some positive states of mind occasionally - some positive aspiration.

Siddhiratna: The positive side of humanity may be based on the fact that they feel comfortable within the group, as it were. **[S: Mm. Yes.]** ..... that they are at least 'healthy' within that group, but this never seems to get mentioned. **[S: Uh huh.]** Maybe it's not worth mentioning, because it's of no account. But it feels a bit one-sided.

**S:** Mm. Well, is there anything positive in the description at all? Or is there anything which is actually untrue?

\_\_\_\_\_: I think: "easily provoked ....." **[S: Mm.]**

Siddhiratna: "He takes no account of those who are holy". That is not necessarily true. **[S: Mm. Mm.]**

\_\_\_\_\_: It sounds a bit like those non-conformist religions. **[S: chuckles]** You're all sinners.

**S:** Well what is that other side then? What is that side, would you say?

Siddhiratna: I couldn't say what it is, but I mean I think I see it as in bus conductors and milkmen - (a jolly kind of side to them?)

Nagabodhi: We've got to be careful though because in our society today that 'other side' is usually a hangover of Christian conditioning, it's not necessarily something innate in .....

Siddhiratna: I don't know. I don't think many of them know about Christianity in .....

Nagabodhi: Well, it's just conditioning, you know, to be kind to neighbours when maybe there's no actual ....

Vessantara: I think that's a gross overstatement actually. I really do.

Siddhiratna: (breaking in) Well, no.... (Nagabodhi's words lost) ..... I think often the word neighbourly is a good one, but I don't think that neighbourliness is based on the fact that their parents or their great-great-great grandparents were Christian.

Ratnaguna: I'm just thinking of my friends who I used to know, and used to live with, and I think they were really good.

**S:** Ah! What do you mean by 'good'?

Ratnaguna: Well just positive quite a lot of the time.

**S:** Well what do you mean by 'positive'? Don't you think that might, in some cases, come under the heading of 'greed'? Your appetites, or desires are fulfilled, they are not being

frustrated at the time, so you feel sort of `good'. You can afford to be sort of cheerful. Don't you think it might be that?

Ratnaguna: No! I think they were quite concerned for each other's welfare, and my welfare, and things like that.

S: But what do you mean by `welfare'? [Pause] Were they concerned say about your **spiritual** welfare? Could you even say that?

Ratnaguna: I don't think they even thought about that.

S: Well what do you think they **were** concerned about then?

Ratnaguna: I really can't say.

Siddhiratna: They may be concerned about your spiritual welfare, but they may not understand that sort of area.

S: Well you can say they are concerned that you should be happy [Siddhiratna: Yeah.] ..... they would genuinely like to see you happy, but how would they **conceive** happiness? Mm ?

Nagabodhi: In terms of group ideas of what happiness is. [S:Mm.]

Lokamitra: You can look at animals: one moment they're fighting, and one minute they're sort of playing with each other. It's all on that level, that same level, as it were.

\_\_\_\_: (laughing sound in his voice) I can't believe that.

S: Well, the point also arises: can you draw a hard and fast line? If you want to give a sort of `character' in the (Labouillier?) sense you usually give the character in a sort of chemically pure form. Do you see what I mean? But does this necessarily correspond very exactly to life? For instance you might get a character of The Miser, or say, The Married Man, or The Artist. So all those characteristics might be sort of generally true, but might there not be, as it were, in the case of any given individual of that class, a sort of as it were, another side to the picture? Do you see what I mean? [Pause]

Manjuvajra: This is a sort of `idealised' from a Buddhist point of view, ordinary ....

S: (breaking in) Mm. Yeah. Right. You could say idealised but inverted idealised. Whether of course that this does in fact completely represent all the statements about puthujjanas made by the Buddha, that is another matter. He's given quite a lot of quotations, but does the Buddha have anything else to say that one can think of? [Pause] And also one mustn't forget that the average man, or the `common man' is being looked at in the light of a very high ideal. But can't anyone say anything at all positive about the average man? Specifically?

