

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

Birds - tape four.

S: ... this sort of desire that you get - craving, that you hope for something. At the same time, you are afraid, you fear that you may not get it, or that you may lose it. So 'hopes and fears' probably stand for all the conflicting egocentric emotions or egocentred emotions. So while you are still chained to these things - that's a pretty strong expression - while you're still chained to hopes and fears, chained to these conflicting emotions, it's not possible for you to reach, to contact that centre of inner calm which you do have within you deep down. First you must still the hopes and fears, you must get rid of the hopes and fears, you must get rid of the five hindrances, to change the terminology or to make the terminology more technical, before you can enter upon the dhyanas. It's a little bit like that.(pause)

Aryamitra: .. anxiety.

S: Yes, fears no doubt includes anxiety.(pause)

Ratnaketu: Could it also be seen that hopes and fears are like assumptions in themselves?

S: Yes, very often they are....

Ratnaketu: You're trying to see your inner mind, your hopes and fears...(unclear).

S: There's a verse or a line of a poem that says something like, 'Hopes are traitors, fears are liars.' They can both be quite falsely based, be quite imaginary, your hopes can be imaginary, your fears can be imaginary. Sometimes you find this, sometimes you discover this in the case of fears, you discover that you've worried quite unnecessarily. You've worked yourself perhaps into a real tizzy - it was completely unnecessary. You had, in fact, nothing to worry about at all.

Buddhapalita: Surely ultimately that's true in every event, everything.

S: Well, some fears may be justified. But on the other hand, still, why worry? I mean, some people worry about their health, they're worried, they think they might have cancer. Anyway, they eventually get themselves examined and they find they don't have cancer, so they stop worrying, well, they stop worrying about whether they have cancer and usually start worrying about something else, because they've got into that sort of habit.

But even if you're told you have got cancer, well, in a sense, why worry? You know the worst, just face it sort of calmly and don't worry about it. You know you've got to die one day anyway, you know, whether you have cancer or not. Even if you don't have cancer, it doesn't mean that you're going to live for ever, you've got to die one day, so it might just as well be of cancer as of anything else. So even if you have cancer, even if the fear in a sense is justified, still paradoxically, the fear is not justified. I mean, you know, death will come

whether or not you worry about it, whether or not you're afraid of it, so you may as well not be afraid of it.

(brief cut off in the tape) Anyway, the Golden Goose then sums up and he says: "All you who thus prolong your bondage within this ocean of suffering, Try to grasp the meaning of my words, for they will shorten your bondage." It's as though he's saying, 'You all do this, you're all guilty of this, you all prolong your bondage in these various ways. But try not to do it, try to understand what I've said, because that will shorten your bondage, that will liberate you all the sooner.'

In a way this whole speech from the Golden Goose is a sort of diatribe against half-heartedness. It's no use being half-hearted, there's no point in being half-hearted. There's no point in just going through the motions of making an effort when you're not really doing that. You might just as well not bother. If you're not prepared to put yourself into something whole-heartedly, better to leave it alone, certainly with regard to the spiritual life.(pause)

Ratnaketu: Is it really like that, just that, you know, some people might come into the circle of the Friends and you can sort of see that they're never going to really possibly make... you know, just looks like they'll never make an Order member...

S: Well, well, some people look, you know, at first sight, pretty unlikely material, but then in the space of three years, four years, five years, six years, you definitely see them become Order members, so one has to be very careful one doesn't sort of dismiss people out of hand however unlikely they may look. But I admit that looking at some people, you can't help feeling a bit skeptical, especially if they've been around for quite a few years, not so much in the case of new people. Especially people who've been around for quite a few years, you don't really see much in the way of change. It may not altogether be their fault, they may not have been so fortunate as to have experienced intensive Kalyana Mitrata, it may be just that, that they need and that they lack.

Ratnaketu: I was thinking quite a bit about the situation of women actually because it seems there's so few women get ordained, so few women actually get through to committing themselves.

S: You see, men are foolish. Women are not foolish. You can get a man, say, to the edge of a swimming pool, the deep end and you can kid him to jump in - he's a fool, he'll jump in! (laughter) But women aren't fooled. They just stand there and they see that water's very deep, they can't swim very well, etc, etc, so they don't jump in, and they just stand there and they're watching the men, you know, clambering about and playing in the water and eventually having quite a good time. This is really what happens in a way. But anyway, you were going to say...

Ratnaketu: That sometimes I feel a bit, you know, a particular woman, say a friend of yours, and you know, well sometimes I feel a bit torn whether to encourage them or not to be involved, you know, I want them to know about what the Dharma is, but then again, I know that the situation is that so many women just seem to be floating about neither being in nor out really.

S: Very often they seem like, sort of, camp followers, if you know what I mean. They belong, but they're not really in the fighting forces. They're the best part of the commissariat. Yes, it is a bit of a problem.

Ratnaketu: Because I know that, really, satisfaction begins once you're an Order member. You know, if you really start to ... the Dharma really starts to

S: Well, sometimes one can't help wondering, well, should one take a tremendous risk and just ordain them all in the hope that ordination will have its effect, (laughter), but then one thinks 'no', it's not as easy as that, in a way. I mean, ordination does mark a very definite step, it is in itself a very definite step forward, just being ordained and committing oneself in that way, but on the other hand, there's nothing magical about it, it's not a magical blessing in itself. Anyway, let's stop there for the time being.

Amoghacitta: Bhante, there's still one more thing I'd like to ask about these two lines, 'To try to understand one's inner mind while still chained to hopes and fears'. It just seems like being chained to hopes and fears is just operating within a dualistic framework and it's that that stops you, essentially that stops you experiencing your inner mind. Would you say that?

S: Yes, of course. One could also say even to distinguish inner mind from outer mind is still dualistic, that's only involved with a fine form of dualism, but certainly, yes, in the case of hopes and fears, you are just oscillating between various emotional extremes and that cannot but disturb the mind, cannot but upset the tranquility of the mind or prevent one from contacting that.

All right, let's go on then to the Raven. Who's going to be the Raven?

Buddhapalita: "Thereupon the Raven, with his great wings rose, made a few sideways steps and said: grogs yon grogs yon, which means, help will come, help will come."

"When you have been true to your vows, help will come in the form of a happy life among men.

When you have given gifts, help will come in the form of future wealth.

When you have performed the acts of worship, help will come from the guardian angels.

When your solemn promises are made in all good faith, help will come from the love of the fairies.

When you are alert at the sacrificial festivals, help will come from the Guardians of the Dharma.

When in this life you learn to enter into higher meditation, help will come from the future Buddha.

Learn therefore to gain these virtues, for help comes through them."

S: So help will come. It's as though in the course of the spiritual life help will come. You don't have to do it all yourself. It isn't that no-one will ever help you. It isn't that only you can help yourself, but help will not come unless you've done something first. This is the point of this whole discourse. 'When you have been true to your vows, help will come in the form of a happy life among men', 'When you have given gifts, help will come in the form of future wealth'? etc. I mean, there is this well known, even hackneyed proverb in the West, "God helps those who help themselves" or another saying, attributed I think to Oliver Cromwell, "Trust in God and keep your powder dry!" (laughter) Do you know what that refers to, the powder?

Ratnaketu: Gunpowder.

S: Well, it's the powder that you ram into the old fashioned sort of, er, not even rifle or shotgun, I forget what it was called, but anyway, you had to ram it in, but you had to keep it dry, otherwise it wouldn't ignite - there'd be no explosion and no shot fired, so he said, or he's said to have said, "Trust in God and keep your powder dry". (laughter) It's supposed to be what he told his troops. So you have to rely upon both, you rely upon objective factors, including other people, even Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, but you also rely on yourself. I think this is the significance, in a way the quite profound significance, of some words which are among the last words of the Buddha, according to the Pali Canon, where he says, 'Be a light or island unto yourself. Have the Dharma as your light or as your island'. And similarly, I think, it's, er, "Be your own light, your own refuge", but he also says, 'Look to the Dharma for your refuge' So it's as though he is saying, Well, both are important, you've got to be a light unto yourself, or island unto yourself, nonetheless, help - nonetheless light, can come from without as well'. But in this discourse, the Raven is in a sense going further. He says 'you must help yourself first'. If you help yourself in this way or in that, then help will come from without. So 'When you have been true to your vows, help will come in the form of a happy life among men.' It seems to be implied that this happy life among men refers to a

future existence. The next line says 'When you have given gifts, help will come in the form of future wealth' - presumably in future lives. What's it mean 'When you have been true to your vows'. What do you think the word 'vows' represents here?

Buddhapalita: Precepts?

S: Precepts, yes. Precepts in the sense of ethical observances. Like the five precepts or the ten precepts. But why will help come in the form of a happy life among men, if you've been true to your vows, true to the precepts, true to the moral precepts. What's the connection? (pause) Is there a connection?

Aryamitra: They do have an other-regarding aspect don't they? Well it depends which precepts - the precepts we took.

S: I think it is probably difficult to distinguish, I mean, I think all the precepts have a self-regarding and an other-regarding aspect.

Silabhadra: Couldn't it just be meaning like if you're following the precepts and then you'll be reborn in the human realm? (unclear)

S: Yes, but why should you be reborn in the human realm as a result of following the precepts. What special connection is there between being born in the human realm and observing the precepts?

Amoghacitta: Well, I think if you actually do follow the precepts, you've got a desire to help other people to some degree as well as yourself. I mean, other people's welfare matters as well if you do follow the spirit of the precepts.

Aryamitra: Aren't ethics concerned with society, with other people. I mean why bother with precepts at all? I mean why not live without precepts? But don't they have a relation to, er, you know, the two forms of society, whether it's a spiritual community or ordinary society...

S: Yes and no - you're getting a bit near but not quite near enough.

Silaratna: Couldn't they also say though that if you observe the precepts, I mean that say for a layman to observe the precepts, then he's likely to be reborn in the Deva realm.

S: That's true also, yes, yes.

Amoghacitta: In which case he wouldn't be a human.

Khemananda: Is it just the merit - you get merit - you acquire good merit.

S: Yes, that's true, but why should that merit take that particular form? That's to say of a happy life among men? Why not some other form, why this form specifically?

Ratnaketu: Is it to do with communication and, by following these precepts you open up communication between yourself and other (unclear)

S: No, it's actually to do with the nature of ethics itself, the nature of the ethical observance. I think I've gone into this, or just touched upon it in this essay of mine on 'Aspects of Buddhist Morality'.

Aryamitra: Is it to do, well I'm just guessing really, I'm just thinking about higher evolution and, you know, self consciousness, in any form so to speak, you know...

S: Well, some of you are getting a bit closer, though from another angle, you've changed your ground. (laughter)

Silaratna: Is it because the human realm is the realm that's most conducive to practising the Dharma? You know, it's hard to practice the Dharma in the Deva realm.

S: That has something to do with it.

Ratnaketu: Is it because, is it because the precepts are the way in which a happy man would live naturally?

S: Ah, yes. The precepts represent characteristically human behaviour. So it's only when you observe the precepts that you're really a human being! So, if you're really a human being by virtue of observing the precepts, well, where else should you be born except among human beings because you've behaved like a real human being? Do you see what I mean? I mean, sometimes the point is made that it's ethical behaviour which distinguishes the human being from the animal. If you cease to be an ethical person, well, if you cease to behave ethically, in a sense, although again only in a sense, you sink to the level of the animal.

I mean, the Buddhist texts, or the Buddha in the Buddhist scriptures points this out in one particular respect, I mean following I think the general Indian line of thinking that, I mean, according to this line of thinking, among animals there is no such thing as sexual morality. Do you see what I mean? I mean, an animal will mate impartially with its mother, sister, daughter, etc, etc. But in the case of human beings, there is such a thing as sexual morality, do you see what I mean?

So, morality is the distinguishing feature of a human being, it's his morality which differentiates him from the animal. So, to live ethically, to observe the precepts is to behave, is to live like a true human being rather than like an animal. So, if you live as a true human

being, well naturally you'll be born among human beings. So this is a rather, in a way, different way of looking at morality from what we're often accustomed to in the West. It's not that morality is something imposed upon you, from without. I mean, morality represents the fulfillment of your own genuinely human nature, besides carrying you a step in the direction of the Dhyanas. Inasmuch as your ethical observance springs from a skillful mental state. So to be ethical is to be human. To be human is to be ethical.

Amoghacitta: Then why is it said that a layman practising the precepts (can be reborn in the Deva realm) Is it because he experiences dhyana?

