

## General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

### Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team*

Tape 7

Prasannasiddhi: It can sound a bit colder. With pema you've got the kind of attachments within families but at least there are strong emotions involved, but with metta perhaps...

S: Well it is simply that when people, even if they have sort of given up affection or given up pema to some extent they find it difficult to develop metta to any degree of intensity. In the Ittivutaka in that passage which was read out a few weeks ago in one of the pujas, the Buddha says of metta, 'It burns and shines and blazes forth.' That isn't actually the way one usually thinks of metta, you think of affection or passion as having a sort of bright red glow; but metta is a bit sort of, a bit like moonlight - yes, it's very pure, it's quite bright but there's not much warmth in it. But really one shouldn't think of it like that.

Prasannasiddhi: So it's as if there can be a field of metta, quite a different... well people think that with metta you shouldn't get close to other people.

S: Yes it seems to be a bit cold, a bit detached.

Prasannasiddhi: Yes.

S: A bit weak.

Prasannasiddhi: Metta (unclear)

S: Well I suppose it isn't easy to transform one's emotions. It isn't easy to get rid of the negativity in all the emotions, develop more positive spiritual emotions and also to develop them to a sufficient degree of strength. And just as, to go back to what we were talking about a little while ago angels often appear weak and lacking in energy whereas devils are always strong and vigorous and full of life. (pause)

But again as I said one must be careful not to fall between two stools, one must make a definite effort to achieve metta and actually achieve it. If one doesn't, well, one will be much more likely to try to fall back into affection and to the comfortable, 'homely' sort of situation and to bring one's spiritual community even into line with that. (pause)

It's quite interesting visiting sometimes women's spiritual communities and comparing them with those of men. In the case of the women they definitely made an attempt to, well to make their communities homely. I know there are... however sort of short-lived the community, however short-lived the property, up would go the curtains and out would come the little mats and pictures of friends and relations in the little frames by the bedside and all that sort of thing. Potted plants, drapes over... always carefully hiding damp stains and holes and things like that. (laughter) Everything would look very homely, very, in a way, inviting, always. Very few women didn't arrange things in this way I found. I think also... there is this current tendency - to dwell on this question of homeliness - of smaller communities. I'm not satisfied that this is purely spiritual; people do say that they... that they're interested in a smaller community in the interests of closer spiritual communication, but it does seem to one that in some case at least there's a move in the direction of a sort of family almost. It's the small, homely, cosy situation that some people at least - more so among the women but even among the men to some extent - seem to want. So I think one has to watch this.(long pause)

Prasannasiddhi: Maybe, I don't know, but maybe it's almost, it's quite a jump for some people to go from the normal worldly relationships that you're being conditioned to adopt. All your mannerisms have been conditioned into adopting in certain relationships.

S: Yes.

Prasannasiddhi: And we're trying to stick with something that's quite different. The relationships are quite different. Well in a way it might be a bit too much to expect people to jump all the way in to large communities, and people and everything working really well. Perhaps in a way then the smaller community is kind of a recognition that...

S: Well that might be alright if you've got in the small communities people who know what they are doing and who are leading people forward and upward, but not encouraging a sort of settling down on a lower level. Do you see what I mean? One does become a bit concerned, not to say alarmed, when one sees so many people leaving the bigger communities and settling down in very small communities. That seems to be the current tendency. Almost a retrogressive movement, hmm? Where in the case of new people, new Friends and new mitras, well clearly you have to go step by step, but on the other hand as I said there needs to be people in those small situations, more home-like situations who do understand something about the spiritual community and who are trying to lead that small community in the direction of becoming a real spiritual community; whether small or big. It's the sort of settling down that I'm not too happy about.

Prasannasiddhi: I suppose it could be a tendency with smaller communities among men, they could just sort of turn into the situation you get in the world with just a few blokes flating together.

S: Yes.

Prasannasiddhi: And going out into town Fridays and Saturdays and earning money during the week and spending it...

S: Anyway, we've spent quite a bit of time over that line. No doubt it was useful. Let's have our tea and then do the remaining two lines.

"Without a good character one would do without companions." What is this? Why is this? What is a good character anyway? What is meant by companions?

Aryamitra: It couldn't mean 'companion' in the ordinary sense..

S: No.

Aryamitra: Because...

S: A good character means, presumably, an ethical character. Why can one not have companions unless one has an ethical character?

Ratnaketu: Because they won't want to associate with them if they're... if they're spiritual companions.

S: Well one element of the ethical character is trustworthiness. You must be able to rely upon someone in order to be a companion to him... or him to be a companion to you. Aristotle in his 'Ethics' discusses the question of whether it's possible to have friendship between people who are not virtuous, and you come to the conclusion that friendship is possible only between the virtuous. In other words friendship itself represents an ethical relationship. So you can have an ethical relationship only between ethical persons. What do you have to say about the well known saying 'fellowship between thieves', say? What about, 'partners in crime'? Can you not be friends

with them?

Aryamitra: You've got a common interest. (laughter)

S: Hmm. A common interest, yes, but Aristotle makes the point that common interest in the worldly sense is not sufficient as a basis for friendship. In the case of say thieves, well thieves do fall out, their interests may coincide for the time being about one particular job, but then their interests may diverge and even come into conflict.

Ratnaketu: Maybe they sort of respect each other in the sense that they're not going to tread on each others toes.

S: Are they maybe afraid of one another? So can there be real friendship?

Silabhadra: It's more sort of a functional approach.

S: Yes.

Aryamitra: Also if friendship needs metta, how can you have metta and be (unclear)

S: So without a good character one must do without companions. So if you want companions you must make yourself the sort of person that people would like to associate with. What do you think are the qualities that most attract people? In a positive sense, qualities in a companion.

(two voices speak simultaneously)

S: I mean what qualities... supposing you were looking for a companion. Well what sort of qualities would you like to find ideally?

Ratnaketu: I would like a companion who wasn't idiosyncratic.

S: Mmm. What do you mean by that?

Ratnaketu: Well they didn't have a very sort of definite way of what they were going to, you know, definite opinions about... always sort of awkward - some people are always awkward, they always find something wrong with (unclear) and they're never satisfied.(pause)

S: Well that's not exactly 'idiosyncratic', it's more like 'difficult to please'.

Khemananda: I think what I find attractive is someone who is happy with themselves, basically happy with themselves, who is quite light.

S: Without being silly, presumably?

Khemananda: Without being silly, yes.

S: Has anybody else got any ideas?

Aryamitra: Strong, patient, good-looking. (laughter)

Ratnaketu: Affectionate.

Aryamitra: A strong patience.

S: He would presumably have a lot to put up with.

Aryamitra: Yes. (laughter) Yes, happy with himself as well.(pause)

S: Presumably someone you don't have to keep 'boiling-up'?  
(murmurs of agreement)

Khemananda: They could be quite exuberant, and light and open and expansive.

Silabhadra: Quite independent as well, not relying on you for getting them on a higher level  
(unclear)

S: Well, without psychological problems. (pause) Well an ideal companion of that sort is really difficult to find obviously, so you'll probably have to make do with whatever you can get! (laughter) I think reliability is very important. Responsibility is very important. I think the Buddha somewhere makes the point that one of the characteristics of a friend is that he looks after your interests in your absence. (pause) You might go away on holiday and maybe your friend just looks into your flat or your room while you're away and he just happens to see that things have been disturbed, and maybe someone has been interfering with your things. So on his own responsibility, he closes up the place, maybe locks it up and he keeps a bit of a watch over it just to safeguard your interests, which is one of the signs of the genuine friend. He watches over your interests in your absence. Or again, he says, even when you're careless of your own interests yourself, he watches over them better than you do yourself.

Silaratna: That sort of implies also that the good friend is not a person who is over preoccupied with his own activities.

S: Yes, he's got sometime to think about you - what you're doing and what is good for you. (pause) On the negative side the line is saying, if you got a good character, if you're not a very ethical person, you're not a reliable person, well then you just have to reconcile yourself to not having any real companions. People will tend to avoid you perhaps.

I think one has to be quite careful also not to be drawn to people for the wrong sorts of reasons. Some people seem to sort of attract friends, attract companions but it's sometimes for quite superficial qualities, for superficial reasons, you're attracted by a sort of superficial glitter in their personality. Do you know what I mean? They've got a sort of mild form of charisma perhaps, but it is really no more than that. I think one has to be quite careful not to be seduced by that and to look for more solid qualities or genuine qualities. Some people have the 'gift of the gab' and are bright, talkative, apparently quite open and you can be quite charmed by them, but actually they can not really being very good companions.

Amoghavajra: What do you think charisma is then?

S: I tend to think it is basically sex appeal, but there may be something else too. I don't know if anyone else has got any ideas. Charisma! I think sometimes maybe self-confidence is an element in it which may or may not be well based. Or someone may be really pleased and satisfied with themselves and that sort of radiates and is a bit contagious.

Ratnaketu: Yes, some people glow with confidence.

S: It's not necessarily well based.

Aryamitra: I wonder if this could be tied up with the positive side. I think one of the virtues of Avalokitesvara was Tantric power of attraction?

S: Yes, but the Tantric power of attraction is not necessarily something sort of showy. It can be something quiet and subtle, something that grows upon you. It need not be very spectacular.

Aryamitra: Whereas charisma does seem to have that.

S: Charisma sort of fits you. It's rather blatant, rather obvious. Perhaps even rather crude sometimes. Luckily not many people in the FWBO have got it. It seems to be sort of 'damped down' rather than encouraged. But in some groups it's almost encouraged.

Silabhadra: It's like sort of 'showmanship' isn't it.

S: Yes that's true, yes.

Ratnaketu: It's interesting, when I was doing 'Aid for India' Tim Lilley was saying you just can't use charisma for doing something like 'Aid for India', it just doesn't give the right effect. People don't like the effect of charisma, they don't like to see a real sort of Eagle and Captain Stardust standing before them. Captain Stardust who's sort of twinkling. They like to see somebody a bit more, er...

S: Sincere.

Ratnaketu: ... Sincere, yes. A bit more solid and ordinary (unclear).

S: Anyway, 'Without good character one must do without companions'. Then, 'When one commits offenses with women, one must do without capacity for deeds of lasting worth.' (pause) Well, do you think this is true to begin with? Do you think people who have committed offenses with women never perform any deeds of lasting worth? First of all is this statement true? Maybe one can ask that question.

Aryamitra: I suppose it depends on what is meant by 'deeds of lasting worth'.

S: Ah.

Ratnaketu: I can't see a connection between... I can see a connection between good character and bad companions, but I can't see a connection here.

S: Well take for instance the case of Nelson. Nelson is generally considered to have performed deeds of lasting worth winning the Battle of Trafalgar and all that, defeating the sea power of Napoleon, but he was carrying on at the same time with Lady Hamilton. So would one regard that as invalidating this particular statement?

Silabhadra: It depends what's also meant by 'offenses'.

S: Yes. Also what... also what is meant by 'deeds of lasting worth'. Was what Nelson did really a 'deed of lasting worth' in the Buddhistic sense? Was it? It may have had considerable value for Britain politically, diplomatically, commercially, but was it, in the spiritual sense, a 'deed of lasting worth'?

: No.

S: No. So...

Ratnaketu: Well what about, say, King Asoka, presumably he had lots of wives, but he did 'deeds of lasting worth'.

S: Well, 'commits offenses with women' what are 'offenses', it raises that question. We don't know much about the love life - if anything - about the love life of King Asoka. We don't even know that he had a harem, he might not have had.(pause)

Amoghavajra: Are offenses not rape and adultery..

: Beating

Amoghavajra: If you did something like that then it would seem to suggest that you're sort of emotionally lacking and trying to get it (unclear) good deeds.

S: Do you think - taking the word literally - 'commit offenses' that the author or translator had in mind breaches of the third precept? Or do you think he had in mind any kind of sexual experiences with women? Are they sort of per se offenses from the spiritual point of view? Is that what he really means?

Amoghavajra: It definitely says offenses. It's quite strong.

S: Uh huh, but perhaps, from the spiritual point of view all dealings with women are offenses. I mean the line would bear that interpretation.

Silaratna: Do you think it's got anything to do with taking advantage of, perhaps, somebody who is weaker. I mean woman are generally considered to be weaker than men in the respect of physicalness and that.

S: That's not true of Tibetan women.