Manjuvajra: It seems to me if you take any one particular man you can either look at him positively or negatively. If you look at him negatively you can find ( ). If you ....

S:(breaking in)... It's not even a question of negatively - suppose you take an ariya to mean anybody who is not a Stream Entrant at least. All the others are anariya, all the others are puthujjana: you don't think then that this description would apply to them? [\_\_\_\_\_: Not all of them]. Not all of them. Mm. But in what sort of way? Where would the exceptions lie? Or on account of what qualities?

Lokamitra: The exceptions would be where the person is aspiring to individuality.

Vessantara: But in what way aspiring, consciously aspiring?

Lokamitra: Oh, consciously and practically. Working out all ( ?)

Vessantara: I don't even believe that. I think that if I look at, not so much in London, but even in Brighton, there seem to be quite a lot of people who are quite bright, quite healthy just on a basic human level, quite friendly, that I feel, if, say, you were in trouble would actually help you out. They have a genuine feeling towards you .....

**[S:** (breaking in) ...a neighbourly feeling ...] ..... Yeah. **[S:** yeah. Mm.] .... yeah, without having any sense of what spiritual life was about, or aspiring to be an individual.

Lokamitra: I'm not sure that's denied.

Vessantara: You appear to be denying it, by saying that it was only people who consciously aspire who rose above that.

Lokamitra: Yes, but in terms of the `ariyan' .....

**S:** If you wanted to argue the matter, you could say that even this manifestation of, say, neighbourliness, or positive feeling, was just an exemplification of a sort of group feeling, or herd feeling which is quite instinctual, and that if you say crossed that person in any particular way, or thwarted them, then you would see a very different side of their character, however neighbourly they may sometimes appear to be, and that would, in a way, justify the description which has been given here in these quotations. Would you not say that?

\_\_\_\_: But can it be valueless? ... positivity and ....

**S:** Ah no, it only questions what is positivity: what it is really saying is, or infer in time is that there is no real positivity, from a spiritual point of view, within the group. So is that so do you think? What is the nature of say group positivity?

\_\_\_\_: (inaudible)

**S:** Yeah. Well say you can experience that someone may be really friendly and apparently very kind, but you cross his path and he's ready to cut your throat. So what was the real nature of that positivity before, you could say, or you could argue.

Manjuvajra: Self-interest.

**S:** A source of ..... not in the sense that he was trying to get something for himself out of it, but that he got a sort of satisfaction from being like that. And that therefore it was a sort of greed. You **could** look at it like that conceivably.

Manjuvajra: I mean, you could do, but that seems to me to be a very negative way of looking at it.

**S:** It's not whether it's negative or positive, is it true?

Manjuvajra: I don't know. I mean, I don't think one can tell. I find that I can take any one person and I can either analyze them in a negative way, and interpret their behaviour and their actions in terms of their complexes and this that and the other, or I can just accept that what they've done is a positive act, and it seems to have a positive effect. If I do things the first

way I find that everything just seems to become very negative. If I do the second way, and take a much looser view of people then the whole world seems much brighter.

**S:** Well that may be but the question still arises: are you seeing it **truly**? That is the basic question. It may seem brighter, but are you seeing it truly? That is the real question.

Manjuvajra: I find it more and more difficult to determine, you know, what is .....

**S:** (breaking in and speaking slowly) What I'm really getting at here is that are we not encountering a sort of resistance to this sort of view on account of certain modern ideas that are in currency, a sort of idealisation of the ordinary person. This is really what we've got to get down to.

Nagabodhi: 'The ordinary man is basically kind and good'.

**S:** I'm not saying at this stage that this necessarily a correct or complete account. I'm just asking whether this is not the case, that we come up here against one of our modern *micchaditthis*.

Siddhiratna: You can be friendly with your next door neighbour or somebody on the street, and in a very casual way it's very warm and positive; but once you get to meet that person, if you start to talk, then you immediately come up against differences, very strong differences at times, and depending on how willing he is to accept you as you are, will condition his response to you in whether he remains positive or not. I think once you start questioning his own views about you and himself and everything around him, then he can either go one way or the other. [**S:** Yes. I think that's very true.] Either you're open or he starts reacting quite strongly.