S: Well, it's a question of the degree, it's a question of the intensity. I think, I'm not wrong in recalling that if you practise the precepts to a very limited degree you're reborn among the Asuras. If you practise them to a quite extensive degree, among human beings. But if you practise them to a superlative degree, then among the Gods. I may not have got it quite right, but there is some such saying or some such tradition. Whereas of course the other three, that is the

hungry ghosts, the animals and the hell realms, those are realms in which one is reborn as a result - of being unethical either to a slight extent or to a moderate extent, or to a very extreme extent.

Amoghacitta: Presumably (as soon as) you actually practise the precepts, you experience some kind of dhyanic state which you could say is the result of that.

S: Well, it's not exactly as a result of that, but to the extent that you practise the precepts, to the extent that you're ethical, your action proceeds from a skilful mental state, to the extent that you're in a skilful mental state, to that extent, your state of mind is dhyanic. It may be very limited, it may be very momentary, but it is of that nature, because dhyana is nothing but a sort of consolidated and prolonged skilful mental state. But the basic point here is that to be human is to be ethical and to be ethical is to be human.

So, "when you've been true to your vows", when you've observed the precepts, "help will come in the form of a happy life among men". And "when you have given gifts, help will come in the form of future wealth".

I mean, this is in accordance with the traditional Buddhist teaching about Karma, though perhaps the matter is not in fact quite so simple or quite so straightforward as it would appear. It's assumed that, wealth, it's assumed that riches represent a sort of blessing. Perhaps they don't always necessarily represent a blessing.

Ratnaketu: So, could we say then, to the extent that you give gifts, act ethically, to that extent you will be reborn in favourable conditions?

S: You'll be born in favourable material conditions, that is to say where you will not have to worry about food and clothing and shelter to such an extent that you'll be prevented from practising the Dharma. It doesn't necessarily mean that you'll be rolling in wealth, though some Buddhist texts seem to assume that in a way.

(long break in the tape with loud buzzing noise)

may be poetry in one respect, but not poetry in another. on the other hand sometimes it may be the work of a comparatively poor poet, on the other hand the work of comparatively great poet, you can have a piece of poetry written by a great poet which is really beautifully written. But it may express to some extent a negative emotion. On the other hand, you may have a piece of poetry written by a comparatively poor poet, who maybe doesn't handle his rhyme and metre very well, but the feeling behind the poem, the emotion expressed by the poem could be very positive. It's just that he hasn't succeeded in expressing it as perfectly as he might. So one has to look at things in all these sort of different ways.

Ratnaketu: It's the same really in anything like that, any expression (unclear)

S: So, no doubt, throughout a poem - assuming it to be a good poem - there will be, in a sense, concentration present throughout, but the emotion, the emotional quality of the poem, may vary, may fluctuate. Sometimes it may be positive, sometimes negative. Then again, you have to judge the impact of the poem as a whole, when you've read the whole thing, not just sort of take up particular bits. What sort of general impression does it leave you with? What is its overall impact on you? And the overall impact may be very positive, even though there may be a few lines, especially in the dramatic poem which, taken by themselves, express a somewhat negative emotion. (pause)

Anyway, poetry and all that is a very big subject. Well, "When your solemn promises are made in all good faith, help will come from the love of the fairies". I'm afraid Conze has got rather a nasty little note here. (laughter) It is really quite beside the point, I'll tell you why in a minute. 'Fairies', he says, 'these fairies are the mkha-gro, literally 'skywalkers'. Their mode of life is such that they deserve the name framed in analogy to the more familiar 'street-walkers.' Well, that's really quite unpleasant! (laughter) I think Conze has overlooked the fact that the word *Dakini* has a number of different meanings on a number of different levels, I'm afraid he's taken the worst meaning.

Alright, let's take the word 'dakini'. It's a very important word in the Vajrayana and therefore in Tibetan Buddhism generally. At the very highest level, the Dakini is a Buddha in female form, or a Buddha depicted in female form - that is a Dakini. You could say a Dakini with a capital 'D'. And then, there is dakini in the sense of, er - hmm... well it's almost like a sort of angelic sort of being or creature, except that it's female. usually dakini in this sense represents sort of forces of spiritual inspiration... welling up within you or forces with which you're in contact or feel you're in contact, rather like a spiritual equivalent of the Muses.

Dakini represents that. It's these dakinis who are represented as flying through the air, flying through the sky. They're like ripples travelling across the surface of the, sort of, ocean of higher consciousness, one could say. (pause)

Aryamitra: That could be equivalent to Blake's emanation?

S: One could say, yes, provided one didn't try to establish too close a parallel, but something like that.

And then, thirdly, dakini means an actual human being, a woman, with certain unusual, very often spiritual characteristics. A woman who's out of the ordinary, who even has perhaps certain physical characteristics which are unusual and who is especially devoted to the Dharma, she just doesn't seem like an ordinary woman at all. Such women, of course, are quite rare. The Tibetans have a popular saying that all women are either dakinis or devils. The dakinis in this sense are said to be in the minority. So there's dakini in that sense. And then dakini in the lowest, in the most debase sense, that is, dakini as an immoral woman, even a prostitute. Conze has taken that fourth sense. He's ignored for some strange reason, these other senses.

Silabhadra: So it actually is a word that can be used for prostitute, is that what you're saying?

S: Yes, yes. In Sanskrit and apparently in Tibetan too. Certainly, and I won't be too sure of this, I think in late Sanskrit, dakini is used in that sense and I believe in modern Indian languages (North India) in literary form dakini is used in that sort of way, because they derive their vocabulary from Sanskrit.

Aryamitra: In a way you could see there that they could have parallels.

S: It's the feminine principle at every level as it were from the highest to the lowest. It's a bit like, again maybe not quite a legitimate parallel, Jung's *anima* existing on those different levels.

Aryamitra: So it doesn't say the wife does it, or the girlfriend, it's the prostitute. This unusual sort of spiritual woman and then the sort of more elevated ones. I was thinking, well the prostitute in a way, there isn't any pema there, in a way you can see how it can relate. It's not as if - it does seem to be in line with spiritual values! (laughter)

S: Well, yes in a negative, reverse sort of way.

Ratnaketu: Either that or it could be saying that there's no halfway house. A woman is either totally devoted to the Dharma in a spiritual way or a mere prostitute.

S: Mmm, no. because one knows really from experience there are lots of women, if not the

majority who are neither the one nor the other, who are just, you know, immersed in domesticity.

Silaratna: Is it part of Otto Weiniger's interpretation of a woman (about 8 words unclear) as a prostitute or as a mother or something like that, this orientation is (at their head and?) take the final form.

S: Well this clearly - here the mother is not considered. But one could say that, you know, what is common to all these is that the Dakini is considered, as it were, in her own right by herself, not in relation to other people so much, because if you think of woman as 'mother' well it's mother of a child, if you think of a 'wife' or 'girlfriend', it's wife or girlfriend of a husband or a boyfriend, a man, yes? But here it's as though it's the woman or female principle on her own. You see what I mean? So in that way, the prostitute is on her own, and the Dakini in the other senses is so to speak on her own. Not half of a partnership. So that, in a way, is a positive element, even in the case of a prostitute. At least she's an independent woman, in a sense, very often in practice she isn't, she's dependent on someone to sort of manage her.

Silaratna: So, Tara would come into this highest form.

S: Yes, Tara would come into the highest category, yes. If one speaks of Tara as a Dakini, it would be in that highest sense. So let's look at the line, "When your solemn promises are made in all good faith, help will come from the love of the fairies." The love of the Dakinis, huh? So what are these solemn promises?

Khemananda: A bit like what someone was saying yesterday, when you see something clearly, the path of vision, a clear vision, your being responds to make some promises. You've got to act in accordance with that vision.

S: Yes. Strictly speaking, the solemn promises seem to represent what is called Samaya or, as it were, Tantric vows - vows of a specifically Tantric character. When one speaks of Dakinis in any case, well one speaks within the context of the Tantra, the Tantrayana, the Vajrayana.

So when, in consequence of, or as part of, the Tantric initiation, you make certain solemn promises, and you make them in good faith, then help, presumably help in keeping those solemn promises, will come from the love of the fairies, the love of the dakinis. So what is this love of the dakinis? I mean, first of all, which dakinis do you think are being talked about? Though presumably it depends upon the level on which the solemn promises are made. But it's at least the level of dakinis as sort of forces of inspiration. If you're involved in the Vajrayana, if you've received Tantric initiation, if you've made solemn Tantric vows and if you're sincere in that, then help will come. You will have the experience of being, as

it were, helped by these forces of inspiration, forces of spiritual inspiration which come to you, or which well up within you, or which unite with you. Help will come from the love of the dakinis, do you see what I mean? Because the Vajrayana in a way is concerned with energy. The Tantric initiation is concerned with energy. The solemn promises, in a way, relate to energy. The dakinis also relate to energy. The forces of inspiration at this level.

Prasannasiddhi: It's almost as if the solemn promises, like, are a sort of the masculine thing that one would do. One sort of decides I'm going to go - it's a bit - things are a bit shaky, you know, you don't know if it's going to be safe and you sort of, you feel as if you're going to be quite alone and it could be a bit risky and might not at all be pleasant, but you sort of go there, you make the effort and then the, sort of, dakinis represent the...

S: (interrupting) the more positive emotional experience, huh? Even the experience of sort of deeper spiritual inspiration. Or an experience of the deeper forces of spiritual inspiration, they sort of come to one and unite with one.

Silaratna: That's devotion - I mean like in terms of your sadhana, I mean, if you're really devoted to the practice of your sadhana, almost like a solemn promise to practice the sadhana in a devoted sort of way. Inspiration comes.

S: It reminds one a little bit of that saying that 'genius is one percent inspiration and ninety nine percent perspiration'. But maybe in this context it isn't quite like that, but, where there's perspiration, there will be inspiration. Inspiration doesn't just come. You provide the perspiration and something else or somebody else will provide the inspiration. (pause) Well, you often find, the more you put into something, i.e. the perspiration, the more you get out of it, i.e. the inspiration.

Prasannasiddhi: It's a bit like, sort of, when you decide you're going to do something, like, maybe, you know you decide you're going to get up or you're going to stay up all night or something, and meditate, or even in a, sort of, er, in a funeral ground or something and you think it's going to be quite sort of a scary experience, you're not sure if you can handle it, but then once you're actually in there and you're brought up against things, there is some quite positive sort of... it isn't actually as bad as you thought.

S: When your solemn promises are made in all good faith, yes?, help will come from the love of the fairies - help from the love of the dakinis. I really don't understand how Conze should have got it so wrong. I'm afraid it's his cynicism creeping in again.

This whole analogy between skywalkers, It's a sort of rather silly pun, skywalkers and streetwalkers, it's really quite ridiculous. It shows how even great scholars can be betrayed, their judgement is upset by their subjective negative emotions.

Ratnaketu: This whole thing that we're just talking about now just reminds me of what you

were saying earlier on in the retreat about the Middle Way and the () of reality (5 words unclear) and if you put in the effort and the reality () it will come...

S: Yes, that's true. One could look at it in that way. (pause).

Alright, then comes, 'When you are alert at the sacrificial festivals, help will come from the Guardians of the Dharma.' I'm not sure what these sacrificial festivals are, they're clearly some kind of Tibetan institution. and the Guardians of the Dharma, in a way, occupy a lower level than the dakinis. Certainly, than the Dakinis of the first two classes, let us say. These sacrificial festivals - they're not

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they're not, of course, sacrifices of animals. I mean the Tibetans have got many observances which sort of have lingered on from pre-Buddhistic days. All sorts of festivals. Originally, in the days when Bon was the religion of Tibetan, there may have been animal and even human sacrifices involved, but these festivals, these sacrifices have all been transformed, have been brought into line with Buddhist principles so that the most or the effigies of animals or even human beings of dough, of barley flour dough.

Silabhadra: I was thinking maybe in terms of the Tantric secret offerings like the tongue and the heart and things like that which are also made of dough?

S: Possibly, it's possible.

Prasannasiddhi: I think that inasmuch as this was supposed to be a sort of folk text, the folk people who represent like one of their only contacts with the Dharma maybe (it's sort of)...

S: It's ethnic celebrations, ethnic festivals.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes, Buddha Day.

S: Well, there was in their case some kind of Bon tradition still lingering on, which gave them some kind of contact with the Dharma. Because that tradition itself has been linked with the Dharma. So the Guardians of the Dharma, these sort of powerful figures, wrathful figures, whose function is to protect the Dharma.

Silaratna: Would there be like, Dharmapalas, say...

S: yes, Dharmapalas are the same thing, yes.