Silaratna: No? (laughter)

S: Far from it...

Silaratna: I've never met any.

S: No, no they seem to be physically just as strong as men - doing heavy work, carry heavy loads, drive mules. (laughter) And carry on businesses, no they're a hefty lot and I've seen them at first hand. (laughter) I assure you they're not weak little specimens at all. No, no this text having originated in Tibet, no.

Prasannasiddhi: So it wouldn't be likely that a man in Tibet would beat a woman, more likely she'd...

S: No... she's equally likely to beat him! Oh yes (laughter) yes.

Ratnaketu: So doesn't it all hinge then on to whether these offenses are breaches of the third precept or (unclear) any sexual (unclear).

S: Yes, it really does amount to that.(pause)

Ratnaketu: But then, even so, even if you say, well it's breaches of the third precept, but then how does that connect with the 'deeds of lasting worth'?

S: Well does it, in a way, then make sense to say, well a man who commits adultery or who rapes women, he has no capacity for deeds of lasting worth. Well in a way that seems pretty obvious, it would seem that the line wouldn't be making a statement as obvious as that. That someone who

had broken one of the precepts in a particularly blatant way couldn't achieve deeds of lasting worth, that would be too obvious. Not worth saying one would have thought. To me it seems to mean someone who maybe is too much pre-occupied with women... too much concerned with them, to such an extent that it becomes an offence, a betrayal of the spiritual life. (pause) But maybe the expression 'offenses' (is not a very happy one) maybe it's more like 'misconduct'. One who misconducts himself with women is 'without capacity for deeds of lasting worth'. Anyway, considering it on its own merits, does one think that becoming involved with women holds you back from genuine spiritual achievements?(pause)

Aryamitra: Is it 'women' in the plural? (slight laughter) Well I was thinking if somebody is married, and there have been married people who have achieved great things.

S: Again, what does one mean by 'married'? Vimalakirti in the Sutras is sometimes cited, but the text itself clearly says that he sort of pretended to be like a householder, pretended to live like a married man, as a skilful means; not that he actually was a householder who, despite being a householder was also a great Bodhisattva. No, he was a great Bodhisattva acting as though he was a householder, and that is a completely different thing.

So even if one cites the example of some historical character who was married, who achieved great things, well one has to look at the actual marriage. What was that relationship like? What was his wife like? Was it marriage in the ordinary sense or not? I mean, for instance, one can take one of the great modern Hindu spiritual teachers, Sri Ramakrishna. Well, he was married, but then he and his wife never lived together - he was married at an early age in Bengal and, as the custom was, his wife joined him to live with him when she reached the age of fifteen or sixteen - or something like that. And he said, "I want to lead a spiritual life, but I'm married to you, I have this responsibility. If you want that we should live together as man and wife, well, I'll have to accept that. But I would prefer if I could lead a spiritual life and you could lead a spiritual life." So, she said, "Well, far be it for me to stand in your way if you want to lead a spiritual life." So she became a sort of disciple and they never lived together as man and wife. So technically they were married but was there any marriage in the ordinary sense? So you couldn't quote Sri Ramakrishna as an example of a married man who achieved great things. He wasn't married in the ordinary sense, he was just technically, legally married. He never worked, he never supported his wife. She was just supported by other disciples. Do you see what I mean? So one has to see the facts of the situation. One might say well Marpa was married. Yes, well what sort of marriage was it? His wife seems to have been a sort of disciple at the same time, and very devoted. (pause)

I think that the real point here is that if one is involved, or especially if one is over involved with women, one cannot help getting involved in the things in which women are interested, that is to say things of a domestic nature, a family nature, unless one is very careful and that sort of interest can certainly hold one back from deeds of lasting worth. You get sort of domesticated through your contact with women.

Amoghacitta: I was looking at it from some different point of view, that is to say, if you're obsessed with women all the time, if your mind is pre-occupied with base desires, then you've got no capacity for higher things, you can't focus your mind, you can't commit yourself.

S: That is true, that is also true, yes - certainly.(pause)

Prasannasiddhi: Do you think that this is sort of moving in the direction of saying that one shouldn't have contact with women at all?

S: I think for someone in the sort of early stages of spiritual life and development - I suppose that means up to Stream Entry - should be very careful in his contact with women. I think one can certainly say that... at least one can say that. (long pause)



I suppose the same thing holds good for women in the case of those women who are definitely into leading a spiritual life. They have to correspondingly steer clear of men.

Ratnaketu: What about - We were talking about that sort of thing in the abstract, but in the last, in one of the *Shabd*s - I think it was the last one or the one before - xxxxxx reported in and said that in Bristol a woman had asked to become a mitra and he had to say no...

S: Ah..

Ratnaketu: .. because he didn't think that he should as a man become involved, you know. And to me, I thought that was taking things a bit too far. If somebody is a chairman of a centre, and that is what they are going to take on to do, to then turn round and say I don't want, I can't even accept somebody as a mitra because they're a woman... i think that's going a bit too far. That's my own feeling anyway.

S: Well perhaps it is, but then one might say, well who is there to take xxxxx's place as chairman in Bristol?

Ratnaketu: I think... no, I wasn't sort of meaning that someone should take his place but that if, say, if there is a person who has decided that what they're going to do is be involved in the Centre and that is what you're doing and you are doing it for a serious reason, not just to flirt with women then can you justify, especially if there are no women Order members around, not having anything to do with women at all?

S: I think one has to recognise that sometimes women do need a bit of handling, as it were, especially if they've got particular problems of their own, and especially problems to do with their personal relationships. I think then they are best handled by other women Order members. I think it is quite difficult, even for a male Order member who is willing to give very often the sort of help that they need or sort of support that they need. I think he was thinking more along those sort of lines. That's my impression. Not that he personally didn't want contact with them because of reasons of personal weakness. More that he just didn't feel equipped to give them what he felt they probably would need. Because when someone becomes a mitra, well they are sort of part of the Movement, they have in a way a definite claim upon you, you as Order members collectively, so to speak, have accepted that person as a mitra. You have a definite responsibility and a definite duty. But supposing you genuinely feel it, there's only two or three of you and you're all men, you can't fulfil that responsibility in relation to a woman. Well then, in a way you are almost duty bound not to take on a responsibility which you genuinely feel you cannot discharge. Obviously we don't know what that particular woman was like, she might - and I'm only speculating - she might have been a little difficult or have problems of her own, even though she was otherwise ready to be a mitra. I mean - put it round the other way. Supposing a certain Centre was run entirely by women Order members, and a man who came along wanted to become a mitra. Well you can imagine the women feeling they just weren't able to handle him. Supposing he was, let's say, a young active man, they might think that they just weren't able to give him - as Order members - what he as a mitra would need, and so therefore would be justified in not taking him on. Do you see what I mean?

Ratnaketu: Well it does seem a bit of a pity from the point of view of the young man that...

S: Well they'd no doubt advise him to migrate where there were men Order members and this is usually what the advice is, the advice that is given to women in that sort of situation around a Centre where there aren't any women Order Members. Women have come down from Glasgow to London and from Glasgow to Aryatara.

Ratnaketu: There's a bit too much of them at the LBC. (laughs)

S: Well there's something in that too. It means that the situation around the LBC becomes a bit disproportionate. The same in Norwich. (Pause)

Perhaps one can look at 'offenses' just in terms of unskilful behaviour. When one is guilty of unskilful behaviour with women, it need not extend to sex even, one must do without capacity for deeds of lasting worth.

Aryamitra: It's not saying that... if we just omit the 'woman' and if it says, "if one commits unskilful actions one must do without capacity from deeds of lasting worth."

S: Hmm. Well that's true, that still holds good, that is a true statement, but except by saying 'with women' it suggests that there is something special about "unskilful behaviour with women", something even especially dangerous or especially likely to hold one back.

Aryamitra: So.... is the danger pointing out this attachment or something else?

S: I think the danger may be, but if you have a close association with women the danger may be that they do not share your spiritual aspirations and through your close association with them you will be held back or pulled back into the more cosy, more sort of domestic situation. I think that is the real danger; with or without sex, though it's usually with. (Pause) A woman will be unlikely to encourage you to go forth and do heroic things. She'll want to, well first of all she'll want to keep you safe and keep you near her and to look after you and be looked after by you. She won't want you to go very far away or do very much on your own; or to think in terms of development too much usually - there are exceptional women but they are exceptional, like Ramakrishna's wife. Or like the lady who lived with Aurobindo for so many years who was known as the Maha. She seemed to help him very much and taken over the more practical side of the running of his Ashram and ran it very efficiently. But she wasn't married to Aurobindo.

Aryamitra: Yes... so it doesn't say much for some of the so-called gurus in the west who have wives.

S: Well I'm afraid it doesn't say anything for them at all. I mean, a hen-pecked guru is a pitiful sight I can assure you - I have seen one or two. (murmurs of laughter) It really is. How can a hen-pecked guru be a source of spiritual inspiration, especially to young men? Always concerned with getting money so as to buy jewellery for his wife. You can see his wife all 'decked-out' with jewellery. One young man came to me in London who'd been a disciple of a Tibetan guru and he was really shocked when he saw another Tibetan guru associated with his own guru who had come over with his wife. He saw that the wife was 'decked-up with thousands of pounds worth of expensive jewellery and here was this Lama appealing for funds for this, that and the other. And he tackled him about it through an interpreter, but he said the Lama appeared not to understand what he was getting at. Hmmm, yes. And he was quite disillusioned and he severed his connection with these Tibetan Lamas - they were Nyingmapa Lamas, some of whom, of course, do have wives.

Again, if it's a nominal marital relationship as in the case of Sri Ramakrishna, that's quite different, but if you can see that the guru is absorbed in family life and is sort of a bit under his wife's thumb, and is thinking too much about providing her with ornaments and finery well how can one have any real confidence in his spiritual mission? (Pause)

Anyway, perhaps we've spent enough time on that. Let's see what the Heavenly White Grouse has to say. Who's going to be the Heavenly White Grouse?

End of side one, tape 7

Khemananda: "Thereupon the heavenly White Grouse rose, flapped his wings three times and said:

*"Hard to fathom the full extent of ills in this round of Samsara.  
Hard to fathom the totality of causes and effects.  
Hard to fathom the limit of endless mundane actions.  
Hard to fathom this body, which entails so much delusion and such  
tumult.  
Hard to fathom the deceits of parents.  
Hard to fathom the religious ways of frauds.  
Hard to fathom the religious talk of the shallow.  
Hard to fathom the mischievous unrest aroused by chiefs.  
Hard to fathom the virtues of the skilful.  
Hard to fathom the choice of action:  
For in the end all comes to naught."*

S: So, "Hard to fathom the full extent of ills in this round of Samsara." In other words, the ills, the sufferings, the misfortunes of the Samsara are endless. You can't get to the end of them. You can't fathom them, you can't count them.

I think that's pretty obvious. You can't enumerate all the different ways in which things can go wrong in the Samsara. With an absolutely classic example, or what I think will become a classic example is our attempts in Poona to acquire a small plot of land over the last four years. It's an absolute saga, huh, of, what was the word I used... well, of things going wrong. It's unbelievable, incredible, it would need a whole book to tell the whole story - without any exaggeration. That's only a tiny little corner of Samsara! A hundred, two hundred, a thousand things that have gone wrong in the course of our trying to acquire that tiny plot of land. As far as we know we still haven't got it. I've got reams and reams of reports of meetings and discussions and so on. So many things have gone wrong. That's typical of Samsara you might say. Such a little corner. So it's things like that are happening all over India but this is just in respect of land. What about in respect of other things - in respect of job, in respect of family? What about in respect of health, in respect of education, huh? In respect of transport, accidents? There's an infinite number of possibilities of things going wrong. That is the nature of Samsara. "Hard to fathom the full extent of ills in this round of Samsara." (Pause) One could even sort of paraphrase, I'd say, 'Hard to fathom the full extent of all the things that have gone wrong in the course of our trying to acquire that plot of land.' It really is like that. (Pause) Anyway, no need to dwell on it perhaps. (Pause) "Hard to fathom the totality of causes and effects." Now what does one mean by that, "The totality of causes and effects"? It can be understood in several ways one would have thought. Causes and effects together and causes and effects separately.

Ratnaketu: Hard to fathom the variety of possible actions and results.