Lokamitra: From the Buddhist point of view surely, anyone whose actions are not based on, I suppose wisdom to some extent, their actions must be based eventually on greed, hatred, or delusion, which means that this is a .....

**S:** Well this is certainly the Theravada view. So what does one think of that view?

Manjuvajra: From my own experience I think it's terrible. (sound of a snorting laugh)  
Purely because it's not of any sort of truth in it or not.....

**S:** (breaking in) All right! What about for instance 'moha', delusion, is that not present as at least an important factor in the thoughts, words and deeds virtually of everybody that one meets? Does anybody have any realisation of say non-ego? If they don't then there is 'moha' present. I'm coming to another point in a minute, but I'm just now pressing the strictly Theravada point of view. Mm? So however sort of friendly, however cheerful people may be, are there not these three unskilful roots there, which are virtually the main-spring of their being.

Manjuvajra: In that analysis that must be true.

**S:** But does one find anything else? [Pause] Does one find any egolessness? Does one find any wisdom in the Buddhistic sense, the sense of the Dharma? Or does one find any genuinely selfless mettā? Or anything of that sort?

Siddhiratna I think you can come across that. [**S:** Ah! Yes ?] .... Sometimes it's not conscious though in the sense that ....

**S:** (breaking in) Ah! But then - 'Not conscious' - what does one mean by that?

**Siddhiratna:** That ... I think you can come across people that will give, or are relaxed in a way where they're not after anything that they think you may have that they may want; I mean they are sort of selfless in a sense, but I'm afraid I couldn't define it any further than that.

**Lokamitra:** There are very few people who would give in the true sense of mettā to anyone who needed help at that particular time. They might feel drawn to helping someone, but you could bring in a dozen other characters like that, and because they're black, or because they're something else ..... So it couldn't be true mettā.

**Nagabodhi:** You do find people, I think, who, because of their own inner experience, whether they're Buddhist or not, whose 'eyes are covered with slightly less dust'. [**S:** Yes. Right.] And they are trying to put into practice, maybe, their own vision of things. It may have come them - an experience, or all the reasons that wisdom can .....

**S:** (coming in) How would you put this in sort of technical Buddhist terms, doctrinally, bearing in mind your 'lobha', 'dvesa', and 'moha', and the rest of it?

**Nagabodhi:** I would refer to the Buddha's original vision of the lotus, the lotus flowers. [**S:** Uhhum.]

**Lokamitra:** Less tied to those three poisons that have a weaker hold on them.

**S:** Uhhum. Or would you see in any other terms at all? [Pause]

All right before we go into this a bit more, let us go back to what I said a little while ago about our reluctance to look at, as it were, 'the average man' in an unfavourable light. I mean, do you see this sort of tendency at work?

**Nagabodhi** Do I see the tendency to ..... [**S:** (coming in) ... to be reluctant] .... (laughs) ... I mean to be reluctant to....

**S:** Yes. Does it not come as rather a shock to our democratic sentiments, our democratic ideals?

**Nagabodhi** It seemed to be when I said what I did at the beginning. (Laughs as he speaks)

**S:** Is there not a tendency in some quarters at least, to regard the people as the repository of all wisdom?

**Siddhiratna:** I think that, in a sense, that is as distorted as to think that the people are the source of all the evil in some way. I think we are talking about particular people rather than **The** people. On the whole you can see that say, in a sense something like three quarter of the people, more or less as it says here, like that, that there are people who without having come in contact with anything deliberately are quite positive.

**S:** But positive in what sense? Positive in the sense of a positivity or warmth within the group? That you're just feeling 'good'. You've had a good meal, things are going well for you, you can easily afford to be a bit generous or a bit kind. Do you mean that sort of thing, or something even **more** than that?

**Siddhiratna:** Maybe even more individual than that. [**S:** Mm. Yeah.] I mean they are

somehow more of an individual.