So, "When you are alert at the sacrificial festivals, help will come from the Guardians of the Dharma." But, what is the connection here? It isn't quite obvious, because one doesn't really

know enough about these sacrificial festivals, what exactly they are.

Ratnaketu: When I read this first, I just thought of it in terms of pujas. When you're alert in a puja and when you're actually aware of what you're saying and what you're doing there's more chance...

S: I think sacrificial festivals probably refers to these rather sort of ethnic celebrations when people come together and maybe they make offerings to the gods of the locality and they make these offerings for the sake of the prosperity of the whole region and so on, then, 'help will come from the Guardians of the Dharma', again it's the principle of you do something for yourself and somebody else will do something for you. But you must act first.

Prasannasiddhi: It seems as if he is talking to people who are not kind of at the centre of this sort of spiritual life but maybe people who just are there on the periphery, the folk people who haven't actually committed themselves.

S: Yes. (pause) Well, then the Raven goes on to say, "When in this life you learn to enter into higher meditation, help will come from the future Buddha." Who is the future Buddha?

Aryamitra: Maitreya.

S: Maitreya. There is a more useful note here by Conze, "i.e. from Maitreya the coming Buddha, who dwells at present in the Tushita heavens. The help he can give is twofold: one may either visit him in trance", that is to say in Samadhi, "to receive inspiration about the doctrine, as Asanga and others did in days past. This inspiration is gained by an 'unwavering and supramundane' trance which resembles 'the radiant light of the sun' and leads to an outpouring of the Dharma. Or, after death, one may be reborn in his presence, and mystical contemplation is one of the most important means for gaining rebirth in the Tushita heavens."

So when in this life you learn to enter into higher meditation, help will come from the future Buddha, either by way of direct teaching to you while you're in that higher meditative state, or by way of your being actually reborn in his presence.

Silaratna: Is the Tushita heaven a sort of more in the realm of like the mundane or was it sort of thought more, perhaps, its...

S: No. the Tushita heaven is definitely a mundane heaven, It's called the Tushita Devaloka. But here again the general principle is quite clear, yes? The 'help which comes from the future Buddha' is, as it were, the objective counterpart of your own subjective experience of the higher meditation. And while duality persists, there is an objective aspect and a subjective aspect or rather a subjective aspect and an objective aspect. There is a state of

mind and there is a world. By elevating your state of mind you raise yourself, or you lift yourself into another world. You see things in another way, experience things in another way and if your state of meditative consciousness, if you enter into higher meditation, well, you will as it were see Maitreya or perhaps some other Buddha, some other Bodhisattva. (long pause) I mean, the future Buddha, or the Buddha, or any Buddha, or any Bodhisattva is a sort of objective counterpart of your inner, your subjective experience.(long pause)

Aryamitra: So this would be true of all visions?

S: Ah! - depending upon what one means by visions, A vision can be just an idetic image.

Prasannasiddhi: So, with regards to the subject/object, you were saying, is it that if you make it sort of on the subjective side, you could look at yourself making the effort and on the objective side, that...

S: You can see things in terms of your being helped.

Prasannasiddhi: I see. Yes. So it's a two way sort of...

S: Yes. I mean, if you change, or if you transform your state of consciousness, in a sense, at the same time you transform the world in which you live. If you transform your state of consciousness, in a sense, you transform your world. You find yourself living in another world, even seeing other people - inhabitants - of that other world. I mean the one is the counterpart of the other. I mean, you certainly can't see the Buddha, so to speak, without lifting yourself to the Buddha's world, the world in which, the sphere of existence in which, or the plane of existence on which, or plane of consciousness on which the Buddha as it were lives.

Aryamitra: Is this what a Buddha field is?

S: No, a Buddha field is some more literal sort of expression, there is the whole area, the whole universe over which, or rather for which, one particular Buddha has a spiritual responsibility, responsibility for leading and guiding and teaching the beings within that area. He may not be seen by the majority of the inhabitants of that, that Buddha field.

Aryamitra: But I mean, would that really differ if you take it on a lower level and say that as you're, as you change your state of consciousness, you actually live in another world, you see things in another world, you see inhabitants of that world, well, it wouldn't just be your world would it, you're sharing it with other people.

S: You're sharing it, yes.(long pause) Well, if you change your state of consciousness, you'll experience changes. Things come to you, so to speak, in a different sort of way and that

includes people coming to you, different people, in this case the Buddha Maitreya, if you change you're state of consciousness sufficiently.

Aryamitra: Could this happen on a lower level as well? You know, say not with the Buddha Maitreya but just human beings, (more) positive human beings.

S: Well, if one changes one's mental state especially say if one practises Metta Bhavana, you do see people in a different way, it's as though they had changed too, whether they have actually changed, or whether you simply don't project onto them in the way that you did, that's another question. But it does seem that people have changed very often. You just see things more positively, perhaps you see things more truly. Perhaps you've got some negativity, some subjective impressions out of the way, through your meditation, you can just see everything differently. It's changed, in a sense, in a manner of speaking. I mean, this is a commonplace, in a way it's a commonplace with poetry, there's several poems describing a young man sort of travelling over a landscape, walking through a landscape. One, when he's on his way to meet his beloved, you know, everything looks so beautiful and, two, on the way back after she's rejected him (laughter) when everything looks utterly different, but it's the same landscape that he's walking through, in a sense. See.

There's a poem by Crabbe to this effect and another poem by, I think, Wordsworth, also to this effect.

Prasannasiddhi: One often notices this quite a lot when one's been away on a retreat, like if you've been to Padmaloka for a few weeks, you go back into the city and you just see things completely differently, you see things that you didn't see before, it almost seems sort of alien, worldly, it can seem like this, sort of alien, world that you're coming back into.

S: Does one see it more positively then, or does one just see it more clearly?

Ratnaketu: When you see it more clearly, you see the positive things that are there.

S: Well, also you see the negative things that are there and don't delude yourself any longer that those negative things aren't negative.

Alright then, the Raven concludes, "Learn therefore to gain these virtues, for help comes through them." It's as though in the long run, you help yourself, because you have to start off the whole process of being helped.

Ratnaketu: It's good to have a positive song or an uplifting song after the other one which was a bit yuck.(short pause)

S: Anyway, the refrain is, 'Help will come', help will come, but provided, provided you do

this and you do that.

Amoghacitta: So it's a bit like there's help - there's help on every level of involvement if you like, and you've just got to get there first.

S: Yes, well, you've got to make the appropriate effort on that level.(pause)

Aryamitra: When something, on an ordinary level comes your way, that's very beneficial and people say, 'well, that's lucky', you know, and things like that, is there such a thing as that, is everything part of your karma, your actions?

S: Well no, that's not the Buddhist view, that everything is the result of individual karma, no. Every action, every willed action that you perform has a result but not everything that you experience is the result of a karma which you have personally performed. So, some things may come to you, as it were, just by accident, it could be. Not that they don't have a cause, but their cause is not to be found within your personal karma.

Well, this is inevitable, because, I mean you're living together with so many other people, you've got your individual karmas, but you're having to live together, maybe that in a sense is part of your individual karma. So that means that what effects other people also effects you, even though it may not be anything to do with your personal karma.

Prasannasiddhi: And also, if things were entirely dependent upon your personal karma, and if you were in the gravitational pull of the conditioned, which means that there are more conditioned things sort of pulling you there, or keeping you there, well then in a way you would never be able to escape the gravitational pull unless something came from outside.

S: Also, there is the point that, the beginning of the samsara, therefore the beginning of your personal karma even cannot be perceived. If everything was true to your karma, everything that happens to you and if at the same time you had to experience the result of everything that you've ever done, you'd never get out, you'd never get off the Wheel of Life. But, fortunately for us, the Law of Karma is not an '*iron law*' as some of our friends like to call it, because there are some karmas that if they don't bear fruit after a certain time, they lose their force, they lose their efficacy, you don't have to experience the results of those karmas. That's according to the Abhidharma.

And, then again, not all the things that happen to you happen as a result of your personal karma, including some of the good things that happen to you. They're sort of just, as it were, gratuitous. You just happen to be there, in the right place at the right time. You're just, in a manner of speaking, lucky. As I said, not that those things happen without a cause, they do have a cause, they do happen in dependence on conditions, but your karma is not among them, your personal karma is not among them.

Aryamitra: Yes, except that you were there.

S: In other words, the Law of Karma, so to speak, cannot keep everybody separate from one another and apportion to each of them just their own individual karma. That isn't possible. By virtue of your association with other people, which is also part of your karma in a more general sense, you cannot but, to some extent, experience the results of - or be involved in the results of - other people's skilful or unskillful actions and they in yours.

Aryamitra: Yes, this is why you have to associate with spiritual friends, spiritual people have friends who are...

S: Well, there's not only the direct benefit of their company, but also some of their good karma perhaps, so to speak, rubs off onto you. (laughter) I mean, maybe their good karma is such that they're never going to be drowned at sea. O.K., so long as you're travelling (laughs) by ship or by boat with them, you're safe (laughter), comparatively. You do find this sort of thing, I mean, there are some people who seem accident prone and if you associate with them you get involved in their accidents and vice- versa.

Anyway, the little Wagtail rose, so who's going to be the little Wagtail? Who's going to wag their little tail and recite this?

Ratnaketu: "Thereupon the little Wagtail rose, sharpened his beak three times, and said:
gtin rin, which means deep and vast.

"Deep and vast, this ocean of ills, the world of Samsara.

Deep and vast, these hells for the evil doer.

Deep and vast, this gulf of the states of woe.

Deep and vast, the promptings of worldly thoughts.

Deep and vast, the cravings for food and dress.

Deep and vast, the fetters of love of self.

Deep and vast, the aftermath of evil habits.

Deep and vast, the morass of wicked deeds.

Let us then, make ready to leave this world of Samsara,
which is so deep and vast."

S: Mmm. This is another sort of Insight into the emptiness of the conditioned. 'Deep and vast, this ocean of ills, this world of Samsara.' So, deep and vast is the refrain here. If you're up against the Samsara, you really are up against something.

'Deep and vast, these hells for the evil-doer.

Deep and vast, this gulf of the states of woe,'

that is to say the three states of woe, those of the hungry ghosts, the animals and the beings in hell. So, 'Deep and vast, the promptings of worldly thought'. In other words, the gravitational pull is very strong indeed. Can one really say very much about these first three lines? All three of them represent pretty strong statements. What do we mean by saying the world of Samsara is deep and vast. What exactly does that mean? In what sense is it deep, in what sense is it vast? What is the significance of these statements?

Silabhadra: They just pervade all things.

Silaratna: you find that people, when they get into really sort of really bad negative states and they can never ever see their way out of them. It just seems to be...

S: Yes, yes. Or you could, say, use the hippie phrase and say well, this world of Samsara is really heavy or this ocean of ills is really heavy. Yes it's very difficult to get out of.

Ratnaketu: It reminds me of that thing you said as well that Samsara won't exhausted by Samsara.

S: So "Deep and vast, these hells for the evil-doer" - there's plenty of space in hell. Don't worry about if you commit too many unskillful actions, there won't be room in hell for you, there'll be plenty of room, the hells are deep and vast. In other words, there are many possibilities of downfall. For Samsara is very much with us, it's all pervading, it seems sometimes all-powerful, it's very difficult to get away from, very difficult to avoid falling

into it again and again and again. Or one knows that, even, say, leaving a retreat. Or in a sense, in a manner of speaking, while you've been on the retreat, you haven't been in the Samsara, in the world of the Samsara. In a sense you have, but in another sense you haven't, you've been in a quite different world, almost in a Pure Land, but once you leave that retreat it's very easy to fall into the world of Samsara, very easy to fall into the ocean of ills, even very easy to fall into the hells, into the states of woe, by committing unskillful actions. I mean, as Milarepa says, we accumulate sin by the pound and the stone. Using the word sin of course Hopefully he meant unskillfulness.

But the main meaning seems to be that the Samsara is very difficult to get out of, very difficult to avoid. It's very much with one. It's a very powerful, almost an irresistible influence. And then, coming closer home as it were, being more personal, "Deep and vast, the promptings of worldly thought". What does one mean by 'Worldly thought'? I suppose technically it means any thought, any mental state tainted with craving, with aversion and with delusion. So the promptings of such thoughts are very deep and very vast. One's motivations, almost all the time, are essentially Samsaric, essentially worldly. One's always on the lookout for some kind of worldly satisfaction, not on the lookout for the Dharma. So, 'Deep and vast are the promptings of worldly thought.'