S: Yes. (Pause) Everything that happens is a cause; everything that happens is, at the same time, an effect from another point of view. But also one might understand it as being, it's very hard to understand the totality of the causes that have given rise to any given single effect. It's as though the whole of existence directly, or indirectly, contributes to the existence, or to the happening of any one thing. In the same way hard to fathom the totality of effects, you just do one little thing and you can't, can't fathom the number of consequences that that may give rise to. Just one little thing that you do. It's like Pascal's famous remark which I quoted about - had Cleopatra's nose being half an inch shorter and the history of the world would have been different. (Pause) Do you see what I mean? If she had not been such a beautiful woman she would not have ensnared Mark Antony. If she'd not ensnared Mark Antony he would not have lost the battle of Actium. If he'd not lost the battle of Actium, Augustus would not have become Emperor. If Augustus had not become Emperor, well, the history of the Roman Empire would have been different. If the history of the Roman Empire had been different, the history of Europe would have been different. If the history of Europe had been different, the whole history of the world would have been different. It all goes back to Cleopatra's nose not being (laughter) There's some truth in it, isn't there? Well that's only one nose of one woman! (laughter) Think how many women there are in the world! (laughter)... with short and long noses! (laughter)

Ratnaketu: It is strange when you think about it though. One little thing happening thousands of years ago which is still effecting the world today. Just maybe something like in Christianity, this small thing, maybe it might have started off....

S: Well even in one's own life. For instance I had no intention of coming back to the West. I was going to stay in India. But I got an invitation inviting me to go to London and I wasn't inclined to accept it and I think I would not have accepted it except that there was an English Buddhist staying with me who virtually talked me into accepting it and that was (Kandipala?) believe it or not! So I thought it over and in the end I agreed to go for four months, not more. Not more than four months. Well then everybody knows what happened. But supposing (Kandipala?) had not been staying with me at that time, when I received that letter. Very likely, you know I would not have done it... (laughter)

: (unclear) (laughter)

S: (unclear) (laughter).(long pause)So, it's hard to fathom the totality of causes and effects, that really is true. So in a sense we don't know what has brought about any given phenomenon. In a sense you don't know what the effects of your actions, your reactions, are going to be. you don't know very often. Well you might for instance very unwillingly go along to give a lecture to some obscure group that you don't care much about but it might happen that years later you hear there was somebody there who really took notice of what you said and remembered it and later on got in contact with the FWBO. That has been known to happen.

Amoghacitta: It's a bit like Harshaprabha, he used to go to a Presbyterian Church and somebody gave a lecture.

S: One doesn't know what sort of seed one is sowing. (Pause) Well, when I was in India last, all sorts of people were popping up and saying, "Well I heard you lecture in such and such a place twenty years ago." I'd forgotten the place, forgotten the lecture. Well Mahadhammavira said that. He was one of those. The old man, 73, 74 years now - he heard me lecture in, I think it was Ahmednager twenty odd years ago - he'd never forgotten it. I don't remember giving that particular lecture. I certainly don't remember seeing him - he was one of a thousand faces in the crowd (laughter), but it had an effect and years later, well, he's an Order Member. (Pause) Anyway that's just an illustration.

So,, "hard to fathom the limit of endless mundane actions." What does that mean? (Pause) Well, there's no end of worldly actions. I mean, once you get involved in them, there's no knowing where it will stop. Just like this land business. I mean Lokamitra's sincerely felt, well, here's this piece of land, these people are willing to sell it to us for a very reasonable price. O.K., we just have to draw up the agreement and sign it and that's that. But, oh no! That one mundane action... well, I don't think we can actually sign the agreement yet. It might have been signed, I haven't received any news for a couple of weeks. But one thing led to another. We became involved with all sorts of government officials, the lawyers, the surveyors. All sorts of visits to all sorts of government offices and departments and taking of documents and making of copies. It's extraordinary, just that one sort of action, buying that land which seemed simple enough really has involved us in thousands of actions. We just wanted to do something, something quite ordinary, quite simple - this seemed to involve you in endless complications.

Ratnaketu: This reminds me of something which I heard (unclear)... I don't know whether it's true or not, but it was that it's easier to make it in the spiritual life than it is to make it in the world.

S: That's the sort of thing I could have said (laughter) but I don't remember, but I think I would agree with that. Because, yes, the spiritual life is in a way easier, simpler, in a way everything is under your own control. In the case of the spiritual life you're basically concerned with personal development, with your own mind essentially, and it's much easier to tackle that and develop that but if you're engaged in the world, dealing with all sorts of other people - if you are, say, in the world of commerce, all sorts of market forces. That can be very difficult. So in a way the spiritual life is more easy in the sense that it's more simple and straight forward than the worldly life. I don't mean easy in the sense that you have to put less effort into it - you have to put more - but the issues are more clear cut, more straightforward, more depends on you as an individual. So, "Hard to fathom the limit of endless mundane actions." "Hard to fathom this body, which entails so much delusion and such tumult." How this is to be understood - fathoming this body? Would it be understood spiritually, or metaphysically or physiologically? (Pause) How does it entail so much delusion and such tumult?

Aryamitra: To do with our idea of ourselves?

S: Well first of all it's not easy to fathom the actual workings of the body as an organism. How many of us really know how our bodies work? The circulatory system, the respiratory system, all the rest of it - the nervous system, you know, we don't usually know much about these so it's difficult enough to fathom that. And no doubt harder still to fathom it metaphysically. Fathom the insight into the true nature of the body which entails so much delusion. In what way does it entail delusion?

Ratnaketu: Delusion of the separate self?

S: Yes, it reinforces that delusion. You can even identify yourself with the physical body - think that you are the body. And tumult. How does it entail tumult?

Silaratna: (unclear) sort of, um., as you sort of try to sustain the delusion of the physical self, you're just of, just keeps needing more sustainment. It goes on and on and on. (Pause) And just to keep it going and keep it warm and keep it fed and to keep it (unclear). And if it gets hurt or something...

S: Yes, and it can so easily get hurt, so easily get damaged. A little grain of dust is enough, in the wrong place. The whole organism can be seriously disturbed, you can even be in danger of death. you can die. A little tiny blood clot or something like that. (Pause) Anyway, we mustn't dwell upon that too much perhaps. (Pause) Well, what about the next one? "Hard to fathom the deceits of parents." That seems rather unusual; "Hard to fathom the deceits of parents." This reminds me;

quite recently I was reading a story by Dickens in which there was a father who had a blind daughter. The father was very poor and they had to work and work for a very hard, grasping sort of a man. But the father, out of love, as he afterwards discovered a blind love, deceived the daughter and he made her believe they lived in a beautiful room and that their employer was very kind hearted and that he had beautiful clothes. Whereas in fact they lived in a wretched, miserable sort of room - if it can even be called that and eventually he had to tell her the truth. So in this way he deceived her but you could take that as symbolical. That parents bring up children with a false view of the world. I mean, like parents of that friend of mine whom I mentioned who brought him up to think that the height of earthly bliss was to be bound in marriage. So, "Hard to fathom the deceits of parents." Not that they deliberately deceive one in a way. They deceive themselves. Maybe they've been deceived themselves in turn anyway. So, "Hard to fathom the deceits of parents."

Ratnaketu: It's rather a pity that you can't be born to spiritual parents in a way.

S: Yes, indeed. Well the Buddha's parents, or the Buddha's father tried to deceive him according to the legend. Tried to make him believe that there was no such thing in the world as old age, disease and death. He tried to deceive him. He tried to encourage him into a sort of cocoon of unreality. So of course it's hard to fathom the deceits of parents because you were brought up by them, you trust them, maybe you love them. You don't like to think that they've deceived you. It's not easy to see through their deceits. Perhaps you don't even want to. You don't want to lose your confidence in your parents. Is there any other way of looking at this line. It seems to relate more to the way in which they bring you up. Not that they tell you any specific lie or anything of that sort but they bring you up sort of entrapped in the whole network of delusions in which they themselves are entrapped. It's difficult for them to do anything else.

Amoghacitta: I was just thinking it doesn't specially say that it's you that they're deceiving. I was thinking they may well deceive others in order to bring you up perhaps. You know (unclear). (Pause)

S: Well if they're trapped in a network of delusions so they'll be trapped in it so far as all the people with whom they come into contact are concerned, but that will effect most of all their own children because they have to bring up those children within that network and to believe in it as something real.

Khemananda: And when you grow up you just tend to assume that's the way that the world really is because that relationship is so basic...(unclear).

S: And to think for oneself, to see things for oneself. Can anyone think of any specific incidents, any particular way in which one was, as it were, deceived by one's parents and the way that they brought one up or the way that they, so to speak, taught one to see things?

Aryamitra: Yes.

Aryamitra: My mother wasn't very cultured and things like classical music and poetry were very sort of 'cissy' or something like that.

S: Wanted you to be a man.

Aryamitra: Yes. So even now, after I've been to (unclear).

S: I think that some parents, especially perhaps mothers, bring up their children to be afraid - that the world is a very fearful place. In a sense it is, but not in quite that sort of sense. They bring their children up to think it's a very fearful place or they shouldn't go out into it. They should feel

only at home they're safe.

: Yet they're (unclear)

S: Yes, or if you go very far away from home that something dreadful will happen to you. Don't speak to strangers and all that sort of thing.

Silabhadra: It's like sort of an extension of the protective force (unclear).

S: Subhuti mentioned one such instance in his life story - he was told in so many words by his mother not to mix with the local village children because he was different, and it was of course understood that he was better. So in other words, you know, his mother brought him up, or tried to bring him up within the network of delusions pertaining to the English class system.

Amoghacitta: I think often boys are brought up too very dependent on career and education and girls are brought up to value cookery - that kind of thing - and, you know, two different ways (unclear). (Pause) (unclear).

Silaratna: They do it in the sort of way they'd sort of like grandchildren. Not that they'd like you to get married but they'd like grandchildren. (laughter)

Ratnaketu: That was one thing that my parents never talked about it at all (unclear)

S: Well perhaps they took it so much for granted that you would.

Ratnaketu: Well mine thought you have to have a job. You have to have a career which you can involved with.

S: Otherwise they sort of imagine you loafing around with your hands in your pockets at home indefinitely, not doing anything. Generally getting under people's feet.

Ratnaketu: I suppose one of the, actually thinking about it, the worst ones, the worst deceits, are the ones that are not spoken at all, just so totally assumed that you can't even imagine there being anything else. It's not like you're not allowed to smoke cigarettes or something like that, well then you can always fight back, but when it's just assumed that everybody's going to get married or everybody...

S: If you venture the question, they look at you as if you're sort of mad or out of your senses. I think another area of deceit is where the parents deceive the children, even without saying anything at all, with regard to the state of affairs between themselves. That is to say the parents may not be getting on well, they may be on very bad terms but they don't actually say anything to the children to that effect. They keep up the appearance of being sort of, well sort of happily married. That's the sort of official view, the official attitude, the official line that they're happily married but actually they're not.

Ratnaketu: Just seeing them saying one thing but the emotional content is quite different. You see that a lot with young children. Not only saying one thing, you know, something quite nice, but the way the emotions are coming across (unclear).

S: Well enough of all that. "Hard to fathom the religious ways of frauds." Well maybe we can consider that with the next one, "Hard to fathom the religious talk of the shallow." One really does find this, one really does notice this because nowadays in the West we've got so many gurus and pseudo-gurus going around all of them, well many of them with a very sort of glib line of pseudo-spiritual thought which a lot of people fall for. And this is, for ordinary people hard to

fathom, they find it really difficult to understand, difficult to accept that these people are religious frauds. In some cases at least there's no other word for it. Sometimes they're half-frauds and half-sincere. They're not wholly frauds. In fact I think it's very difficult to be completely a fraud. Rather there's some little element of genuine-ness around which the whole fraudulent structure is built.

Prasannasiddhi: It's almost as if there's a role in society. Some of them just sort of end up because there's that position. May be some of them just sort of experience this. They end up finding themselves in the position of being this guru and there is some genuine-ness because there are certain things the spiritual life is good but they might have a very good idea about (unclear).

S: Because it does make one quite sort of sad sometimes when one sees the extent to which people have got to be deceived and misled and even exploited, especially financially, certainly psychologically. You know, I have said this it's as though there are some people who are begging to be deceived. Begging to be exploited. It's almost... well it is as strong as that.