**S:** Well, how do you explain that, as it were, technically? It is not `moha' operating. It is not a sort of sublimated `lobha' operating, and of course there's no `dosa' operating, what is operating? What is there? How do you explain it?

**Siddhiratna:** I've probably got this all wrong, but anyway - it's something like they're *pratyekabuddhas* or something like that?

**S:** Ahhh? No. I think you have got it wrong actually.

**Manjuvajra:** In the past in one of your lectures you talked about the Higher Evolution as being an increasing sort of scale, [**S:**Yes.] .... manifestation of reality, well maybe people naturally manifest certain degrees of reality, and although they may not be consciously involved in trying to develop to that degree, they still may manifest a quite high degree .....

**S:** Mm. Well how would you state that in traditional Buddhist terms then?

**Manjuvajra:** Perhaps a kind of the Buddha nature within them shines through.

**S:** Well what would be the expression for `Buddha nature'?

**Lokamitra:** The Bodhichitta.

**S:** Bodhichitta? No that's in a slightly different context. This is a question which did, as it were, occur to the Mahayanists. And the Mahayanists were faced as it were by the question of if people are `bad', as it were, how can they become `good'? Because if you are bad, and this of course is the problem which the Christians face, everything that you do is `bad' and so can only lead to further `badness'. So how can you become `good' unless in a sense you are `good' already, or contain some potentiality of `goodness' or, if that's too abstract, some **seed** of goodness. And this is what the Buddhists call *Tathagatagarbha*. It's from such considerations as these that the Mahayana conception of *Tathagatagarbha* arose. But yes, the `lobha' is there, the `dvesa' is there, the `moha' is there, but underneath it all there is, as it were, the seed of enlightenment'. This is not of course a Theravada conception at all. It is a strictly Mahayana conception: this seed of enlightenment which even before it is fully developed, or begins really to sprout, can just manifest itself in little ways. The Mahayana sought to explain it in this sort of way. Do you see what I mean? Not that the Mahayana in practice took the modern optimistic view, or idealised view, about `the people', or anything like that. But the Mahayana seems to have recognised that unless one did, or unless one could see, this sort of potential, not just a sort of abstract potential but as a sort of almost living presence in a very sort of germinal, vestigial form of the `Buddha nature' in ordinary beings, then one could not account for the fact of any of them actually developing and becoming enlightened.

But of course, again, the Mahayana has to be very careful that this should not be interpreted as a sort of `atman'. Do you see the difficulty? So they put it rather carefully.

**Siddhiratna:** Does it involve that problem that they won't actually have to do anything as they'll get there in the end anyway?

**S:** Yes. Exactly! So if you say it's a fair potentiality, that isn't enough. Asvaghosa in *'The Awakening of Faith'* speaks of a reflection, as it were. Or not even a reflection, he speaks of a `perfuming'. Basically this is connected with very very fundamental metaphysical questions. Asvaghosa, or whoever is the author of *'The Awakening of Faith'*, has these two principles -

the `samsara' and the `nirvana', but he speaks of `samsara' being, as it were, perfumed by `suchness', which is his term for `nirvana' as it were: perfumed by `suchness, so there is a trace, as it were, of `suchness', a very subtle trace like a sort of scent, in the `samsara' itself. And in the same way `nirvana' is perfumed by `samsara'. There is a very subtle trace as it were, of `samsara' in `nirvana' itself, which, as it were, gives the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas their connection with the `samsara'. Do you see this? If the two are completely different; if there was a rigid, absolute dualism, how can they ever come into contact? How can the one, as it were, ever become the other, ever reach the other? So the thought of Asvaghosa tries to overcome this dualism by positing a sort of presence of the `unconditioned' in the `conditioned', and the presence even of the `conditioned' in the `unconditioned'. Do you see this? We went into this when we had our study group on the *'Awakening of Faith'* some five years or so ago. Maybe we have to go through that text again.