It's as though one's worldly, unskillful motivations are sort of unfathomable or fathomless, they're without bottom. One's craving is without bottom, one's aversion is without bottom, one's delusion is without bottom. There's always something for one to draw upon of that nature. We never get to the bottom, so to speak, we never exhaust such thoughts, such worldly thought. There's no question of your thinking in terms of satisfying all your cravings and then, when you've satisfied them, then starting to lead a spiritual life. I mean, some people think in those sort of terms. Satisfy all your worldly desires and get your worldly life out of the way in that manner and then start on the spiritual life, then everything will be clear and straightforward, so they say, but they overlook the fact that your cravings are, so to speak, fathomless, inexhaustible. In a million lifetimes you can't exhaust them, they just have to stop, you just have to not give in at some point. Just have to refuse to satisfy them, refuse to indulge them. They're never going to stop of their own accord, they're never going to be fully and finally satisfied and then leave you at peace to get on with other things. (long pause)

I mean, sometimes, in such contexts as encounter groups, people talk in terms of sort of exhausting their negativity, or exhausting their anger, experiencing it fully. This is actually quite impossible, you can't, you can never get to the bottom of it in a way. In a sense, you're always replenishing it, always sort of recreating it, because the Samsara is a wheel, it's going round and round and you don't get to the end of the wheel by turning it and turning it. You get to the end of the wheel by just stopping to turn it. So there's no question of sort of someone experiencing their negativity, experiencing their anger fully and being sort of clear of it.

Silabhadra: It's like through indulging in it you get even more caught in Samsara.

S: Yes. That is not to say that there may not be something unexpressed, something blocked, something frustrated within you which you need - just with regard to that particular matter - just to get out, to express. That's another matter but there's no question, no possibility of giving full expression to your total negativity, it's not as though it's a fixed quantity. It's an indefinite possibility. You can just go on and on and on being negative without ever stopping. So there's no question of exploring it fully, you are in fact, in the name of exploration simply indulging, simply renewing, recreating. (pause)

So in the literal sense, there's no question of letting it all hang out - it's too big! (laughter)
You can't let it all hang out. It's pointless, pointless even to try. (pause)

What do we come to now? Oh, "Deep and vast, the cravings for food and dress." Is that true, or is that an exaggeration? Is the cravings for food 'deep and vast'? Is there, sort of, no end to it? Is that putting it rather too strongly?

Ratnaketu: There's no end in the sense that you want some more every day.

S: That's different, because after all, the body needs replenishing, your energy needs renewing, and the word here - I don't know how literally we can take that - is *craving*, which is neurotic desire. A Preta-like desire. So, can a Preta-like desire, can a craving for food ever be satisfied? If it can't ever be satisfied, it's 'deep and vast'. It's deep and vast because it's neurotic. I mean, the Pretas, the hungry ghosts they represent this sort of craving. They've got enormous bellies representing... well, the deep and vast nature of their craving, but they've got mouths like the eyes of needles and necks which are long and thin like those of geese or swans, or cranes rather - cranes. This represents their limited capacity for satisfaction, because a neurotic desire, a craving, cannot in fact be satisfied. You eat and you're still hungry, you still want to eat more, even though your stomach is full and this cannot but be neurotic. So, such cravings are deep and vast. They represent an unfathomable sort of pit, a bottomless pit of craving, in this case for food or for food and drink.

But why should one crave for food in this way? As distinct from desiring food, because you've a healthy appetite and just want to keep yourself going physically. Why does one have this craving for food? Why does one have the bottomless pit of this craving for food? I mean, is it a very common phenomenon?

You think it is, huh?

Silabhadra: It's like compensation for something you're taking something in but it's not satisfactory...

S: So what's it a compensation for? And beware the psychological cliché. What is it a

compensation for? Well, why do you take something in? What does that do when you take something in?

Amoghacitta: You've incorporated it.

S: You've filled an empty space. So that means you're feeling an emptiness. So if actually your stomach is not literally empty, perhaps it might be full, full to bursting, but you still feel empty. So that cannot be a literal emptiness of the stomach, so what is that emptiness that you feel when your stomach is full, and which you try to satisfy by cramming still more food into your defenceless stomach? (laughter) What is it? What is that emptiness?

Ratnaketu: An emptiness of self in a sense. Not ultimately so but in a sense of not really feeling very there at all.

S: You don't experience yourself would you say? There's a sort of emptiness where there should be a positive experience of self.

Ratnaketu: I went on a three-day solitary retreat once, when I was a Mitra, and I just ate the whole time I was on it. (laughter)

S: Assuming that you weren't just hungry. (laughter)

Ratnaketu: I wasn't just hungry, I was eating all the time, and I figured it was because, looking now, maybe because usually I'd never been on my own before and usually our selves are reinforced by our contact with other people and when there's no other people to reinforce ourselves, we want to do it somehow.

S: Yes, but what about dress. We don't usually think in terms of craving for dress. Do you think this is very important, is there a sort of bottomless pit of craving for dress in people?

Aryamitra: I think there is.

S: In general. I mean, when I say general, I mean among people outside the F.W.B.O.

Aryamitra: Yes, I think there is. You have a lot of clothes shops and expensive boutiques. I know somebody who spends, I'd never believe he spends about thirty pounds on a jumper. I think there is a lot. It's the reverse in the Friends. (laughs)

S: But perhaps we'll go into that particular manifestation in a minute. So what are you trying to compensate for, if it is a question of compensation by buying or by buying and wearing new clothes?

Amoghacitta: It's your superficial self. It's the self that other people seeing, kind of augmented (unclear), largely dependent on what you wear.

S: So perhaps again it comes down to what Ratnaketu was saying in the case of food, an insufficient or inadequate experience of yourself. You don't feel that you've got a self to present to the world, so you present a suit of clothes, a new suit. I mean, could it be that, is it as simple as that, or are other factors also involved?

Ratnaketu: I think it's also group factors like especially with young people and certain sort of movements, especially connected with music where there are certain kinds of dress, certain kinds of clothes come in and if you really want to be part of the 'in' crowd, you've got to wear all those clothes which means you have to buy them.

S: Yes. Well, one notices with all these little men who come on Sunday mornings with their guns, they're all kitted out in the same sort of way, which seems rather unnecessary, because even if they manage to shoot the odd little bird, you don't need a special kind of cap or special kind of breeches or special kind of boots in which to do it. (laughter)

Amoghacitta: They're all kitted out like in combat clothes.

S: Mmm. Combat gear - yes, yes.

Silaratna: Do you think it could be interpreted sort of like in a wider sense, just like say sustenance and shelter, more sort of...

S: Well, it does say clothing, I suppose these are the two basic needs. In Buddhism traditionally there are said to be four basic needs, - food, shelter, clothing and medicine. These are said to be the four things which the monk can rightfully expect or in a sense even demand from the lay community, the lay supporters. Food, clothing, shelter and medicine.

Amoghacitta: You can have a neurotic desire for these two other things as well, in a sense, can't you? You could have a craving or a neurotic desire for those other two things as well. Bigger houses (unclear).

S: Yes indeed.

Prasannasiddhi: It does seem this sort of wearing clothes thing in the same way that other - you know, the same clothes as other people - that does seem a bit different from perhaps a more extreme, just buying lots and lots of clothes and always trying to present a new outfit, always wearing a new outfit.

S: Well, some people have lots and lots of clothes which perhaps they don't wear very often.

I don't know whether women are more prone to this really than men - they're said to be.

Ratnaketu: Yes, my mother. In my parents bedroom there is this big double wardrobe and on one side is my father's clothes and the other side is my mother's. My mother's always took up about three quarters or more, my fathers just took about a sixth or so.

S: Well, isn't this perhaps to some extent due to social requirements and presuppositions that a woman is supposed to look more pretty and attractive and therefore to need more sort of dresses to change into than a man, you don't wonder too much, you don't think about it if you see a man in the same suit every day, you know, day after day, week after week, even month after month, but you would be surprised if you saw a woman in the same frock week after week and month after month. But is that just cultural conditioning?

Prasannasiddhi: Maybe, but why did it come about?

S: Yes, why did it come about? I mean, Indian women, they wear the same sari all their life, I mean not that the same garment but the same type, the same style of garment all the time, they don't have any need for change. Well, some of the modernised ones do now, but they're still in the minority.

Ratnaketu: It's interesting that in nature the male birds are usually more beautifully decorated than the females.

S: Well, nature has here own reasons for that. Well, in some periods of human history the human male has been more gorgeously decorated than the human female, with lots of rings and gold chains and feathers and brooches and anklets and all sorts of things.

Prasannasiddhi: I was thinking about why women sort of dressed themselves up so much and I was thinking that in a way for a woman, her basic objective in life was to get herself a man so she's kind of geared towards perhaps getting or attracting a man to her so she's doing as much as she can just externally to do that..

S: Well, the point has been made, I seem to remember reading a short story about it not so long ago, that after marriage a woman often neglects herself, doesn't bother so much. well certainly doesn't bother to make herself as attractive looking for her husband as she did when her husband was still, so to speak, courting her.

Ratnaketu: I remember someone, when she was in New Zealand, had to get a job, you know, as a secretary once in a big office and she, I remember her saying that there are no men about whatsoever, but all the women really were dressing up, you know, really going to great lengths to dress up and she felt that it was more like it wasn't so much for the men that they're doing it, it's for each other, that there was a sort of competition between the women

to see who could get themselves the prettiest.

S: But why should there be that competition and what was the prize for the winner? (laughter) There's no competition without a prize. It may be just a question of keeping one's hand in, you know, just getting in a bit of practice for the real thing, the real situation.

Amoghacitta: Presumably in such an instance there'd be no superiority involved.

S: But can men get neurotic about dress? They certainly can.

Silaratna: You do sort of get used to a particular style, I mean like when, on the very few times when I've had to say wear a tie, it just feels really, it feels completely strange (laughter) because I'm just used to wearing sort of....

S: That's a little bit like some of those people in the old days at Sukhavati who refused to get their hair cut. You know, one thinks of oneself in a definite way, you associate a tie with being in a particular way, being a particular kind of person, so you don't feel comfortable wearing it and it's entirely due to your psychological attitude. I don't think so much that a tie is physically uncomfortable, you feel uncomfortable mentally, because of the associations, the social associations of a tie. In the same way, you can feel comfortable or kid yourself that you feel comfortable even in a dress which is uncomfortable. I remember a few years ago, I happened to hear two teenage girls talking, and one was wearing, I don't know what you'd call them, but, anyway, well, I suppose you could call them shoes, but they were completely unnatural and she was tottering along and having great difficulty keeping her balance and she must have been suffering excruciating torture - I would have thought. But I overheard her saying to her friend, who was asking her about them, 'Oh, they're ever so comfortable!' (laughter). And she was persuading her friend to buy a pair too.

Silabhadra: It's also like, I think it's probably Victorian society with the women in their corsets.

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S: Yes, tight lacing. Or men, men used to tight lace themselves at an earlier period because very small waists were fashionable for men. To emphasize the breadth of their shoulders. So men, I think in Byron's time, used to wear stays. Dandies used to wear stays. They used to lace themselves up tightly to pull their waists in.

Prasannasiddhi: What were they doing that for?

S: Well, as I said, to give themselves a trimmer figure and to make their shoulders seem broader and, so to speak, more manly in comparison.

Prasannasiddhi: Just to sort of, what was the competition for them though?

S: What was the competition? I suppose social success. It was more of course among the upper classes who had leisure for such things and the money - not ordinary people.

Silabhadra: And make-up as well.

S: Make-up as well, and again, make-up is another matter. You could include this in dress, huh? I mean, why do? - I was going to say people but it's women mainly, why do women make-up? They're not satisfied with the features they've got. They don't, in a sense, accept themselves. That's why I discourage women using make-up within the Friends. I think it's a very unhealthy, almost neurotic manifestation besides being bad for themselves (unclear) cheap make-up is bad for the skin.

Khemananda: Even like the word "make up" suggests that something has to be made up. (unclear). You're not good enough as you are, your own beauty, your own natural beauty.

S: Even if you aren't beautiful. Sometimes there might be a doubt about that but, in any case, you're better as you are really. So 'Deep and vast are the cravings for food and dress.' And shelter and medicine. 'Deep and vast are the fetters of love of self.' Usually, I'm afraid, people consider themselves first, don't they - consciously or unconsciously. I mean (unclear) speaking, they please themselves. They do what they want to do most of the time, to the extent that they can. Presumably the line is not referring to a healthy, objective positive love of self such as you should experience in the first stage of the metta bhavana. Presumably it's referring to something unhealthy, even neurotic.