: What is that though?

S: Hmm, I've tried to, well, fathom that, certainly thought about it. It's as though there are some people, maybe it applies more to women than to men, who seem to need to utterly depend on someone. And there are people, these sort of guru figures who seem to get a deep satisfaction of having people totally dependent on them. It's a sort of mutual need which is fulfilled. You want to really depend on someone in a neurotic sense and there's somebody else who wants to be depended on in that sort of way who gets his fulfilment or his kick almost out of that. A lot of people want certainty. They want to believe that they're in contact with god, someone who's infallible who can just tell them exactly what to do and what it's all about in an absolutely authoritative way without the need for them to think at all. So for some people, a lot of people, it's the Pope. The Pope is probably the biggest of all these sort of guru figures although perhaps we don't see him in those sort of terms usually because he's got an ancient institution and a long history behind him. But that is really how he functions. I mean there are other lesser figures with a few hundred or a few thousand followers - even a few million in some cases.

: (unclear)

S: Hmm, that is sometimes the case but this point has sometimes been made to mean. If anybody says or some guru says to me, 'I can't help it, my disciples insist', then I say, 'Who is the guru and who are the disciples? If you are the guru you should be insisting.' I mean he might say - 'I don't like using this Rolls Royce, but my disciples insist.' Well again, 'Who are you, are you not the guru. Is it for you to teach them or for them to teach you?' There's a simple answer to that. I don't accept that argument. It means you've abdicated your position as a guru - you are just a sort of figurehead used by other people. You can't claim to be a guru or a teacher or a leader even. You're no more than a sort of mascot.

Buddhapalita: Almost a puppet for their needs.

S: Almost a puppet for their needs really, yes. One sees this in India also, almost on a grand scale sometimes. You hardly need a human being in such cases. You just need a puppet worked by a few strings. I used to sort of say this on a slightly different level with regard to some of the Sinhalese Bhikkhus when they used to come. Not so much as a criticism of the Bhikkhus but as a criticism of the lay people who wanted them to behave in a certain way. I said all you needed was a tailor's dummy, put a robe on it and play a tape recorder behind it with some Pali chanting. That will satisfy most lay people! It really is like that in some cases. They just want a yellow robe to bow down to and some holy words to listen to - that's all, unfortunately. Not that the Bhikkhus in many cases like to function like this, but the weight of society and lay opinion is very strong



in countries like Ceylon. They don't have much choice and they're not very often men of very strong character anyway.

Aryamitra: Do you know of any people that you would consider to be genuine gurus?

S: Well there are some but they're not gurus quite in this sense. They're very worthy people, or people of real spiritual understanding and Insight who in some cases have small circles of disciples, sometimes not. There's one person, a very admirable person, a friend of mine in Bombay, that's Sophia Wadia who is head of the Theosophical movement there and she's a very impressive person. Lokamitra's quite impressed by her and I've known her for thirty years now and she certainly comes into this sort of category - very, very genuine, very, very sincere. Emotionally very positive - you know, kindly and helpful, you know, really standing by her principles. So there are such people but not usually among the well known gurus or sort of national figures. I mean, some of the figures I've mentioned in my memoirs, like that apparently eccentric (Yarahanka Swami) - he seemed very genuine. You remember? The one with one eye who is supposed to be five or six hundred years of age.

: Oh yes!

S: I'm sure he was genuine. He had just a small circle of disciples, just a couple of dozen young men and one old lady and that was his circle. He didn't encourage people to come along. So there are such people, quite definitely - maybe there's more of them than we think - but they're not very well known because they don't go in for self-advertisement in the way that some of the famous 'gurus', inverted commas, do.

Aryamitra: Wasn't there one recently who had advance publicity who was about to emerge in London.

S: Oh yes, what happened to all that?

Aryamitra: I don't know quite the outcome but I think it was just before the (unclear).

S: I got a letter just recently from someone who seems to be a new guru and he wrote to me comparing his sort of brotherly greetings and, you know, sorry he couldn't meet me while he was over in England. He was only over here for a year. He was going back to his hermitage near (Amarabad) and hopes to meet me sometime. I'd never heard of him before but he's started up some group and some organisation and seems to be a sort of guru. He claims to be both Hindu and Buddhist and clearly he'd heard of me and he writes to me, he's about 72 I think, as though he'd known me for years and years. I'd never heard of him! (laughter)

Ratnaketu: On midsummer's day when that guru in Brick Lane - was supposed to appear on midsummer's day and that evening there was a bell on the door at Sukhavati and I went down and there were three people there looking for Christ! (laughter)

S: You should have said, 'Well you've come to the right place!' (loud laughter) or you can say well we haven't got Christ but we've got the Virgin Mary (loud laughter) and sent them up to Parami! (loud laughter) She would have enlightened them.(laughter)

Ratnaketu: One of them was really dressed up very well, and he'd flown over from America in order to connect this...

S: Yes. Fly over for that sort of thing at enormous expense They won't fly over for the FWBO. It's not glamorous enough.

Ratnaketu: We also got a letter from Sunset Boulevard in California. It was on a piece of paper with a heading on the top, headed notepaper, and it was addressed to 'Christ. E.2' and they'd sent it to Sukhavati (laughter) - the Post Office and they said...

S: At least they didn't send it to any local church (laughter) You would have been more likely to find Christ at Sukhavati than in any of the local churches. It's quite interesting, quite revealing. (laughter)

Ratnaketu: And the letter said it's glad to hear that you're coming! (laughter)

S: I hope you do better this time! (burst of laughter).. Maybe place an aeroplane at your disposal. (laughter) It's telling, you know when you think of it, huh, it's really quite sad, tragic that people have lost any sense of spiritual tradition - any sense of spiritual discrimination. You see, now you've all heard of Lobsang Rampa. You know that he is broadly speaking a fraud. Though a very good writer, he's a fraud in the sense that he actually was never in Tibet and was never a Tibetan Lama as he purported to be. Now what was interesting was when his first book came out, that is to say, 'The Third Eye' - I've read this in Kalimpong. I only read two or three pages and I knew that this man is not a real Tibetan Lama - he's a fraud. I knew it at once - but never heard of him, never heard of the book before. But then I read the review about the book in the 'Middle Way' sometime later by Doctor Conze and he clearly couldn't be sure whether it was genuine or not and that really sort of shook me that someone like Doctor Conze should not have possessed that sort of spiritual discrimination, but then, that is not surprising because he had never had real live contact with Buddhism or with Buddhists or with lamas. He just couldn't tell, so he sort of played safe. He didn't commit himself to say either that the author was a genuine lama or he wasn't. But I knew, having had contact with Tibetan lamas, to some extent, knowing something about Tibetan Buddhism, after two or three pages I thought, ah ha! I smell a rat (laughter). Well it was a rat, it was Lobsang Rampa (laughter) But, you know, people are unable to distinguish. If you say that you're a guru and you've got your private aeroplane and all that sort of thing, they'll take you as a guru, especially if you've got a private aeroplane - that seems to be one of the necessities for a guru these days. But it's sad because, you know, the people who go along to some extent sincerely, they're looking for something, they're in need of something, but they're misled. Maybe they get a certain emotional satisfaction, a certain psychological satisfaction out of belonging and looking up to this guru - they can't get very much in the true spiritual sense because dependency is encouraged more often than not. But they're happy to be exploited, very often.

end of side two, tape 7    Birds Tape 8, side one

S: It's pseudo-humility. And if you venture to criticise the guru or to express these doubts or reservations well, they take that as meaning that you can't possibly be as spiritual a person yourself, or have any sort of spiritual insight or understanding or sympathy. You place yourself outside the pale. And then you could say there's a sort of club of these sort of international club with these sort of rules and they're all careful not ever to criticise one another. They dare not, they can't afford to, they're all in it. They're all in the same little game, the same little racket. So they indirectly support one another, recommend one another, speak well of one another, even though sometimes their actual claims are more or less improper. There can't be more than one God around at the same time, presumably, or more than one Jesus Christ but sometimes there seem to be dozens of them. (Pause) Anyway, perhaps that's enough on that subject. (laughter)

Prasannasiddhi: This is apparently a traditional Tibetan text And so all the stuff about gurus and the way the West and kind of things happening, presumably in Tibet....

S: Well, unfortunately not altogether. because I have met some fake Tibetan gurus, though it's much rarer - that sort of thing is much rarer in Tibet - because there is, or was, a much stronger spiritual tradition and therefore the flaw was much more easy to detect. But I have met one or

two. I remember there was one in particular. There was a Kargyupa lama came out of Tibet before most of the great lamas came out of Tibet. He was a great big healthy, beefy looking man - really sort of self-confident. He wore a white and red Kagyupa dress and a big tower of hair curled up here and a little tiny wife. Anyway, he gave himself off to be a certain well-known incarnate lama from Eastern Tibet, one that was well-known by name. I forget what the name was but anyway, lots of people had heard of him though only... they were overjoyed that this great incarnate lama had come to Kalimpong, so he was really feted and he performed ceremonies and gave blessings and eventually he was invited to Rome by Professor Tucci. But actually, we afterwards discovered that he was not that actual... in fact, he was an imposter! He gave himself out to be that particular incarnate lama, but he wasn't. He was just, as it were, an ordinary Kagyupa, - well, one can't even say monk, because he was married. But anyway, he came to me - I had had my sort of doubts about him because, even supposing he had been the man he was supposed to be - that is the incarnate lama - well, that wouldn't prevent me from sort of just sizing him up myself. I saw he was 'on the make'; this was very clear to me, he was 'on the make'.

So, when he was going to Italy at Tucci's invitation, he asked me to give him a letter of introduction, the sort of....saying he was this, that and the other, and so I was very careful. So I deliberately wrote that this was to introduce so and so and so and so who is a very good Buddhist Upasaka. I said nothing about being a great lama. So of course, the people in Rome - especially Tucci - they twigged this; 'Ah, ha! Why does Sangharakshita say that he's a very good Upasaka?' Yes? (laughter) And of course, Sangharakshita is clearly saying he's not an incarnate lama. Do you see what I mean? They twigged this. And he also eventually came to understand that this is what I had written. I mean, he knew at the time what I had written, but he didn't understand what I was getting at - he wasn't quite sharp enough. But he came to know later on; he was very annoyed about this, but by that time he'd been exposed and everybody in Kalimpong knew that he wasn't in fact that particular personality. And of course he was useless in Rome; he was supposed to have been helping Tucci with researches into Kagyupa religious literature, but, in fact, he didn't even know classical Tibetan properly. So Tucci sent him back after a while, and he settled in Kalimpong. So even among Tibetans, sometimes (cut in tape)

Prasannasiddhi: Actually, thinking about these two lines, in a way perhaps the first line could refer to the kind of religious fraud we've been speaking of, but in a way this second line could also refer to just kind of ordinary people or just people who talk a lot about spiritual things, in a way without just...

S: Yes, religious patter, one can call it. And again, I remember an incident when I was in Kalimpong. I was going down to the Plains and I was sitting next to the driver in the front of the jeep and on the way down to Siliguri - I think - we were stopped on the way by the traffic or something like that, some disturbance or maybe a landslide, anyway, there was a Bihari policeman controlling things. So, he came up to the jeep where I was and he saw, 'Oh, there's a monk sitting there; there's a holy man.' So he started talking with me in Hindi and, as Hindus often do, he started on a long religious spiel about religion is this and God is this and God is that and duality and non-duality; and he went on and, having satisfied himself in this way, he sort of departed.

Of course, the Tibetan sitting behind me... and the Tibetan was horrified and he said to me, 'That man, that policeman, he was talking about religion.' Meaning, how dare an ordinary person like that with no real experience or knowledge, dare to sort of hold forth on the subject of religion. He was really shocked. And I found this was the Tibetan tradition - unless you really knew what you were talking about as regards the Dharma, you didn't say anything at all. And you certainly didn't sort of stroll up to people sitting in jeeps and just hold forth in that sort of way. So this is one of the reasons why I found the Tibetans considered the Indians very irreligious. And in India so many people - this is rather the negative side of the spiritual tradition - are ready to hold forth at the drop of a hat on the subject of the Absolute and the Origin of the Universe and things and

with absolute confidence, just go on talking and talking, as though they really knew all about it. So 'Hard to fathom the religious talk of the shallow.'