But anyway, leaving aside that: the Mahayana came to think in terms of a sort of `seed of Buddhahood' present in the midst of every individual or proto-individual. And that due to the presence of that seed when it met appropriate conditions, some effort in the direction of Enlightenment was possible. So these are of course quotations from the Pali texts, of the Theravada tradition. The Theravada tradition does not recognise that particular teaching. It would regard it as moving in the direction of a permanent, unchanging self, which perhaps it does if one takes it too literally, and doesn't take it as trying to express something that one feels, or something that one perceives, in a sort of semi-poetic form. Do you see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: We went through a lot of this on the *'Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism'* seminar. [S: Yes. Right.] ... It's as if he has fallen into this trap. In a way I was quite relieved that everything was demystified and you simply used terms like `potential'. It was almost confusing to hear this because it is raising those `ghosts'. [S: Mm. Mm.]

S: It also, as it were, raises the question about the validity of the original absolute dualism. The Theravada does operate with a dualism - Buddhism basically, generally, operates with a dualism, but perhaps one should regard it not as a **doctrinal** dualism but as a **methodological** dualism, if you see what I mean. In the sense that I have distinguished these two at the beginning of the *'Survey'*. Not that you do posit two irreducible metaphysical principles - the `samsara' and `nirvana' - but that for the practical purposes of the spiritual life it is convenient to postulate these two. They are what Guenther calls - what was his expression? [\_\_\_\_\_: `Operational concepts'.] ..... operational concepts.

Vessantara: So how did the Theravadins try to get around this question of if you're bad to start with how do you actually become good?

S: Well the Theravadins are not very metaphysically inclined. They even eschewed metaphysics, you may say, quite deliberately. But it is noticeable that the Theravada for many many centuries has been spiritually less alive and less productive than have many parts of the Mahayana Buddhist world.

Siddhiratna: I once heard somebody talking about if a person could understand - I think it was the `anatta' doctrine - that means that in this present rebirth then they had gone to a higher level, and that they had the possibility of realising `nirvana'. But that most people, in fact, hadn't realised or couldn't assimilate the doctrine of `anatta' and were stuck in `samsara'.

S: Well, yes, it's not only a question of the doctrine of `anatta' but the truth of the Dharma generally, and not just understanding in an intellectual sense but developing spiritual intuition.

On the other hand, I think one has to be very careful still to guard against this, as it were,

pseudo-idealisation of ordinary humanity, especially when one is young: one is over-impressed by the positive features of things in a people, but this is one of the sad experiences of life that as you get older there are further and fresher revelations of how people actually can be. And one does accumulate a sort of quite big load of disappointment, as it were, and you see more and more the extent to which people **are** governed by unskilful thoughts, words, and deeds, but still there is this Mahayana point of view that underneath all that there is, not just a potentiality for Enlightenment, but even the actual presence of a `seed' almost literally deposited. But to refuse to see the `seed' is one extreme, but also to refuse to see the levels of `lobha', `dvesa' and `moha' which hide the seed, that is another extreme.

\_\_\_\_\_: When you talk about ... when Buddhist texts talk about `defilement', it almost suggests as though there was an original undefiled state which has since been defiled by perhaps social or whatever conditions. Is that perhaps a very misleading way of looking at things?

**S:** There is just one text in the Pali Canon where this sort of language is used, and it is of course fairly common later on in the Mahayana, and in the Vajrayana. The great drawback as I pointed out on that *`Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism'* seminar is, that if you start substantialising and reifying that, you start thinking in terms of, well, it's already there, it's only got to be uncovered, I've already got it, I am, in fact, already that, and so on and so forth. And there isn't really much to do about it, there's nothing sort of practical to be done except just see that I am that already, which usually doesn't work very well at all.

\_\_\_\_\_: So there are defilements but there's nothing which is defiled.

**S:** One could say that. And there's non-defilement, but there's also nothing which is **not** defiled, or which is undefiled.

But you see the sort of practical difficulties? - if you take some of these very metaphysical concepts too literally, and press them too far, and too hard.

**End of Tape 25**