Prasannasiddhi: I think that you've mentioned at one stage something about one almost couldn't help being a little, kind of self orientated as long as one had a physical body.

S: Well, yes, because, I mean, you've got a physical body, it's your body. If you don't look after it, who else is going to do so? If you don't feed it, if you don't clothe it, if you don't wash it, if you don't exercise it, then who else is going to do it? Only you. You've got a natural feeling, a natural instinct of self-preservation almost, to do that. So that cannot but make you, in a way, self-orientated - the mere fact that you've got a physical body.

Prasannasiddhi: So with regards to sort of pleasing, people pleasing themselves, first it would almost seem as if you have to, in a way. It's almost like to start, you satisfy yourself then maybe you look out and see if there is anything else.

S: Well again, it's like the metta bhavana, the natural progression is from loving yourself to loving a near and dear friend and then even neutral and inimical people and eventually everybody.

Ratnaketu: It's sort of objective love for yourself as well, instead of subjective.

S: Yes, yes. I mean love itself is a fetter only so long as your love, or let's say even your metta - which is a positive thing - is confined to yourself and has no tendency to go beyond yourself. (pause) And of course, it's not so much that love is the fetter but the limitation of the love that is the fetter. It's not that you should stop loving yourself, love yourself by all means, develop metta towards yourself, look after yourself, but not only after yourself. Try to widen the circle, try to expand yourself.

Khemananda: It would seem almost that if you were really loving yourself, the natural expression of that would be that you'd want to expand yourself.

S: Ah, yes.

Khemananda: If you truly love yourself you want to communicate more deeply with other people because you want to give yourself that experience. You'd be more aware of other people. Go outwards from there.

Prasannasiddhi: It's as if these sort of fetters of love of self, and also the cravings for food and dress, perhaps, represent when you've kind of got a bit out of hand and you're involved in a neurotic way, rather than in just a kind of natural...

S: Yes, because you need to eat, you need to clothe yourself and, in a sense, you need to love yourself, there's nothing wrong with all that provided it's carried out in an objective, healthy sort of way, a skilful way. It's the craving which is 'deep and vast'; the fetters which are 'deep and vast'. (pause) Because the craving for more food than you need and more dress than you need and refusing to extend your love of self beyond yourself, which I think is meant here. Those cravings which are fetters.

Prasannasiddhi: But the deep and vastness, refers to kind of, when it's your energies, is sort of moving in that direction, the sort of neurotic and you can just keep going in that direction.

S: Yes. It's 'deep and vast' because there's no end to it. A neurotic craving can never be satisfied. An objective craving or desire can be satisfied, a healthy desire for food can be satisfied but a neurotic craving for food can never be satisfied. I mean even if you had a stomach as big as the world, as big as the universe, it would still feel empty.(pause)

Prasannasiddhi: But there is a level on which craving or desire for food and dress and to love yourself are sort of valid.

S: Yes, yes. Well, they're necessary, they're the starting point.

Prasannasiddhi: It's a bit difficult when one's thinking in terms of enlightenment being extinction from all, you know, no longer desiring all sorts of worldly things, and being content with some other state. It seems difficult to think in terms of like how you fit that in with your own basic sort of human needs.

S: Well one might say, 'Did the Buddha desire too?' Well the Buddha certainly ate regularly, ate every day. Went to collect food, went on his alms round, consumed the food. So that would suggest that consumption of food and presumably desire for food is not incompatible with enlightenment. But there are two things to be said here. First of all that the Buddha did not, that the fact that the Buddha, let us say, desired food did not mean that the Buddha desired from food that which food could not give. He saw clearly, presumably, that food was simply to sustain the life and strength of the body. He didn't expect anything more from it than that. He saw its limitations. So that the desire for food in that sense was not incompatible presumably with his experience of enlightenment. And certainly he saw the limitations even of a sort of healthy desire for food and certainly there was no neurotic craving for food in the case of the Buddha. But clearly he was, in a manner of speaking, concerned to keep his physical body alive and functioning. He did not neglect it; he was not so absorbed in the enlightenment experience, so to speak, that he neglected his physical body. That was, after all, the instrument through which he functioned, through which he contacted people spoke to people, helped people and preached the Dharma.

In the same way he clothed himself, he sheltered himself, took medicine. But that was all.

Prasannasiddhi: You could say that was an aspect of his enlightenment experience, was that the desire...

S: Yes. you could regard it as a skillful means. In a sense he had no personal interest in keeping his body going. It would have made no difference to him personally, to his enlightenment experience, if the body just dropped off and he gained Parinirvana straight away. So you could say that he kept it going as a skillful means. And that is to say his desire for food and etc. was not a selfish desire. Even though it was a desire for food for his body. Because the use he was making of the body itself, the use he was making of it, was an unselfish use.

Prasannasiddhi: Do you think one could actually say that - he would've just (unclear) from his enlightenment experience such that if it wasn't for other people, he wouldn't have been worried about...

S: If it had not been for other people, presumably he would have had no motivation to stay alive. But on the other hand, not that he would have had any motivation to die either. I mean, some of the arahants make that point that, I mean, I think it was Sariputta "I do not wish for life, I do not wish for death, I just take my wages like a daily workman."

Prasannasiddhi: But perhaps you could say that perhaps you can't really separate the things and look at it from the point of view that if there were no human beings, he would just have let himself die, or...

S: I don't think that even then he would have just let himself die, because the body would have had its own self preserving mechanism so to speak. And he would have had no reason, so to speak, to oppose the operation of that, because he would have had no desire for death anymore than he had a desire for life. So since the body was there and was as it were his body, he would allow it to go on functioning, would give it the food that it needed, or it would give itself the food that it needed. He'd have no reason to oppose that. On the other hand, he had no reason either for making any special effort to prolong that particular process. No desire for life, no desire for death. Just carry on functioning.

Prasannasiddhi: I suppose that's in a way sort of hypothetical, because there actually are sentient beings in the world, that is part of the ...

S: Yet we don't know what might have happened in other circumstances. One, we know the Buddha was enlightened; two, we know he went on living after his enlightenment and, three, we do know that there were other living beings around, especially human beings whom he taught. Those are the three facts as far as we know them from history.

So what would have happened had there not been other beings around. We really don't know, we can only speculate. So, in a sense, we can only speculate what kept the Buddha going. Though no doubt compassion did enter into it. Because this is what he says, he made that point. That he teaches out of compassion, out of comfort for, or fellow feeling or sympathy. Though the point does seem to be that, for whatsoever reason, feeding oneself or keeping oneself alive, looking after the physical body is not incompatible with the state of enlightenment. So it does seem that one can do these things, as it were, objectively. (pause)

Well, let's go on shall we? 'Deep and vast, the aftermath of evil habits'. Evil habits would seem to mean unskillful karmas which have become now habitual. There's a difference between an evil action and an evil habit. An evil habit of course is much worse. It's an evil action which is performed regularly, which has become, so to speak, second nature, which you perform unthinkingly again and again. What is this 'aftermath of evil habits'? It's presumably the retribution?

Silaratna: Guilt?(pause)

S: It could also include guilt, yes. (pause) This whole question of habit is very important. It's very easy to form habits. In some ways it's necessary to form habits because you don't want to have to stop and think about everything all the time. Habits are useful, they make it possible for one to function more easily and smoothly. So one should be careful to form

habits which are positive and helpful rather than habits which are negative and unhelpful, which are skilful rather than unskillful. Inasmuch as one finds oneself in an unchanging situation, in a fixed situation, one tends to do things in a fixed sort of way, and in that way you form habits. Do you see what I mean? Well, that we get up at a particular hour each day. There's no logical reason why you should get up at the same hour each day. You could vary it every day. But it's more convenient if you get up at the same time every day, have breakfast at the same time, meditate at the same time. You're more likely to get through all the things that you want to do - that you need to do. You may have a habit of having your hair cut every two weeks. Because then you don't have to think about it, you know, you have it cut every two weeks, so when two weeks have gone, you go and have it cut, you don't give the matter any thought, you've settled that. You know that you're going to have it cut every two weeks. You don't have to stop and think about everything. But it is important that the habits that you form are not harmful habits.

Aryamitra: So a sort of regular life is a better sort of life?

S: Yes, yes. I mean the things that you do, especially the things that you do regularly, that you do habitually, have a very powerful effect on your mind, on your mental state, on your whole being. So you should watch how you form habits. Watch what habits you are forming, what are the things that you're doing repeatedly. Especially perhaps in the line of work. I mean work usually involves the repetition of certain actions doesn't it?

Aryamitra: Could you sort of control desires, instead of by trying to give them up totally, by actually making a specific time for that?

S: Also limiting them in that way. Well yes, I think one could. Well one does that with food. For instance, you could make a resolution, alright I'm going to confine myself to my meals; I'm not going to have snacks in between. I'm not going to have, you know, the odd *Mars Bar* or extra cup of coffee or cream bun - I'm just going to stick to my meals. Or you could even limit the meals but at the same time have them regularly. If you know you've an absolute irresistible urge for let's say *Mars Bars*, alright, have one a week.

Aryamitra: Yes, even have it on a specific day.

Ratnaketu: That's really important because sometimes I've got a strong craving for a particular thing like a *Mars bar* or something like that, and I try and throw the whole thing all at once and there's no structure to my abandonment of it and it breaks down quite easily but if I say, alright, I'll have one every Tuesday morning.

S: I mean that's after a while, after a period of habitual indulgence in that way you can just drop it. One can have it every other Tuesday morning, or even the first Tuesday in every month. (laughter) Then the first Tuesday after the third Sunday before. (laughter) But one

should watch, as I say, what habits one is forming. One usually forms habits quite unconsciously, just due to the influence of your environment, the circumstances in which you are living.

Silabhadra: When you talk about having some work habits and being careful of those ...

S: Well, work itself is a habit? Isn't it something that you're doing regularly, you're doing all the time. But also watch what habits of work you are forming because you tend not only to do the same work over and over again, but you do it in a particular way. Form little minor habits in connection with the work. You have to watch those and see what effect they're having on you. You may for instance be in a business where orders come in. You may develop the habit of leaving those orders or not attending to those orders until, say, the next day. That might be a bad habit. Bad in terms of the business and bad in the sense that it represents an element of procrastination in your character which you're strengthening. You form the bad habit of not disposing of those orders until after they've arrived, when perhaps they should be disposed of immediately. Do you see what I mean? (pause) Well, you know, you form the bad habit of treating your subordinates in a certain way, a way which is negative. You get into that sort of habit. Maybe you're very sharp with them or snappy with them or short with them. And you don't notice that that's how you're beginning to treat everybody that works with you or works under you. It becomes habitual. You just get that sort of reputation, 'Oh, he's very short' or 'He's very sharp, he's a bit snappy all the time.' That becomes a sort of permanent part of your character, or at least while you're at work. You haven't noticed perhaps that you have formed that particular habit, that way of treating people, of dealing with people. Or you may get into the habit of answering the 'phone in a certain way without realising it. You form another little habit which may or may not be a good one.

Silaratna: In terms of the fetters, habit is usually talked of as being of one of the first three fetters, the first three fetters - habit, superficiality and vagueness. But then you've got craving sort of further on. I couldn't see quite how, craving's so tied up with habits in some way, how, you have craving without having a habit - habitual sort of response to something.

S: Well, the lower fetters represent the cruder forms of certain unskillful states and actions, one shouldn't try to compartmentalise them too literally. I think I've said that you yourself may just be a bad habit which you've got into. (laughter) Your whole being may represent a bad habit, you don't have to be the way you are. You could be completely different tomorrow, turn over a new leaf, form a fresh set of habits. Easier said than done in a way. But one could summarise the whole matter by saying that Habits - or just habit - habit is a good servant but a bad master. (pause)

And then lastly, 'Deep and vast the morass of wicked deeds.' Well, this doesn't in a way really bear contemplating. A morass is a swamp or a mire. A swamp of wicked deeds. It

doesn't really say clearly whether one's own or other peoples, perhaps both.

'Let us then make ready to leave this world of Samsara which is so deep and vast.' The reflection is inspiring a sort of serene withdrawal. One has had this sort of knowledge and vision of things as they really are, one has seen the Samsara as it really is, one has seen the emptiness of the Conditioned, so one, as it were, withdraws from it, one disentangles oneself from it, one leaves it, one no longer looks for any refuge in it. (pause)

Alright then, I'll think we'll leave it there.

tape 6

S: Now we come to page 24. (long pause) We come to what the ruddy sheldrake says. (pause)

Amoghacitta: "Thereupon the Great Ruddy Sheldrake rose and said: *os gtor, os gtor,* which means, *one must do without, one must do without*"
"Dwelling in the world of Samsara one must do without bliss.
Without the celestial Dharma, one must do without deliverance.
Without reward earned for past gifts, one must do without all riches.
Without devotion, one must do without the blessing from on high.
When personal worth is small, one must do without a spiritual guide.
Without wisdom, one must do without virtues.
When leading a homeless life, one must do without affection.
Without a good character, one must do without companions.
When one commits offences with women one must do without capacity
for deeds of lasting worth."