It's very difficult to get a word in edgeways; it's very difficult actually to talk to them or discuss about, 'Well, how do you know this?' Well you just know it; they just know it. They're just telling you. There's a certain sort of Hindu if he catches hold of a visiting European, he'll just buttonhole him and sort of feel he's got to give him the whole works about the spiritual life and sublime Hindu philosophy and all the rest of it. (laughter) You encounter these characters in England even. (long pause)

Anyway, then, 'Hard to fathom the mischievous unrest aroused by chiefs.' One may have to bear in mind the sort of conditions in Tibet at the time - all sorts of local chiefs struggling for power, struggling to extend their territory, struggling to extend their sphere of influence and plotting, and planning all the time. So, 'Hard to fathom the mischievous unrest aroused by chiefs.' Well, one could say that of any sort of political situation. It's really hard to fathom sometimes what the politicians are up to. (Pause)

I mean in recent years in England there's been a flood of memoirs and reminiscences published which purport to show you what was going on behind the scenes - certainly usually a lot more was going on I think that the public at the time generally suspected.

Aryamitra: It makes you wonder what was behind all the Falklands...

S: Well, perhaps we shall find out when we get back. There may have been revelations while we've been away.

Ratnaketu: It also seems to me that you're really sort of aware of getting whipped up into a fervour by one person's own interest in a particular area.

S: Right, yes. Yes, that's true.

Khemananda: It almost seems as well that politicians, they want to create disagreement between themselves and stir things up, you know....

S: Well, they want to sort of create a wave on the crest of which they can then rise - hopefully rise to power. (Pause) All that's pretty obvious, I think.

Anyway, we come to something more positive now: 'Hard to fathom the virtues of the skilful.' What does that mean?

Aryamitra: Is it that the skilful - the really skilful - are almost on another level? And that, not just the skilful deeds they do that are hard to fathom, as much as they are (unclear)

S: (unclear) as their qualities.

Aryamitra: Their qualities are really hard to fathom.

S: Well, it's difficult sometimes to understand the motives for their actions. You know, you can see well perhaps their actions are pretty positive but it's not easy to understand why they've performed them, or even why they've said certain things.

Amoghacitta: We're quite often sceptical. We're quite often sceptical. We often think it's done for selfish motives when someone does something that seems a bit too altruistic almost.

S: Yes.(Pause)

Prasannasiddhi: Do you think that actually that's a proper interpretation - 'Hard to fathom the virtues of the skilful' - because all the other lines involve negative kind of things. But that's actually a positive statement. Perhaps he's mistranslated it or something. Perhaps it's more the sort of artful person - or... I don't know but...

S: It might be - we've no way of knowing - but there's no reason why there shouldn't have been a positive line sort of introduced. Perhaps the author thought, well, it's time there was a little positivity.(pause)

Ratnaketu: It's strange in a way because at the end it says, 'For in the end all comes to naught.' How does that relate to the virtues of the skilful - 'It comes to naught'?

S: Well, it's the 'hardness to fathom' which is the point of the whole section. In the end, it's as though one's effort to fathom comes to naught. Whether the negative or the positive instances.

Prasannasiddhi: So you think trying to fathom the virtues of the skilful would come to nothing in the end?

S: Yes, because they are in fact unfathomable, one might say.

Ratnaketu: In the Mahayana scriptures, it says if you tried to count the Buddha's virtues aeons would go by and you wouldn't do it.

S: Yes. And then it comes on - after 'Hard to fathom the virtues of the skilful', it comes on to something which can be either negative or positive: 'Hard to fathom the choice of action.' What does that mean, do you think? I think it means it is hard to fathom, it's hard to understand the reasons why people do things - I mean, whether skilful or unskilful, good or bad. It's very difficult to understand another person's motivations. I mean, maybe they don't fully understand them themselves. It's a question of the motivations - it depends upon the sort of, or it's the result of their balancing innumerable factors, many of which perhaps you're not in the least aware of. Why have they done certain things and not something else? You just don't know, very often.

Silaratna: It ties up very much with the second one doesn't it - 'the totality of causes and effects.'

S: Yes. (pause) It means that one musn't be quick in judging other people. We don't know the motivations of their actions. Not fully at least. I mean you don't always appreciate the weight that they give to certain factors. Even if you're aware of the existence of those factors. (pause)

Sometimes people are very ready to credit other people with certain motives, to attribute motives. This is quite wrong.

I have mentioned this on a number of occasions in connection with one particular topic - I mentioned it in particular in connection with Order meetings or any occasion on which Order Members get together. I mentioned something that should be avoided; that is to say, someone makes a point - or someone even makes a criticism and someone else jumps in questioning that person's motives for making that point or making that criticism. And I said you must very carefully separate these two things. You must first of all deal with the statement simply as a statement - whether it is true or untrue, justified or not justified - not try to rebut the statement by at once questioning the motives of the person making it; that, if it is to be dealt with at all, should be dealt with quite separately. Because in any case it is very difficult to understand an

other person's motives and you shouldn't hastily jump to conclusions in this respect.

Maybe someone says to someone, 'Well, I don't think you should have done that', and the other person says, 'I just think you're annoyed with me because of such and such and such and such', in other words, doesn't consider what you've actually said at all. This is quite wrong. (pause)

Aryamitra: It does seem to happen quite a lot actually. So the correct thing to do would be to take them at face-value to begin with and consider that.

S: Well, why not? Because if what they say is obviously untrue, well, the untruth of it will pretty soon become apparent to everybody. One has to be a bit patient. It may be that they are, in fact, making that statement for purely subjective reasons, it may be; but I think one should not say so or point that out on the spot. That will probably lead to some kind of argument or quarrel of an unpleasant nature. It ends up with you saying, 'Oh, well, you're prejudiced.' 'Well, no. I'm not prejudiced, you're prejudiced.' It leads to that sort of exchange which is always to be avoided. So just deal with the matter calmly and reasonably. And afterwards, if one thinks it necessary, just take the person aside and say, 'Well look, do you realise why you said that, why you said that statement. Do you realise you weren't being completely objective?' Chances are they may admit it to you privately. And usually, well I've certainly found in the case of Order Members, if there are a number of Order Members gathered together in some kind of Order meeting, and someone is being a bit unreasonable, it's pretty obvious to everybody. You need not go out of your way to rebut that person or show that they're being unreasonable. Other people can see. So in the end that person's unreasonableness has no alternative but to just collapse - it gets no support from anybody. (pause)

So 'Hard to fathom the choice of action for in the end all comes to naught.'

Well, is there any further point? I think we've almost come to the end for the morning.

Prasannasiddhi: 'For in the end all comes to naught.' This sounds a bit of a sweeping sort of statement.

S: Well, I think it refers to one's effort to fathom things which are unfathomable. (pause)

Prasannasiddhi: So it would recommend actually even trying to fathom the... (unclear)

S: I'm not saying that it necessarily says that you should not even try to fathom. I mean, for instance, in the case of 'the religious ways of frauds' and the 'religious talk of the shallow', it's in one's own interest to be able to see through that. Maybe you don't need to fathom it in its entirety; perhaps that would even be a waste of time; but at least fathom it sufficiently not to be taken in by it, not to be deceived by it. And maybe one should fathom 'the virtues of the skilful', at least sufficiently to be able to appreciate them. And fathom 'the mischievous unrest aroused by chiefs' sufficiently not to be drawn into it. you don't need to understand all the ins and outs of their various plots, but just understand enough not to get involved. (murmurs of agreement)

I mean it's hard to fathom the body, but you don't need to fathom it completely, just fathom it sufficiently to be able to look after it, keep it in good working order. There are some things one doesn't need to know everything about.

Prasannasiddhi: Well, one can't.

S: One can't. Even if one could, one doesn't need to. I mean, as the proverb says, you don't need to eat the whole of the egg in order to know that it's bad. You don't need to fathom the egg in its entirety.

Silaratna: Isn't that something you've got to be quite aware of it seems with the Dharma. Because it's - I mean, it's so vast. I mean the actual scriptural sort of thing of the Dharma that you could get distracted in the sort of side issues.

S: Well, fortunately one doesn't have to fathom it all. A small portion of it is sufficient.(long pause)

Amoghavajra: Could I ask you something to do with 'Amogha' that's (unclear) parts of our names - Amoghacitta, Amoghavajra, and Amoghavira. Amoghacitta looked up 'Amogha' in the Pali dictionary, and it's linked to 'moha' - delusion. I just wondered if there's a definite connection between 'Amogha' and 'moha'

S: Not that I know of (unclear). Well one could perhaps just think of subtracting the 'g' and making also Amoha - without bewilderment, without confusion - that would be an additional meaning. Well if there was no 'Moha' well there would be no 'Mogha' (unclear) and if there was no bewilderment there would be no obstacle, if there was no delusion there would be no obstacle. So to be without delusion is to be without obstacle - delusion being the biggest obstacle.

Amoghacitta: But is that actually what you meant when you gave us our names?

S: No, I gave it as the Sanskrit word that's without reference to the Pali, (laughter) 'Unimpeded'. If one looks into the meanings of these various words composing people's names one can discover all sorts of connections, deeper meanings and subsidiary meanings. I won't say some Order Members spend their whole lives looking up these things. (laughter) They do seem to take considerable interest in it! Honestly my Pali dictionary has never been out of my hands, I don't think, ever for so long before. (laughter) I haven't seen it for days! (laughter)

Amoghacitta: It's been (well) used, I think.

Silabhadra: But people should sort of take the interpretations that you've given as opposed to making up their own things.

S: Well no, they can carry on with their own explorations if they wish. I mean, like I haven't exhausted the meaning of all these names by any means. You might like to give complete talks on the meaning of their own names or meanings of their own names. (laughter) I mean one could go on talking for an hour about 'Vajra' at least, not to speak of Vira (pause)

What is the point of saying that all these things are 'Hard to fathom' do you think?

Ratnaketu: Maybe we should not give into them - just leave them behind.

S: Not get into them any more than is necessary. You can't get to the absolute bottom of them anyway. Maybe you need to understand these matters to some extent, for certain practical purposes - in order to avoid certain difficulties or pitfalls yourself. But you don't need to fathom them in their entirety. In fact, you can't.

Amoghacitta: The average worldly person believes that these things are states (within), rather than these are states of Samsara - which is quite important (unclear). He believes he has fathomed them in a sense.

S: Well, one often finds that worldly people like to think that they've really understood things. Really understood everything. Really got to the bottom of things and disposed of them. But things aren't so easily disposed of. Especially with regard to people. It's very difficult to get to the bottom of people. Well, as the line says, to fathom their real motivations. One shouldn't

presume too easily that one does understand what has caused certain people to do certain things. (murmurs of agreement) This may involve giving them the benefit of the doubt... if there is a doubt.(long pause)

It's just gone one. perhaps we'd better leave it there for today.

Birds tape 8 side 2

S: (unclear) There is a certain amount of repetition in the text so perhaps we'll go through it (very) quickly (unclear). Well, alright, page 25, and it is the turn of the pigeon to speak.

Silabhadra: "Thereupon the pigeon rose, circled three times in the air, and said, *yi mug, yi mug, which means, well might one despair, well might one despair.*  
*"Well might one despair, - the degenerate men of this iron age!*  
*Well might one despair, - the conduct of evil men!*  
*Well might one despair, - the quarrels of families in disunion!*  
*Well might one despair, - the absurdities of jealous neighbours!*  
*Well might one despair, - the mischievous disputes of great and passionate men!*  
*Well might one despair, - the poison running through the deeds of mischief makers!*  
*Well might one despair, - the pursuits of the busybodies!*  
*Well might one despair, - the chatterings of the garrulous!*  
*Well might one despair, - the enemies of the Dharma who teach it wrongly!*  
*Well might one despair, - the squanderings of ill-gained food and wealth!*  
*Well might one despair, - the swindlers who adulterate our food!*  
*Well might one despair, - those who would here abide for ever, however certain of impermanence and death!*  
*Well might one despair, - the children raised with tenderness who then reject their parents!*  
*Well might one despair, - the intimate friends unconfident in separation!*  
*Well might one despair, - the cares of family life we leave with such regret!*  
*Well might one despair, - false friends returning evil for our kindness!*  
*Because they cause despair, shun all such things!"*

S: 'Well might one despair', again it's an insight into the emptiness of the Conditioned. Emptiness of worldly life, or worse than emptiness; Insight into the fact that, well, if you think too much about it, and don't remember the Dharma, you might well have cause for despair; things are in such a bad way - or the picture as it is painted by the pigeon. I mean, think of life nowadays, quite clearly, quite evidently.

'Well might one despair, - the degenerate men of this iron age.' There's a note here. Conze says, "Iron age" - this is rather free for bskalpa snigs-ma, more literally "degenerate age." The Sanskrit equivalent is Kashaya and denotes the present Kaliyuga, in which everything decays and degenerates.'

Well, whether everything has to decay and degenerate just because of the Kaliyuga, that's quite another question, but apart from that there's no doubt that things are in a pretty bad way on the whole, whether it's inevitable or not.

Then the pigeon enumerates the various causes for despair, gives various illustrations of how it



is in the Iron Age: 'Well might one despair , - the conduct of evil men!' First of all just the miserable way in which people behave. (laughter) Cut that one. (laughter) If one just looks around, I mean, at the world in general one just sees people do behave so badly so very often so much of the time. 'Well might one despair', no need to linger on that; one could spend the whole day on it actually, but there's probably no point (in) it.

'The conduct of evil men' - we read about it in the newspapers everyday. 'Evil men' doesn't necessarily mean the men who end up in prison - some end up in the House of Lords, or the Vatican.

So, 'Well might one despair, - the quarrels of families in disunion!' One likes to think of family life as peaceful and happy, friendly, but all too often it isn't. If one looks at all deeply into family life one very often finds that families are divided, that there are quarrels. Again, this is all pretty obvious isn't it. (short pause) I remember I had two aunts, two of my mother's elder sisters who were sort of inseparable companions; they were both married and they lived quite near to each other and I think they ended up living in the same house, one had the upper and one the lower flat; they always went out together, always came to see my mother together; this had been going on for thirty, forty years. One day they stopped speaking to each other and no one ever found out why. I don't know why they stopped speaking to each other. I don't think my mother does either. They just stopped speaking to each other and refused to speak to each other again. Neither would give any explanation. (laughter) So this is the sort of thing that happens. It's very strange. I could tell you quite a few other little stories. I have a limited experience of my own family. No doubt there are quite a few in your own experience.

'Well might one despair, the absurdities of jealous neighbours!' This is still a characteristic of social life isn't it? (pause) You may remember that in my memoirs in 'The Thousand Petalled Lotus', I was writing about people in Kavela the then (?) State - all the litigation that used to go on over land; and I made the point that in Kavela the state of affairs was such that one could hardly go away for the weekend without one's neighbours shifting the boundary fence so that when you came back you had less land than you had when you left, and this was going on all of the time, providing plentiful practice for lawyers.

But, 'Well might one despair - the mischievous disputes of great and passionate men!' Men who occupy a prominent position in society, a prominent position in local life, maybe national life. They have very strong feelings. They like to throw their weight about and clash with one another and quarrel and involve other people in their quarrels. So that there's a great upheaval in the lives of many people. One really does see this in India.

Ratnaketu: 'Mischievous' is a bit of.... seems a strange word to use.

S: 'Mischievous disputes of...'

Ratnaketu: It seems a bit of a strange word to be using in....

S: Ah, mischievous in the strict sense of causing mischief, causing harm, causing damage, causing loss; not just mischievous in the sense of playfully naughty, not in that sense.

'Well might one despair, - the poison running through the deeds of mischief makers!' Again one has seen quite a bit of that - again one has seen it in India. In connection with our own work there, there are a few people who have been, well, have tried to be have mischief made in connection with our own activities in India. This is literally true. There's a poison running through what they do. There's no other way of describing it - it's so bad, so nasty, so negative, so

harmful.

Ratnaketu: It reminds me of bit of Buddhadasa as well - because I feel that the person who caused all that trouble was acting like they had poison.

S: Right. Well no need to dwell on it.

'Well might one despair, - the pursuits of the busybodies', people who just make themselves busy in a way with things that are no concern of theirs. People like Mrs Mary Whitehouse perhaps, maybe she's a good example of that sort of thing.

'Well might one despair, - the chatterings of the garrulous!' The chatterings of the very, very talkative.

So, one sees people doing all these stupid and foolish things. There's so many of them doing it so much that one might well despair.

Ratnaketu: What does 'garrulous' mean?

S: Just very talkative. Not only talkative, but talking very freely and loosely - without care - frivolously, thoughtlessly, heedlessly; very quickly perhaps, uninterruptedly.

'Well might one despair, - the enemies of the Dharma who teach it wrongly!' This is something that I've often reflected upon. Because years and years ago there was hardly anybody teaching Buddhism in the West. Now there are hundreds of people, maybe thousands but sometimes one can't help wondering whether there's really been any improvement, whether we've really gained anything, because some of them at least do teach it, well, one can only say wrongly - with such a misleading emphasis - teach it in a way that doesn't really help people so that in a sense, it isn't the Dharma, or is the Dharma only in name. One feels very sad when one sees this sort of thing.

Well then, 'Well might one despair, - the squanderings of ill-gained food and wealth!' Well to begin with people that acquire food, which is of course the basic possession in a way - well they acquire it in all sort of illegal and illegitimate, immoral and unskilful ways and then they just squander it. They just waste it. Again one sees so much of this. One finds people making large profits, making fortunes and then spending very lavishly on all sorts of useless things, virtually throwing money away. one sees a great deal of this, especially in a place like London - well, London is one of the places where people come from all over the world; having made their ill-gotten wealth, they come to London to squander it - nightclubs, hotels, big expensive shops.

'Well might one despair, - the swindlers who adulterate our food!' Well this strikes a very topical note. Again in India one saw so much of this. The merchant will regularly dampen the sugar, or they'll put chalk in the flour. Well, in Spain recently, there was a terrible case of the adulteration of cooking-oil. I think more than a hundred people died. So people quite deliberately, quite cynically, adulterate food without any care for the risk to people's health, or people's lives, just for the sake of profit, extra profit. One can hardly imagine any sort of crime worse than this, short of murder - well sometimes it does amount to murder.

'Well might one despair, - those who would here abide for ever, however certain of impermanence and death!' Well, some people are so stupid, thinking that they can go on living forever even though the fact of impermanence and death stares them in the face; well then one might well despair - despair of people if they could be as stupid as that - to think that they can go on living for ever as it were as they appear to do. (pause) It's as though (what the whole speech or whole refrain is (saying is))

'Well might one despair of human nature'. You might give people up as a bad job. As even the

Bodhisattva is sometimes tempted to do; when one sees them behaving in this sort of way. One doesn't, but one might well - despair of human nature - sort of give people up as a bad job.

Ratnaketu: I don't like the sound of that! That it's like human nature. Sometimes people use that as a justification for staying that way - it's natural - people often say it about fighting "it's part of human nature" - "you can't avoid it".

S: But when one sees people persistently behaving in a certain way then one is at least tempted to think, "Well maybe it is just human nature, maybe there's nothing one can do about it, maybe they can't help it, maybe it's inevitable. I mean that is in a way the danger, this is what constitutes the despair; that you sort of give up hope when you see people, behaving so badly to such an extent.

Then the text says, 'Well might one despair, - the children raised with tenderness who then reject their parents!' Well, this must surely set parents thinking. They've brought the children up. They've brought them up with tenderness and then the children turn round and reject them. It's surely that makes one wonder, makes some parents wonder whether it was worthwhile having children at all. The text seems to suggest that the case that the speaker - the pigeon - has in mind - the children have no real cause to reject their parents. They've been raised with tenderness; but none-the-less they do reject them. One can see instances of this. Again, 'well might one despair.'

Aryamitra: That's what my mother used to say all the time; she used to say, "Is it worth it?" (laughter) "Never again", she'd say, "never again will I have children."

S: How many did she have?

Aryamitra: Four.

S: I bet you're the brightest of the bunch. I'm sure that all parents wonder this sometimes.

Ratnaketu: It's one of the things that has moved me most is seeing sometimes a father with his young daughter just before she's developed - you know, become independent - and I remember quite often seeing that father and daughter playing in the park and I just sort of wondered what he's going to think when she starts going out into the world and getting up to all sorts of things and going astray. It must be really difficult for the parents.

S: Well, it's very difficult for even a sensible parent to steer a middle way between leaving an inexperienced young person entirely to his or her own devices and interfering and trying to run their lives for them. Sometimes a conscientious parent may think, "Well, should I interfere? Should I say something? Or should I not? Have they not got to learn from their own experience?" On the other hand, they might be getting into serious trouble which will damage them for life. So this is quite a serious question, quite a serious problem for a conscientious parent. Leaving aside the parents who do want to control you and run your lives, well, there are others who are more sensible, who don't. But even they are sometimes not quite sure what to do, how to act. Not quite sure what would be best for you in the long run; that they should interfere or that they should not interfere. Leave you to your own devices, or not leave you to your own devices. It's not easy to be a parent I'm sure. Especially in modern times perhaps.

But also another sad thing is you see children repeating the same pattern when they grow up, committing the same mistakes that were committed with regard to them by their own parents. I remember I had in Kalimpong a number of students - a number of Nepalese students, pupils who didn't get on well with their fathers, whose fathers treated them very sternly, were very distant with them, and none of these students liked their fathers. One could see - the way that they were developing - that when they grew up, when they married, when they had sons of their own,

they were going to treat them in exactly the same way, I could see it coming. They wouldn't remember, and learn from their own experiences; they just would blindly repeat the same pattern. Anyway, no need to dwell on that.

'Well might one despair, - the intimate friends unconfident in separation!' What does one mean by that? This is maybe something that might concern us more. 'intimate friends unconfident in separation'?

Silabhadra: There's no independence. If they're on their own they can't really function properly - they need the other person.

S: I was taking it in a quite different sense; though it does bear the sense that you (unclear).

Ratnaketu: It might be that you've got a friend who you maybe even confess something to and they just go away and just talk about it.

S: - 'the intimate friends unconfident in separation', who when they're separated, lose their confidence, lose their faith, lose their trust in each other. (pause) Well I have been thinking about this quite a lot recently for one reason and another and it has occurred to me that this loss of confidence, this loss of trust happens quite easily; sometimes it happens with surprising easiness.

Ratnaketu: You can see it within the Order even. People go to different countries, get a few thousand miles between them and ...

S: But before one discusses the unconfident, what does one mean by 'confidence' in this connection?

Ratnaketu: Is it trusting in the other person's own sincerity and commitment?

S: Yes, with regard to you especially or in general even. For instance, you might have been separated from someone for some time, someone you regard as a good friend, then you hear that he is supposed to have made some really unpleasant remark about you. you. Now if you have real confidence in that person, if you know him really well; if you really are an intimate friend, if he's really an intimate friend of yours, you'll be confident he could not possibly make such a remark; you just know that - he just couldn't have said that. But if that confidence isn't there, you start thinking, "well, he might even", not only just think what he might have said, you might even just believe that he had made that remark and you might start getting really angry. And you might write off a really angry letter - why did you make that remark and telling him you don't want to be friends with him any more etc., etc. And then of course it transpires that he didn't say anything of that sort at all. And clearly you did not have sufficient confidence in him - perhaps you didn't know him well enough.

So this, I think, is the sort of thing the text is speaking about. 'The intimate friends unconfident in separation.' Unconfident of each other when they're physically separated. And this sort of thing does seem to happen very easily. It means that while people were together they didn't actually build up a real trust, a real mutual confidence and that's a great pity when they've been together perhaps years.

Prasannasiddhi: Could you have called them intimate friends if they were...

S: Well, the text does but it seems clear they weren't sufficiently intimate. Otherwise if they were truly intimate one would assume that sort of lack of confidence just couldn't occur. Or it may not be something connected with one's own friendship. You might just hear somebody (unclear) they committed some crime and all the evidence might be against them and you might think, 'Well no, I just know them, In my own experience of that person, he could not have done that; he must

be innocent.' That's the sort of confidence that you've got. Even if the evidence is against him. If he says he's innocent, well you believe him because you know him sufficiently well to have that sort of confidence. You have to know someone pretty well to have confidence to that extent, as distinct from just blind faith, the sort of blind faith that the mother has in the son that he couldn't possibly do anything wrong. So even if she sees him with her own eyes stealing she'll swear that he's innocent and still believe it. Mothers can do that sort of thing, they're quite capable of it. But friendship is something different.