S: This discourse or speech of the ruddy sheldrake is somewhat like that of the golden goose inasmuch as it deals with things which are incompatible, but nonetheless people want those incompatible things, but there are things which really are incompatible, which don't go together, so if you have the one you can't expect the other. So in this sort of way the ruddy sheldrake says, "Dwelling in the world of Samsara, one must do without bliss". Well, you can't have both. If you want to join the world of Samsara, if you insist on being reborn, if you want to live in the world, if you want to enjoy worldly life, well one must do without bliss in that case. 'Bliss' meaning, presumably, not only higher spiritual happiness, but even a continued or uninterrupted mundane happiness. (pause) If people want to go on dwelling in the world of Samsara, they don't realise that it's impossible to do that happily for very long. Then they want to dwell in the world of Samsara but at the same time they want to be completely happy. But those two things are incompatible, they are inconsistent. you can't do both at the same time. you can't go on dwelling in the world of Samsara and at the same time be completely happy. You've got to do without, you've got to give up either the one or the other. You've either got to do without the world of Samsara or do without bliss. Most people apparently prefer to do without bliss. (laughter) Even though they say that happiness is what they want.

Ratnaketu: Why do people prefer to do without bliss?

S: Well speaking from one's own experience, what does one think?

Aryamitra: Too much effort to obtain it?

S: It isn't a kind of (1 or 2 words unclear) it's just sort of blindness; one doesn't see where one's actions are leading one. One doesn't see what would really bring one happiness.(pause)

Ratnaketu: So many things appear false like they appear to lead to bliss, but don't.

S: Maybe you're all misled from your earliest youth. You were brought up thinking that certain things would give you happiness. (pause) I had a friend once, quite a few years ago. I met him shortly after I returned to England in '64. He started coming along to my lectures, came along first of all, I think, to the one on death. It was a special interest at that time. He was in rather a depressed state. But he subsequently told me that he had been brought up think - brought up by his parents to think - that there was one sort of sole, ultimate source of happiness, having achieved which you're going to be happy just ever after, live in bliss, live in paradise. And that was marriage. And he believed this. So much so that he remained quite celibate until he was married. That was (unclear) at the age of 21 and then he slowly discovered, well after a few months, that marriage was not bliss, that it wasn't a sort of heaven on earth. All problems were not solved as soon as you got married and this was a terrible shock to him. It seemed incredible that someone should actually have been brought up in this way by parents who weren't very happily married, that he should have believed all

this. He was a rather naive sort of person, though at the same time, in many ways, quite intelligent. But he really believed this, or he had believed this. And it was a disappointment from which I think he never recovered. I don't think he got over it, and that was a friend who eventually committed suicide. So really he had placed all his hopes there, apparently, and he'd had some sort of psychological difficulties or troubles when he was in his teens, but then he felt, well, as soon as you get married, well, life is just bliss. He really believed that. He was in a sense quite gullible. He'd lived a rather sheltered, protected sort of life. (pause) And after a few months he started wondering, when is the bliss going to start coming. But it didn't ever come.

Ratnaketu: I remember a similar sort of thing like that. I was always told the years at school were the happiest years of my life. (laughter) I couldn't understand it. I really didn't. But what was to come were the (unclear) years of my life. (laughter)

S: So one can't really expect complete unadulterated happiness from worldly things. You've got to take your choice or make your choice. (long pause) It doesn't say - and one must be careful to understand this correctly - this doesn't mean, this doesn't mean to say that you can't experience spiritual happiness while dwelling in the world of Samsara - you can. But it's a spiritual happiness that you can experience, not a complete, uninterrupted worldly happiness. You see the difference? (murmurs of assent) It's not that you can't experience happiness or bliss. I mean dwelling in, so to speak, the world of Samsara, you can. But in that case it will not be a worldly happiness, it will not come from any worldly source or any worldly object - not if it's very deep and very lasting. (pause) I find that people have got very fixed ideas about happiness. In the case of this friend of mine, he had the fixed idea that happiness was to be found in marriage and only marriage. But other people have got equally fixed ideas; that happiness means having a wife and family, having a good steady job, having enough money, being able to afford holidays abroad, being able to buy your own house, own your own house. That is happiness. So one can tell that people have got these fixed ideas about what constitutes happiness, because when they see you, you being the average member of the FWBO - male member, that is - living in a men's community, working in a co-op, they think that you can't possibly be happy because you haven't got those things, you don't seem to have those things which they're convinced are necessary to happiness. On the other hand you look bright and cheerful enough and that may well puzzle them. To them it appears as a problem - why are you happy?, or, how can you be happy even though you lack these things? They can't understand it because for them, to them it's something that requires explanation. (pause)

Aryamitra: It does seem odd though that people go through their whole lives, you know, in that limited idea of happiness. I suppose they do have spells where they do experience something satisfactory, but (unclear)

S: I think quite a lot of people have probably never experienced happiness. They're quite

cheerful from time to time, or a bit hilarious, or get a bit carried away. But perhaps they've never ever been really happy. (pause) So in a sense they don't know what they're missing. They take the sort of state of mind that they normally experience as being quite normal.(pause)

Ratnaketu: You also get the impression, well I did anyway growing up and becoming aware of history, in the past and other societies other sorts of people - like aborigines or some hill tribes and that - that they can't be happy, that they can't, because they don't have tape-recorders and TV's and cars and things like that. People in the past - how could they have been happy? It must have been awful for them. (laughter)

S: But sometimes reading the literature of the past, even the very recent past, one gets the impression, I don't know to what extent one can rely on this or take it as historical evidence, but one certainly gets the impression that in many ways people enjoyed themselves very much more then than they do now. (murmurs of agreement)

Aryamitra: Is that because there was, I don't know, less distraction or that they had more sense of roots, of belonging, and so forth?

S: Well there was that, but perhaps that has its negative side. One thing that occurred to me is that if one wanted any entertainment, for instance, well you have to provide it yourself. I mean more often than not you had to play or you had to sing, play a musical instrument or you had to sing or get up something or other. You couldn't just sort of turn a little knob and there it was, all laid on for you. Well perhaps you do enjoy in a deeper sense more, something that you've produced or laid on for yourself rather than something which we just passively enjoy, especially if that sort of passive enjoyment becomes habitual.

Silabhadra: It also ceases to become enjoyment at that stage. It's just a continual stream of something.

S: Yes. Apparently in the last century when concerts or what we now call classical music began to be popular, people used to prepare for these weeks in advance, maybe studying the score, playing over the melodies - which they knew they were going to hear - on the piano, accustoming their ear to them, discussing the composer, becoming more and more excited until the great night arrived and then thoroughly enjoying it. But now we've got a collection of records, we just think, shall I listen to Mozart, shall I listen to Handel or to Haydn or to Bach? We think, well no, I've heard them all before, they're a bit dull and a bit uninteresting, perhaps. You can't appreciate or enjoy that in quite the same way, not unless you're very young, very innocent, unsophisticated, perhaps discovering these things for the first time. I don't want to idealise the past but I think there is some truth in this way of looking at things. I certainly wouldn't like to say that, or to assert that people are nowadays more happy

than they have been in the past. Life is more convenient in many ways, more pleasant in many ways. But whether it is actually happier for the majority of people, I think that would be very difficult to say. (pause) One could say that people don't have to work so hard but are they necessarily therefore happier? you could say that people have better clothes to wear, better food to eat, but are they therefore necessarily happier? That isn't proved thereby. Not that they shouldn't have better food and better clothes, but at the same time one has to understand that these things don't necessarily bring happiness. Or as the text said, dwelling in the world of Samsara, or at least dwelling in it in a worldly way, one must do without bliss. Maybe we have gleams of happiness occasionally, but nothing very stable, nothing very lasting, nothing very intense perhaps, or prolonged. (pause)

"Without the celestial Dharma, one must do without deliverance." Sometimes people get fed up with the Samsara, fed up with the world, even worldly people. They think, I'd like to get rid of my job, get rid of my wife, just get rid of everything - I'd like to be free. But "without the celestial Dharma, one must do without deliverance." It's no use deliverance just being a pipe dream. You must be prepared to practise the Dharma if you really want deliverance. Without the Dharma there's no deliverance.

Ratnaketu: I really felt that strongly reading about the English Civil War. It was the book by Christopher Hill, mainly about the common people, about how they seemed to go through a period of just wanting to change everything, but in the end it all came back to the way it had been because they didn't really have anything new to replace it - they didn't have the Dharma.

S: they didn't have the means to bring about any permanent, any truly radical change. (very long pause)

Once again it's a question of wanting the end without being prepared to use the means. And as Matthew Arnold said in the line I quoted yesterday, "we want all pleasant ends but will use no harsh means". So if one wants the pleasant end - in this case deliverance - we must be prepared to use the harsh - or at least sometimes harsh - means, that is to say the celestial Dharma.

Prasannasiddhi: It's almost as if these people don't actually even know the means, don't know the Dharma, don't have any idea what to do.

S: This is why it's so important to make the Dharma known as much as one possibly can. (pause)

Anyway, "Without reward earned for past gifts, one must do without all riches." The context here seems to be that of karma and rebirth - repeated existences. If you haven't been generous in your previous existences you must be prepared to do without riches in this existence, or if one isn't prepared to practise generosity in this life, then you must be prepared to do without riches in your future lives. Well again, you cannot expect the fruits of such actions without actually performing those actions themselves. Usually people want apparently to negate the law of cause and effect.

S: I think we talked about that in a previous study group some months ago and I made the point that it's important to realise that actions do have consequences. This is part of one's sense of responsibility, that one realises that actions do have consequences; that the things that you do do make a difference to your own life and to the lives of other people, and it's your awareness of that and your acting in accordance with that, which constitutes your sense of responsibility. You can't be really responsible unless you realise that actions do have consequences. They don't just end with themselves or end in themselves. (pause) You may be a bit unpleasant to somebody because you happen to be in that sort of mood, so it's no use thinking, "well I was just, I happened to be in that mood", and think that's the end of the matter. No, you could have upset some other person and he may go away thinking it over. He may take certain action against you on that account. The matter isn't necessarily ended there. you set up a whole series of consequences which you can't stop once you've set them up. You've done that, that action will be with you for ever and ever. Its consequences will continue to spread indefinitely, very often. You can't recall it. The proverb is once you've shot the arrow from the bow you can't call it back. You may regret having shot the arrow, but the minute the arrow has left the string you can't hold it back. You've shot it so it'll go to its mark, even against your will. So it's just the same with one's actions. They do have consequences, and once you've performed the actions there's nothing you can do, or very little you can do about the consequences. Sometimes you can't even counteract them.

Silaratna: When I was growing up, there was this thing about the white lie, people talking about the white lie which seems to come from not being aware of the consequences. you can't have such a thing as a white lie.

S: Well, even if there is such a thing as a white lie, even a white lie has its consequences. (pause)

Then the text says "Without devotion one must do without the blessings from on high." Sometimes it seems people want these miraculous blessings from on high but are not prepared to give the necessary devotion. Again that's an impossibility. No devotion, no blessings. If you don't put anything into your practice, you'll get nothing from it.

Aryamitra: Does that mean, getting back to the other, the actions one, that thought do have

an effect?

S: Well, thoughts do have their effect, but thoughts that you actually act upon have in a way a greater effect, because they involve the objective world, they involve other people. You may daydream, you may fantasise about committing a murder, which may have a very negative effect upon your own mind - will certainly have. But suppose you actually commit it, well that's a completely different thing. It sets up all sorts of effects, all sorts of consequences in the objective world - for yourself and for other people.

Amoghavajra: (unclear)

S: Well it wouldn't be karmically neutral because it is an unskillful thought, it is an unskillful mental state, so that it does have a deleterious effect upon you. But if you were to act upon that unskillful thought, if you act out of anger, it's far worse, you do much more damage. It's not that thought's don't matter, but actions matter far more.

Amoghavajra: So even if say you wake up in the morning feeling quite angry does that have karmic consequences?

S: Yes, you're still responsible for your own mental state. Where there's responsibility (unclear)..karma comes into operation.