So it has seemed to me a number of times that there needs to be much more confidence within the Order in this sort of sense. People should have much more confidence in one another. And also it means that people should be much more worthy of confidence than perhaps they sometimes are.

Ratnaketu: I've felt this quite a bit, especially things like various people are responsible for certain things like there's certain people responsible for running a Centre, like the LBC, and I feel I should just be able to say, well I don't have to keep an eye on them, I trust them just to do it.

S: Well why should you keep an eye on them, any more than they should keep an eye on you? You're all equally Order Members, you're all equally responsible. Some are not more responsible than others, except perhaps to the extent that they are more experienced or have more understanding or have a better knowledge of the Dharma.

Prasannasiddhi: What do you say of people that you have seen that actually you can't rely on certain people.

S: Unfortunately one has seen that and it's a great pity. I get batches of minutes from all the different Centres and it's sometimes quite sad to see as reported in the minutes someone's promised to do something and then you find, reading the minutes of the following meeting, he hasn't done it for one reason or another. Next month he still hasn't done it. And there have been little sagas going on sometimes of someone not doing something for months on end. The classic case - I won't give details, or names at least - the classic case was the saga of a lock which was to be fitted to a door in a certain Centre, a certain community in fact and this went on for about a year. Someone had promised to get the lock and fit it and every month there were fresh excuses! And I was following this month by month in the minutes. It took a year, or perhaps even more, maybe fourteen months, for that lock to get fitted on that door.

So one of the things one must be able to have confidence in is somebody's word. This is really absolutely - what shall I say - of supreme importance. If someone says something, says that he will do something, you should be able to have that confidence in him that, well, he'll practically kill himself in order to carry out what he has said he would do. and sometimes it's so saddening, so disheartening when maybe someone has done a simple thing like making an appointment and maybe you've set aside time for that person, maybe, you know, dropped other work, and he doesn't turn up. And when you meet him you say, "What happened to you?" He says, "Well, I just forgot." As though it's of no account at all, that no care for your time or anything of that sort; that's very disheartening. You feel you can't have confidence in that person. So next time if he wants to see you, you think, "Well, is he going to come; is it worthwhile putting aside that time. Should I bother? He may not turn up." (pause)

So confidence is absolutely essential between friends. Confidence is an absolutely indispensable ingredient of spiritual friendship especially. Within the spiritual community, you just can't do without it. The spiritual community can't function, the spiritual movement can't function, without mutual confidence of this sort amongst all the people concerned, all the people involved.

And I think in this connection, reading through discussions as reported in minutes, very often what happens, and I think this sort of thing must be avoided, there's a discussion about a certain job to be done and then of course the question arises, who's going to do it; but the end of the discussion is often very inconclusive, that someone says well he'll think about doing it, or maybe somebody could be asked. And that's that; then there's no sort of machinery for following that up or seeing it through. A decision has not in fact been arrived at - there's only the illusion of a decision having been arrived at. In fact, it hasn't been arrived at. You know the sort of thing I mean. Some of you perhaps know it only too well.

Amoghavajra: Sometimes it's quite important that somebody says something like that, that they will look into it, you make a point of clearing it up, if they say that.

S: Or they say they'll try to do it or they might do it if they have time; well that's not good enough. Even if it is the only way that things can be done for the time being well then it should be ( ) that they will report back afterwards whether they've had time, whether they've been able to do it. It shouldn't all just be left just hanging in the air as often is the case. Sometimes the end of the discussion is "It would be a good thing if somebody could be found to do the job" and it's left like that. A pious hope is expressed, the matter is regarded as dealt with, disposed of.

Prasannasiddhi: That may be valid because people actually may have so many things on their hands that they feel that if they gave their word they would...

S: Well that's fair enough, then the decision of the meeting should be there is nobody available to do this particular job or this particular work, we therefore take the decision that we will forget about it for the time being. But not leave things just hanging in the air. If people haven't got time, fair enough, they must say so, then that's taken into consideration.

Ratnaketu: Coming back to that thing about, or just general confidence amongst Order Members, how do you think that could be developed?

S: Well I suppose, first of all you've got to get to know (unclear). Each one has just got to act more responsibly. You can't have confidence in people who you know from experience are irresponsible and therefore not worthy of confidence unfortunately. But also I think an important thing is that you should not let people off the hook. People get away with far too much. Once they've given their word they must be held to it and if necessary be made to feel really bad about not keeping their word because they give it much too lightly. They should be taken severely to task if they don't keep their word without very good reason. If they're seriously ill or something like that, well, fair enough, that can't be helped; that might happen at anytime to anybody. But if they've promised to do something and they haven't done it they should be taken severely to task and made to realise what they've actually done and how serious a matter that is. Because sometimes, and I know people come back in this sort of way and say, "Well, you shouldn't do that sort of thing because it makes me feel guilty." Well, of course you should feel guilty. It's right and proper to feel guilty under those circumstances, That is a rational feeling of guilt. You should feel very guilty and very regretful and very ashamed of yourself - that's only right and proper. (pause)

I used to have a friend in India, in Kalimpong, who used to tell me that she never gave anybody a second chance. If they let her down once she had nothing further to do with them whatever. I used to think this rather severe; in fact, I used to argue with her about it - tell her that I thought she was being too hard; but since I've been concerned with running things in England and elsewhere, I really wondered sometimes whether she wasn't right. Because her argument was, well, if they're capable of doing it once, they're capable of doing it twice. If they've done it once it means they're not trustworthy, they've shown that they can't be trusted. So you might just as well have nothing further to do with them. And sometimes I have wondered whether that wasn't

the right attitude.

Ratnaketu: You'd be left on your own! (laughter)

S: Well, not quite on my own. (laughter) But if people get into the habit of, or if they're habitually allowed to get away with things, they start thinking, well, it doesn't matter, giving your word isn't a serious thing. Sometimes people give their word as a sort of gesture - it looks good, it sounds good -there's a bit of applause- "Oh good old so and so, he's agreed to do such and such." Well, having done his bit by saying that he'll do it he thinks that's enough, that the gesture was sufficient, he's shown willing, and he just forgets all about actually doing it - until the next Council meeting.

Aryamitra: I suppose if it's absolutely held to firmly it would also avoid people taking on more than they can handle.

S: Yes.

Aryamitra: ... which sometimes happens. Or even the Council itself or (its) Centre....

S: The Council has the responsibility of not allowing people to take on things lightly. It's not enough that someone puts up his hand and says, "I'll do it." The Council should consider, well, who is this person? Is he able to do it? I mean, what about his past record? Is he reliable? Has he got the capacity. You shouldn't just accept someone's offer instantly, just to save yourself further trouble.

Ratnaketu: And in that connection as well, there's the thing of the Council decides to put something on, put a day on or something so they say "Will you do - you look after that", and the day happens and there's no sort of review of the day, as to whether it was a success or anything like that and so things get repeated again and again, mistakes.

S: Yes, quite, that's true. (pause) Anyway, 'Well might one despair, - the intimate friends unconfident in separation!'

'Well might one despair, - the cares of family life we leave with such regret!' You see the sort of paradox of it - 'the cares of family life we leave with such regret!' No need to dwell on that perhaps.

'Well might one despair, - the false friends returning evil for our kindness!' No doubt everybody has this experience sometime in their life, especially if they live a long time. (unclear)

'Because they cause despair, shun all such things!' Don't you find that last line a little surprising in a way? Doesn't it represent a sort of turnabout in a sense?

Ratnaketu: It seems quite natural.

S: Well that's true, but none-the-less there is a sort of reversal of roles let us say, do you notice this?

Amoghavajra: Maybe the other one should seem to be about (reversing?) the situation.

S: Yes, 'Well might one despair,,'; well it's the other people who are doing all these things. So what is the solution or what is the conclusion? You shouldn't do those things. Because they will cause despair to other people. you see what I mean? At least do what you can.

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..You yourself not do those things which you've seen other people doing which well might cause one to despair. I mean very often one finds or one hears people who are criticising others but they don't usually come to the conclusion, 'well, I just mustn't do those things myself.' But this is the conclusion of the pigeon, at least let me not do those things. At least let not me cause people despair in this sort of way; let me not add to the weight of despair by my behaviour. (long pause)

So what is the upshot of this speech of the pigeon apart from the conclusion reached in the last line? What sort of general impression does it leave one with?

Amoghacitta: All negation of useless pursuits (what one sees?)

S: It's more than useless pursuits. It's worse than useless, it's harmful in many cases. Mischievous. Undermining the Dharma. Well what do you think is the force of the phrase 'well might one despair'? What is the force of that idiom 'well might one despair'? It does not say one is bound to despair, it says 'well might one despair'.

Khemananda: If it wasn't for the Dharma you would despair.

S: Yes, if it wasn't for the Dharma, which means not just the Dharma in the abstract but perhaps one's own practice of the Dharma or perhaps one's own contact with one's own spiritual friends. Yes, if it wasn't for the Dharma one would indeed have cause for despair. This is why it is so important that the Dharma itself is rightly taught and not wrongly taught.

Ratnaketu: Is it because some of these people just teach the words of the world; that is all that they teach. It is just going to cause people to despair because they don't have the Dharma, they don't have that positive side.

S: Even if you do have the Dharma, sometimes you might be tempted to despair because the Dharma, at least as regards one's own practice of it, perhaps seems very small and insignificant, whereas these causes for despair occur on such a vast scale; as one of the previous speeches says, 'deep and vast this ocean of ills of the world of Samsara; deep and vast the promptings of worldly thought.'

Ratnaketu: But even so the thing that always stops me from totally despairing is conditionality and that I know, like, I have heard now that FBS has stopped and in a way that's a pity. But in a way I know that all the energy that has been put in there, it just does not disappear. Things do have effects and that if you put an effort in somewhere it will have an effect.

S: So in a sense there's no such thing as a wasted effort.

Aryamitra: Is that true - there's no such thing as wasted effort?

S: Well it depends I suppose on what one means by wasted. An effort is not necessarily fruitful simply because there are expected objective results. There is the effect of the effort - in terms of the fact that you have made the effort - on you or your own life, on your own character. That can be, so to speak, a permanent thing.

Silaratna: I suppose it could be considered wasted if the effort you put into something is going to be unskilful actions.



S: Yes, then your efforts would be wasted however objectively successful your efforts were in a sense. But best, no doubt, is where your efforts are skilful and are not wasted in any sense, whether subjective or objective - as when Sukhavati was built.

Ratnaketu: It's having your cake and eating it too.

S: I don't know whether that's the sort of analogy on which we should look with favour! (laughter) Perhaps we should leave it there and go on to the next speech which is the speech of the dove.

Prasannasiddhi: "Thereupon the dove rose and said skyid *dgug-pas sdug thug* , which means, *the quest for bliss will lead to ill.*  
*"The quest for bliss in this samsaric world will lead to ills in a state of woe.*  
*The quest for bliss in earthly things will lead to ills which never end.*  
*The quest for bliss in family life will lead to untold ills.*  
*The quest for bliss through avarice will lead to ills of hunger and thirst.*  
*The quest for bliss through gay diversions will lead to ills of restlessness.*  
*The quest for bliss in common things will lead to ills of body and of mind.*  
*The quest for bliss in earthly joys will lead to the ills of effort.*  
*Such are the things which lead to ill. Indeed so it is!"*

S: I think we'd better look at the general principle involved here first before going through the different applications of bliss. The general principle, the general idea seems to be that the quest for bliss ends in unhappiness in all these different ways, in all these different cases. The quest for bliss will lead to ills in a state of woe, will lead to ills which never end, to untold ills, ills of hunger and thirst, ills of restlessness, ills of body and mind and ills of effort. So the quest for bliss will lead to ill in one form or another, will lead to suffering one might say. So why does the quest for bliss invariably lead to suffering? Is this true, what does it really mean? How is one to understand this?

Amoghavajra: A misguided quest.....

S: A misguided quest. But what does one mean by a misguided quest? Could there be a rightly guided quest? Could there be a right way of going in quest of bliss in this Samsaric world which would lead to a state of happiness? Is there no bliss at all to be enjoyed in this Samsaric world?

Amoghavajra: The point is that you can't get bliss in the Samsaric world but people try.

S: Is there no bliss at all to be enjoyed in this samsaric world?