Aryamitra: How does one neutralise that supposing... I'm presuming you've got a certain amount of anger... But if you wake up in the morning feeling angry, does that mean that previously the acts you've done etc., have produced that and that will then produce more, that will have karmic results as well? I mean how does one overcome it?

S: Well it's difficult to generalise, but different people wake up angry in the morning for different reasons. One should try to trace it back. If you wake up in the morning feeling angry, the likelihood is that you've had angry or at least unpleasant dreams. So why should you have had angry or unpleasant dreams? That depends on the mental state in which you went to bed, to sleep. Well, you are responsible for that. Often you find that if you go straight to bed after a puja or meditation you'll have a good sleep and will wake up in a quite a happy frame of mind. So it becomes, therefore, your duty, it's your responsibility to see that you go to bed and go to sleep in a positive state - then you're a lot less likely to wake up angry in the morning. If you go to bed angry, you're likely to wake up feeling angry unless it's because of some small annoyance that just passes away in the course of the night while you're asleep. But it's important to remember, just as you're responsible for your actions, you're responsible for your own thoughts. Thoughts are a species of action. (pause)

This next line seems a bit paradoxical. "When personal worth is small one must do without a spiritual guide." Doesn't that seem rather hard? It reminds me of one of my aphorisms in

'Peace is a Fire'. Does anyone remember it?

Ratnaketu: It's the strong that need help, not the weak.

S: Yes, that one should not waste time helping the weak. Nowadays it is the strong who need help. It's a bit like that, isn't it? "When personal worth is small, one must do without a spiritual guide." So what does that suggest?

Aryamitra: That you're not ready yet.

S: You have to prepare yourself for the spiritual guide.

Aryamitra: There's also the saying, 'When the disciples are ready...'

S: '...the master will appear.' That's a Theosophical aphorism.

Silaratna: I read something about, an article about Da Free John. He wrote about that, he said come to me when you're happy.

S: Who says this?

Silaratna: Da Free John - it was an article in a yoga magazine.

S: Baba Free John.

Silaratna: Baba Free John - is that the same person? Well he said, "Come to me when you're happy".

S: Well, there's something in that. What do you think he meant - "come to me when you're happy"?

Ratnaketu: Don't come to me out of a sense of...

S: Don't come to me with your problems. There's no problem-orientated approach. Come to me because you're happy, and you've got so far but you want to go further. Not that you're in a miserable sort of state and on the verge of collapse and you've got all sorts of insoluble problems and please, Baba, help me solve them. To me, he's saying don't come to me in that sort of way. Come to me when you're happy. There's a lot of commonsense in that. A spiritual teacher is not a sort of psychotherapist.

Khemananda: Also, you can be far more receptive because you're not seeing him in your own terms of what he can do for you, what you need from him. You can be far more open

because you've got that basic happiness.

S: The need is of another kind.(pause)

Silabhadra: Could this be related to building up punya in the past?

S: What do you think is meant here by personal worth exactly?(pause)

Aryamitra: Merit?

S: One could look at it in terms of merit. But how would that show itself? What sort of person do you think must do without a spiritual guide? Is it someone who wants one?

Khemananda: Someone who doesn't value themselves or the spiritual guide or value anything.

Silaratna: Also, people who haven't got a lot of metta going for themselves.

S: They could of course have an exaggerated idea of themselves. It's almost as if the text is saying unless you've reached the point where you can be guided, one has to do without a spiritual guide. You must be in a position to be guided.

Prasannasiddhi: So it requires you to have a strong character or you need to be almost a strong character, happy, lively, cheerful, strong-minded...

S: Determined...

Prasannasiddhi: Honest...

S: One has to give, in a way, the spiritual guide something to catch hold of.

Prasannasiddhi: Something worth catching hold of.

S: Yes, something worth catching hold of, yes. What about this next one then. "Without wisdom, one must do without virtues."

Aryamitra: It seems to imply that virtues are dependent on, true virtues are dependent upon wisdom to some extent - on spiritual insight.

S: I don't think it's a technical reference to the paramitas. It is said that the paramitas are not paramitas unless they're conjoined with wisdom. The dana paramita is not a paramita unless dana itself is conjoined with wisdom. It's the presence of wisdom that makes it a paramita,

out of the ordinary, so to speak, virtue of giving. I don't think it's a technical reference of that sort. I think what it means is you can't be good without a certain amount of understanding, without a certain amount of insight in the ordinary sense. I referred before, I think, to the Christian concept, or at least the Western concept influenced by Christianity, of 'the holy fool'. there's no such thing as a holy fool in Buddhism. If you're a fool, you can't possibly be holy. A certain amount of intelligence, a certain amount of insight is necessary to be good. In other words, Buddhism does not divorce virtue from intelligence quite so much or to quite the same extent that Christianity does. It is significant that the word for good is 'kausala', that which is skilful. To be skilful requires a certain amount of intelligence.

Aryamitra: Christians are supposed to be like sheep. (laughter)

S: Well, Buddhism doesn't have the idea of a good, but a rather dim-witted, not to say half-witted sort of person. In Buddhism such a person is not necessarily good - he's just half-witted. So without a certain modicum of intelligence, one can't even be good. "Without wisdom, one must do without virtues." (pause)

Aryamitra: It does seem to be a point worth really emphasising, say if you're giving a talk to outside people, because I think our general reaction to Christianity has been a sort of like blind acceptance etc., not very intelligent.

S: Well if one reads fiction, for instance, the classics of western fiction, only too often one finds that the good characters are rather stupid and the intelligent characters are rather wicked. You rarely find a very satisfactory, well-depicted let us say, hero or heroine in whom goodness and intelligence both come together. There's either one or the other but very rarely both.

Ratnaketu: Indeed, in some depictions of the devil, he's a handsome, debonair, intelligent looking person. (laughter)

S: And some of the angels look very insipid! (murmurs of agreement)(end of side one of tape six)

S: And this is where it's quite noticeable, say in the figure of the Bodhisattva as represented in the (unclear) literature. One finds that he's strong, he's good and also he is intelligent, which is a quite unusual combination in the west. Some of the people canonised as saints by the Catholic church were definitely mentally subnormal. (laughter) There is no doubt about that. that can now be seen by reading their biographies. They are of subnormal intelligence, some of them even imbeciles. In some cases they died young and were canonised especially if they came from influential families and they're among the saints of the Catholic Church. There was one, for instance, I forget his full name, I think he was a St. Peter Gonzagos, or something like that. He belonged to a very noble, not to say royal family - I'll have to check

this up in the encyclopedia - I think those of Spain and Italy. Anyway, he was a saint from a very early age. From the age of about seven he kept long lists of his sins. He used to spend the whole day writing out these lists of sins and he put them in a big wooden box and they were discovered after his premature death. And on the strength of that, largely, he was canonised because he had such an acute sense of sinfulness - he must have been a saint. But he seemed to have been a young moron practically. He died at the age of sixteen or seventeen, and he was canonised as a saint. He used to keep a sort of long washing list as it were of moral dirty linen, one might say. These sins, and there were thousands and thousands of sheets of paper covered with lists of his sins. (laughter) It doesn't bear dwelling upon, does it! So wisdom - I think this is a good point - In presenting Buddhism to a western audience, one has to stress this, that one cannot be good without intelligence. On the other hand, one has to avoid giving the impression that you can only be a Buddhist if you're an intellectual. By intelligent one doesn't mean intellectual in a slightly pejorative sort of sense. One means intelligence in the way one speaks of a workman being intelligent - he approaches the job intelligently. You can always tell the difference between, say, a plumber, a man who approaches his plumbing intelligently or not. The same with any sort of workman, whether he puts his intelligence into his work, brings his intelligence to bear on his work. It makes a very big difference to the sort of workman he is. Some workmen don't bother to put their intelligence into their work. Sometimes they haven't got it to give - that's another point. The good workman is the intelligent workman who thinks about his work and thinks intelligently - whatever it may be. Some of our university-educated friends confessed this in connection with the building of Sukhavati - that they'd come to realise that bricklaying for instance wasn't something you could do if you were just stupid as they formerly thought. In being, as it were, intellectuals or in that sort of academic way of being educated, they tended to think that anyone who worked with his hands didn't have to be intelligent. But, in connection with the building of Sukhavati, they discovered that they'd made a mistake.

So another line, "When leading a homeless life, one must do without affection." The homeless life clearly refers to the life of a monk, especially the wandering life. So, "one must do without affection." What sort of affection is meant here?

Buddhapalita: Pema.

S: Pema, yes.

Silabhadra : Family ties?

S: Family ties. Well, define what sort of affection. Why must one do without it? Why is it incompatible with a homeless life?

Khemananda : It's grasping. The wife grasps the husband (unclear)(pause)

Ratnaketu : Did you find that when you were a homeless wanderer that you experienced affection in a good sense?

S: Yes quite a lot, especially when I was going begging. People used to feel very sorry for me. They'd often give with a great deal of affection and warmth, there's no doubt. But then you were passing on. It didn't tie you down. There was no danger of that so although it was very pleasant you didn't stay with it (unclear). So what do you think is meant by 'affection' here? What sort of situation, what sort of relationships?

Silabhadra : Affection that involves attachment, that you can't just go on from.

Silaratna : The sort of thing like being tied to your mother's apron-strings.

S: And the fact that the word 'affection' is used suggests that you find it pleasant and enjoy it. In what way is it that the homeless life is incompatible with affection? It suggests that the affection that the text has in mind is the sort of affection associated with the home, with the family, a situation that's very safe, very secure, and settled in a not very inspiring or stimulating sort of way. It's a bit like a cosy little nest that's all warm and safe and comfortable inside. Well you probably left your warm, cosy little nest so many years ago, you've forgotten what it's like. (laughter) Or you were thrown out anyway! (laughter) Does the fact that one must do without affection mean that one must do without any kind of emotional warmth? Do you think that is meant? Or must you just try to get rid of affection in every sense?

Aryamitra : It does seem to be tied up with this continuous affection, a sort of mother-type affection.

Khemananda : I feel that at home mother doesn't see you as a person. There must be affection where the person doesn't generally go beyond (unclear) that other person wants to encourage you.

Aryamitra : Isn't sort of friendship affection?

S: Well it depends again on how one uses the term affection. It's quite ambiguous in the English language. It can be used in the sense of pema, or it can apparently be used in the sense of metta. When you sign a letter with 'yours affectionately', do you mean 'yours with metta', do you mean 'yours', as it were 'stickily'. One of our Finnish friends signed a letter to me, 'yours with passion'. (laughter) What he meant, what he seemed to indicate is just that he has strong, positive feelings. He must have got the word out of the dictionary, because his English is quite limited.

Ratnaketu : It would be interesting if you signed your letters with actually how you did feel.

S: 'Yours brutally', 'yours disgruntledly' or even perhaps 'yours passionately'! Or 'yours lazily', 'yours hungrily'. (laughter) So when leading a homeless life, one must do without affection in the sense of the sort of affection one gets at, or can expect from home and the people associated with home.

Ratnaketu : It occurred to me as well that it's like at home they're reinforcing you as you are, at the moment and they want you to stay that way.

S: They remember you as you were when you were very young, when you were weak and genuinely dependent. Very often they want you to stay that way.

Ratnaketu : I was thinking that even with spiritual friends you can miss them.

S: It doesn't mean that you must be hard-hearted or insensible. It's very different missing one's spiritual friends, it's very different from missing one's mum and dad, one's brothers and sisters. It's a different kind of feeling, a different kind of emotion.

Prasannasiddhi : Well maybe I mean, I think I miss my brothers and sisters but I'd say it was in a reasonably positive way.

Silaratna : The thing is, though, in spiritual friendships you've got the fact that your common interest is quite high up. You've got - like in the Order - you've got going for refuge as your highest interest whereas say with your parents, when I think of my parents, I can't really think of anything particularly high on the scale - like going for refuge - that draws me towards them so much.

Khemananda : It's amazing how it really became, coming here to Italy, really brought home that my mother saw me in exactly the same way as ten years because in response to my travelling abroad, the sense of worry was exactly the same as when I travelled abroad 12 years ago. It's as though she hadn't actually seen me change at all in that 12 years. It's exactly the same - even the things she says, and the amount of worrying was identical.

S: How old are you now?

Khemananda : Thirty-one! (laughter)

S: I think mothers are like that - well 99 percent of them are like that. But you remember the point that was made by that little incident which I dwelt on in 'The Case of Dissentry': the Buddha and the sick monk or the Buddha and Ananda and the sick monk? What did the Buddha say, admonishing the monks who neglected the sick monks?

Ratnaketu : 'You have no mother and no father.'

S: You have no mother and father. So that means if you do not look after one another, who will look after you? So what relevance is that to this question of affection?

Ratnaketu : You have no lovers, so if you don't love each other, who will?

S: The Buddha was not saying, well you've no mother or father to be affectionate, therefore you must be affectionate to one another, that is to say affectionate in the same way, in the same sense. He was saying, those things that your parents would normally do for you out of their parental affection, you must now do for one another, as it were, for more mature reasons, out of a sense of spiritual fellowship and mutual responsibility. He was not saying that the monks should take the place of one another's parents in the literal sense and feel the same way towards one another as their parents did. In a situation like that, say of sickness where you cannot fall back on natural human affection as you could when you were at home living a lay life, you must be able to fall back on something higher, on spiritual friendship. So I think this is a danger in a way, from a certain point of view, in the spiritual life, that you sort of fall between two stools. You sort of give up or you go forth from the rather stuffy affection of home but you don't sometimes manage to experience the more liberating, the more stimulating or more exhilarating spiritual friendship of the spiritual community. You're sort of stuck half-way. You try, maybe unconsciously, to turn the spiritual community into a sort of family in the ordinary sense, make the spiritual community into a sort of home in the ordinary sense. Do you see the sort of thing that I mean? This is an example of the gravitational pull at work. What do you think are the signs of trying to make your spiritual community like a home instead of really like a spiritual community? What are the signs of it?

Silabhadra : Things like not taking responsibility for the community, maybe.

S: Yes, wanting to be looked after just as though there was a mother to do it all for you. Yes, that's I think a sure sign, that you are regarding the spiritual community as home, that you want somebody to be there doing everything for you, looking after you. That may be alright in the case of a young Mitra who has just left home, but not in the case of a fully grown Order member. Any other signs?

Silaratna : More or less taking an awareness for your presence in the community, how you look, keeping yourself clean, keeping yourself presentable, whereas in the home you've got mother to tell you, go and brush your hair or wash your teeth, or wipe behind your ears. You need to do that yourself.

S: I think one of the signs that you want to make the spiritual community like home is that you want to bring women into it, because all women are reminiscent of mother to some extent.(long pause)

Ratnaketu: All women are reminiscent of mother to some extent. What does that mean?

S: Well mother's also a woman, at least that. The sort of association. It's nice to have women around. They do things for you. They've got a sort of motherly streak in them, they look after you. They go and get you a cup of coffee. They like doing these things, just as mother did. Even if they don't like doing them, they just do them, it's their nature almost, or at least it's their cultural conditioning. It started pretty early, so it's deeply ingrained, but it is cultural conditioning.

Ratnaketu : So having that around, do you fall into the role of being almost a son?

S: Almost a son, sort of looked after, yes - pampered, babied. Some men really love this, but I'm afraid it is a weakness. It can be very pleasant, very soothing, very agreeable, it does put us into a sort of temptation - women running round with cups of tea, carpet slippers, doing everything in their power to make you feel comfortable, at ease and at home. It can be very ensnaring. I think it's what you have to watch as you get older. When you're a young man you can be ensnared, so to speak, into matrimony and domesticity just by your sex drive. As you get older, you get over that and it doesn't count as such an important factor. As you get older, especially when you get to about thirty-five, forty, it's your love of comfort that's likely to ensnare you, to domesticate you and cause you to settle down, to have everything comfortable and cosy and have things done for you, not to have to bother with say shopping or cooking - have it all done for you and laid on for you, everything kept nice and tidy and neat and convenient and comfortable and cosy. (laughter) Warm, cheerful, nest-like, safe.

Silaratna : That's interesting because I noticed at home when my mother would go away, she might have gone away for a couple of weeks and there'd be just me and my father in the house and how he changed. He'd become much more free. He was a lot more active and sort of more intelligent in some ways when my mother was out of the house. He sort of had his hands...

S: Women on the whole - leaving aside our women in the FWBO who are a bit special - are not normally very stimulating company, not for men, not for long anyway, however much one may be fond of them in the case of say relations, female relations are not very stimulating company usually, on the whole. But to refer to the main point, one must be careful not to fall between these two stools. Once you've left home you must really have left home and on the one hand you must not try to recreate your home in a sort of pseudo-spiritual fashion, that is to say supposedly living in a spiritual community but actually trying to make the spiritual community like home. On the other hand you really have to enjoy the positive emotional experience of living in a spiritual community, not just give up the one and fail to achieve the other.

Aryamitra : Do you see anything really wrong with comfort though?

S: It depends what one means by comfort.

Aryamitra : Well I was thinking that sometimes you work all day, you come back and you find it quite stark, maybe, in a spiritual community, where there's a few chairs and it just can be sort of incredibly jaded after a while. I don't know, maybe I'm rationalising it...

S: I don't understand - what is comfort as distinct from convenience, or not actually inflicting hardship or suffering on oneself?

Aryamitra : I don't know. Say if I, say, imagined a room, it should be comfortable, it would sort of have soft things in, like nice chairs that one could lean back in. It would have, I don't know, maybe even material on the walls of some kind.

S: I think material on the walls is only comfortable in that sense if you can lean up against it! (laughter)

Aryamitra : A good bed.

S: Well what do you mean by a good bed? (laughter)

Aryamitra : A big one, a comfortable one! (laughter)

S: But what do you mean by comfortable one?

Ratnaketu : Not a board!

S: Well sometimes when I visit my friends I'm put into beds with sort of feather mattresses, I find it difficult to sleep because it's too comfortable. You sort of sink into it. I've always preferred a relatively hard bed - I sleep better. Would one say that that was comfortable for me? So what is comfort? I think one shouldn't have really a greater degree of comfort than is necessary to avoid being distracted from what one wants to do or to think about, simply by a physical discomfort. Well, suppose I give you an example. I spend much of my time sitting at a desk and I'm, writing so I don't want a comfortable chair other than a chair by sitting in which I'm not going to get backache. All I'm asking of the chair is that I can sit in it for hours on end and not experience backache. I don't want to luxuriate in a feeling of softness and comfort - that's all. The same with a bed. I don't want a soft downy mattress that I can sink into. I want the sort of mattress that will enable me to have a good night's sleep. I think when you speak of a pleasant room, that isn't comfort in the strictest sense, it's that you require something soothing in a way, something pleasing and positive to help you get into a positive mood, a positive mental state. Otherwise if it's too nice, in a way it defeats its

own end. If there are too many pictures or too many knick-knacks you just feel distracted or worried, quite apart from having to dust them all.

Prasannasiddhi : It does seem that you can have these two extremes. Like at home it's really cosy, it's all cluttered. You've got TVs, pictures and all sorts of things, and big couches and everything's really plush. But it's all a bit kind of stifling. But on the other hand you get the communities which can sometimes be quite bare and cold and not look very nice.

S: That's not so much a question of comfort as aesthetic sense, that things shouldn't offend your aesthetic sense, they should be pleasing and harmonious. But that's quite different from being comfortable or luxurious. I mean I've walked into many a middle-class home of friends of mine and it's been so comfortable, it looked almost horrible, it looks ugly. It isn't really comfortable even in the ordinary sense - these really big over-stuffed armchairs. They're not even really comfortable, if you sit down in them very often.

Silaratna : Doesn't that come down to the thing you mentioned before - about the pleasure principle and the ideal principle?

S: Yes, you should try and bring those two together. In so many homes, one sees what can only be described as tasteless comfort. One really wonders why furniture and so on is just not better designed. Just look into the windows of some of these big furniture shops. The stuff which is usually exhibited at enormous price is really disgusting from the aesthetic point of view, badly designed...

Ratnaketu: It's something to do with the ruling classes. Hundreds of years ago you had a definite, very small minority who could live in opulence and since then everyone has tried to come up to that level, since then all kinds of ...

S: You get these cheap imitations, mass produced imitations, the sort of bed that George IV or Napoleon would have slept in. (laughter) This is now the dream of some working class wife. (laughter) Sofas, armchairs, divans and all that to match.

Ratnaketu: I noticed it around Bethnal Green. In some furniture shops there's these lampstands and everything that looks like it came out of Louis XIV's bedroom, it's all gold and marble-looking. It's really ugly.

S: This is one of the points which was made by Marco Pallis in his book 'Peaks and Lamas' about Tibet, that everything in the old Tibet, in their houses they had very few things, but everything was handmade and everything was, in a sense, a work of art. A little table would be hand-carved and hand-painted. The tea-pot would be hand-made and beautifully decorated in silver. They'd just have a few of these things, otherwise the room would be bare; just a few carpets or a few teapots or things of that sort.(pause)

Khemananda : Going back to what you were saying about the importance of affection between members of the spiritual community, I think that's really important. I know when people get ill, particularly ill I noticed in this one particular case it was his girlfriend who showed him most attention in a way. She might have been doing it from the wrong basis, but at least he got his food when he needed it, he got just basic requirements.

S: It is a pity if one is not able to do out of metta what ordinary people do out of pema. One has maybe got rid of the pema perhaps, but one hasn't succeeded in achieving metta. This is really a pity. One has to admit that pema does achieve objective results and it is a pity when metta falls short in any way of those objective results. It should go far beyond pema if anything.

Prasannasiddhi : Pema? Whereabouts does that word come from?

S: Pema is a Pali word corresponding to the Sanskrit prema. It occurs in the Dhammapada and is usually translated as 'affection' in a somewhat negative sense and contrasted with metta, which is the corresponding, more spiritual emotion.

Prasannasiddhi : I think it was in the Mitrata Omnibus, it was described as quasi-sexual affection.

S: It may not be quasi-sexual because one can speak of the mother's affection for the child or the father's affection within the family, or brotherly affection. So it doesn't necessarily have a sexual tinge to it, unless of course one takes the allegedly Freudian view that all emotionality is sexually tinged anyway. It certainly isn't consciously tinged in that way in all cases.

Prasannasiddhi : So it's just sort of attached, or...

S: Yes, it's a form of attachment.

Aryamitra : Would you say it's based biologically?

S: Yes. In the case of the family affection does have a biological basis, especially in the case of the mother. I think affection differs from metta, let's say, because in the case of affection, you gratify yourself, in the case of affection you're perhaps more concerned with what you get out of the alleged object of your affection. But in the case of metta you're more concerned with the actual needs of the other person. You might say, well, the mother is concerned with the needs of her child, but it's her child's needs, it's her family. There's that strong identification. The baby's literally to begin with an extension of herself. That is perhaps why mothers are so confident that they know what is best for you, always.

Ratnaketu : I suppose that's why when you're doing the metta, it's important to do neutral people and enemies because you're not going to get anything out of that. You might get something out of your friend.(pause)

S: Affection is also sort of indulgent, it doesn't insist that you grow up, very often. In the case of mothers affection, mother might even be pleased to keep you a bit un-grown-up. It gives her a greater role to play. But someone who feels genuine metta for you will want you to grow, will want you to develop, will not indulge you or let you get away with anything. That's where fierce friendship comes in. Mother-love isn't fierce, except in possessiveness, defending her young - it's not fierce and challenging. A mother will forgive you anything, perhaps. You can get away with anything. Give her a big smile and a hug and she'll forgive you anything. Also stay at home and she'll forgive you anything. (laughter)

Ratnaketu : I noticed really, really often that if you get hurt or something like that, or if you just graze your knee, or even if your mother yells at you and you cry, that's the end of her anger (unclear) natural response.

S: There's a famous poem about that. It's meant to glorify mother-love though I wonder whether it does. It's a French poem, sort of ballad about a young man who falls in love with a young woman and he tells the young woman he'll do absolutely anything for her. She's only got to tell him, he'll do anything. So the young woman says - of course it's a ballad so it comes across more realistically in a ballad than in prose - the young woman says, well, you must bring me your mother's heart, you must go and cut it out and bring me it. So in blind infatuation he goes and kills his mother, cuts out her heart and is carrying it back to his beloved. He's running to get back to show her what he's done, I've done what- here, here's mother's heart, and he trips over a stone and he falls and the heart says, oh my son, have you hurt yourself?! (laughter) And this is what's supposed to glorify mother-love, and in a way it does, but on the other hand it shows the other side of the picture.

So maybe to avoid misunderstanding, we should amend a little - 'When leading a homeless life one must do without affection but not without metta'. To some it's very difficult to distinguish between the two.

Prasannasiddhi : It does seem quite a mess though. People can somehow get the feeling that there's something almost lacking when you speak of no- get rid of pema, but metta is good, but some people feel that, get the feeling that metta lacks something.

S: Well, It lacks pema and they are, as it were, hooked on pema.