Aryamitra: No lasting bliss.

S: No lasting bliss. It doesn't actually say that they go in quest of lasting bliss; it says the quest for bliss, simply the quest for bliss. One can achieve a limited bliss. So what is wrong here? Why does the quest for bliss invariably end in suffering?

Khemananda: Because that is the object. You're seeking that - that's your quest whereas, I think in one of the question and answer sessions, you said that go into the spiritual life and bliss will come to you (unclear)

S: This does seem to be the point whether with regard to the worldly life or the spiritual life. The mistake is in going in quest of bliss, thinking of bliss as a sort of separate object or objective that can actually be pursued, as it were, for its own sake. It's as though you have to be engaged, you have to go in quest of things for their own sake. If you do that - well a certain amount of pleasure, a certain amount of joy, a certain amount of bliss will come to you out of that pursuit, but not if you are engaged in the pursuit for the sake of the pleasure it can give you. Not even in the case of the spiritual life. In a sense, yes, we say Nirvana is bliss, the supreme bliss. But if your quest for Nirvana is simply a quest for bliss, well, you are unlikely to end up with Nirvana. But as you say, we did go into this in one of the question and answer meetings, so I think this is the point here. It is the quest for bliss itself, the quest for bliss as a separate object as an end in itself that is the mistake. The mistake consists in that. It doesn't mean there is no bliss at all to be experienced in this Samsaric world or in earthly things or in family life or through avarice or through gay diversions or in common things or in earthly joys. But why do people become, as it were, let us say bliss-oriented, pleasure-oriented? Why do they think in those sort of terms in the first place?

Aryamitra: Because they feel unhappy?

S: Because they feel unhappy. They feel an absence of pleasure, an absence of bliss. So they think, so to speak, in terms of going directly in pursuit of that. But that seems not to work. But supposing you are very, very dull and very bored one evening and you start thinking in terms of, I would like to do something that will make me feel happy. But that is not really the right way to go about it. So what would be the right way to go about it?

Aryamitra: Just do something. (laughter)

S: Just do something. But I mean, how do you decide what to do when you are in that sort of state, that sort of condition? Or is it even right to decide what to do? Can one decide?

Aryamitra: I suppose if you are totally immersed in it you can only just sort of sit and be in it.

S: Stew in it!

Ratnaketu: I remember reading something you once said about just do the next thing which is needed to be done.

S: Yes, yes.

Ratnaketu: I've found that worked actually.

S: In other words you don't see the situation in terms of, well what can I do to make me happy. You see things in more objective terms. You just look around and see, well what is the next thing to be done. Is there washing up to be done? Is there a room to be tidied up? Is there a letter to be written to somebody. In other words you stop thinking about yourself, what will make you happy. You just do the next thing that needs to be done. And this is what gets you moving, gets you started. (pause) Otherwise you are like the child of rich parents who is surrounded with beautiful

toys and he does not know which toy to play with and so he is grumpy and discontented. A lot of people these days are in that sort of position. They are surrounded by toys, they don't know which one to play with and therefore they feel miserable.

Ratnaketu: And as soon as they touch them they lose their sparkle. You can see that clearly that the quest for pleasure does not lead to it especially when you go to places where there's people on holiday, like at Padmaloka. When you go down sometimes in the summer when there's people in their boats on the river, you see them all in there with their television sets.

S: Sometimes you hear family quarrels. They don't seem to be having a happy time at all. The only member of the family who seems to be enjoying himself very often is the dog. (laughter) But it is really noticeable if you go to certain sort of seaside places at the height of the season, places like Yarmouth or Southend or Brighton. There is a dreadful atmosphere hanging over them. This certainly is not the atmosphere of joy and happiness and bliss. It is only really dull and sour. It's very heavy.

Silabhadra: It's like people go there and expect the bliss just to be there. When the sun goes in that's it.

Ratnaketu: It also suggests that people have got a distorted idea of how and where happiness comes from. I was thinking when you are on a holiday where would the happiness come from? It's just really from just living in a new place. Like say you were camping, building a fire, just doing natural things. Because quite often people have got the idea that there are certain things which happiness comes from. Like going to a movie or doing something exciting or, it's not from just living, not from just the way in which you live.

Amoghavajra: Maybe that's why people aren't so happy nowadays because you've got all this entertainment like cinema and things like that. People go into the cinema to try and be happy.

Prasannasiddhi: Perhaps culture comes in here - doing things in a certain way; like you might have a sort of way of doing something that becomes a bit of a ritual within a culture which is just sort of involved, it's just being happy doing things and setting up forms and doing things which are pleasing; culture (unclear).

Ratnaketu: And then some people try, it's like what you were saying before how people when concerts first started up they're integrated into their whole life because they built up to it and prepared themselves but now you get this cultural event which we try to sort of stick on when we want to feel happy and so it's not even culture then, it's not really part of our lives.

S: In a way you don't even take it seriously. You don't try to learn something about the composer or read up about the opera beforehand so that you can follow the story properly. It's as though you're expecting all that work to be done for you. At best you glance at a few programme notes.

Prasannasiddhi: Or you go into the record shop and you buy the latest records and play them and when you get sick of them you go back and get some more records and you buy those.

Khemananda: I think people always think that happiness is outside of them, something that they are basically not responsible for, something that can be supplied. Instead of seeing it as an attitude or a state of being which they can cultivate in themselves, be more active towards, actually creating happiness.

S: This is perhaps one of the basic points which we should make - and make very strongly - when we are addressing, if we do happen to address, outside audiences. I mean, probably, to talk about Buddhism, to talk about the Dharma, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path is

a bit premature. We talked about this a bit - this general idea or general principle - in the other study group. The point which we discussed there in this connection was trying to put across to people something about the right use of leisure. But this is another point, a very general point, at least we put across as widely as possible to as many people as possible: that it's unhealthy and ultimately against one's own interests to just adopt a passive attitude towards everything and expect to be fed with everything. There is a sort of consumer attitude all the time. You are always the consumer. You're just a great mouth that's always open for something to be popped into, some sweetie or other in one kind of wrapping or another; usually a sort of little tinsel wrapping. Sometimes all you get is the wrapping, there seems to be no sweetie inside. You wonder what's gone wrong. Well, you have to work for your sweetie - it can't just be popped into your mouth. You have to take an interest in things for their own sake so to speak.

Amoghacitta : It's a bit like the sweetie that just keeps the child quiet.

S: Yes, yes. To the extent that it is a sweetie at all.(pause)

Amoghacitta: It's not really happiness that you experience in such situations, it's just a lack of unhappiness as it were.(pause)

S: Is there any point in that speech of the Dove that needs any particular explanation or discussion? (pause) Any of these particular applications of that general principle. Look at this one for instance, 'the quest for bliss through gay diversions will lead to ills of restlessness.' One can see that (unclear) one notices it even at Sukhavati sometimes. or one has done in the past. On Friday night or Saturday night when people start looking through the latest Time Out, where to go. Not because there is anything they particularly want to see but they just want a bit of pleasure as it were or they hope that going to see this film or that will provide them with that. A bit of diversion, but it leads to the ill of restlessness. Well, that's obvious. You start thinking, well, shall I go and see this or shall I go and see that. You're not really very interested in any of them. But you want some kind of diversion.

Prasannasiddhi: I used to find that quite difficult mainly when I'd been working all week and I'd kind of got into a routine of work, but then on the weekend it would stop and I would kind of have nothing to do and so I would wake up on Saturday morning and I would generally be a bit tired, but there would be nothing to do and usually I would probably go downhill a bit and probably just sit around at the breakfast table eating toast. (laughter and murmurs of agreement)

Aryamitra: I find it's quite a good idea to actually think the day before or at night or morning what you're going to do the next day because sometimes what happens is you get up, say the Saturday or you have a day and you just don't think. You just end up in this sort of pool and you just sort of float about but if you think before, well I'll do that, I'll do my washing or I'll write up these notes and have a look at that, then you find that even though you do feel a bit like in a pool to begin with you say, Oh yes, I was going to do this. You start doing it and you just lead to a much more positive and active sort of state. I find that helpful myself.

S: I remember two or three years ago when I used to go down to Sukhavati. Some people there when they were working on the building used to dread the weekend. For some reason or another work stopped over the weekend; but there were some people who would actually rather have gone on working. They really literally dreaded the weekend because there was nothing to do. There was a sort of stagnant atmosphere around. It was the worst part of the week quite definitely.

Ratnaketu: It shows really that leisure time, recreation, hadn't really become part of the spiritual community.

S: Because things aren't like that now. In fact, not only at Sukhavati, but in the men's communities generally, there's a much stronger tendency for people to, as it were, create their own entertainment. To spend time with one another rather than always having to go out, go to the pub or go out to the cinema or whatever. I mean, someone shows his slides or someone gives a talk. Two or three people read some poetry. I think that is a very positive tendency.

Ratnaketu: When we started doing that at Sukhavati on Saturday night - we had a night just for entertainment within the community - I think quite a few of us got a surprise just how good it was, how much we enjoyed just each other.

S: The old-fashioned Victorians, they used to spend every evening like that in every family circle. Well, one reads in many accounts of the life of the period, that they used to gather around the fire and they would read the latest instalment of, say, a novel by Dickens or by Thackeray. They would all read it together, someone would read aloud and everybody else would listen. There was no radio, there was no TV, no cinema to go out to and they would happily spend the evening like that and they would really look forward to that next instalment because many of these novels were published in weekly or monthly parts. Maybe someone would play the piano or sing a song and in that way they would enjoy themselves. Many families. Even people in other places of entertainment - in the public houses and the taverns - they'd get up and make their own entertainment, sing for themselves, play for themselves.

Ratnaketu: Things are becoming a lot less sociable, even within the family there's entertainment provided. You don't actually have that... I was thinking, I haven't actually had that much contact with my parents really.

S: Well, I don't know about this from personal experience, but I have heard there are some families who spend the whole evening watching TV. If you go to see them, I'm told, there is a 'shush, shush we're in the middle of the episode', and you have to just sit down and watch TV with them. And someone scuttles out into the kitchen for a slice of bread then scuttles back

Ratnaketu: During the ads.

S: It sounds dreadful!

Amoghacitta: I think that's very common actually.

S: I have even heard that there are some people who have got a TV set in the kitchen so that they don't really miss anything when they go into the kitchen to cut their sandwich or make their cup of tea. They don't even want to miss the ads, it seems!

Amoghacitta: My father had a loudspeaker rigged up in every room in the house with a radio wired to it, a tape recorder, a record deck and even a TV. So if he has to work somewhere else he can have this music or even TV sound in any room in the house.

Silaratna: What seems to be even worse though is you get that sort of phenomenon but you get sort of people sit down and they, in fact, fall asleep in front of the TV set. It's like passiveness gone one step further.

S: 'Well might one despair.' (laughter) I'd really like to sort of, as it were, break my way into a TV set and take it over and put on a programme of my own and sort of shout out at people, 'you stupid people!' (laughter) 'Haven't you anything better to do!' (laughter) You'd see this angry face coming on the screen with these words shouted at them, (laughter) I'd then give them a good rousing telling-off. (laughter) It would really be worth spending a year in jail for! (laughter) If

so many million people heard you, you know, give your message in that sort of way. it would do a lot better than all one's lectures on Buddhism. (laughter) You would reach a far wider audience. When you think of the *stupid* people that have got access to this vast audience. It's really ... well again, another cause for despair in a sense. Yes? Just waffling on.

Ratnaketu: It really is; when I remember - think back to - the stuff that I watched and the sort of people who would come on and tell the news and say (unclear) it's so mindless, so trivial.

S: Well, I remember on the occasion of my last visit to New Zealand, what was all that rage there - at least in my memories of the FWBO - was 'The Hitch-Hikers Guide to the Galaxy.' That programme nearly disrupted my visit I think! People would be hastening back from classes so they could listen to the latest episodes and there were anxious enquiries about what had happened if they'd missed it. I didn't even hear it. I mean, maybe I'm underestimating it; maybe it did have some sort of spiritual significance. All the Friends were really into that. I remember especially xxxxx, you also weren't uninterested. I don't know if he'd be so interested now. It reached New Zealand rather late, didn't it - a year or two after it came out in England. A Guide to the Galaxy. It did sound a bit cosmic, didn't it.

Ratnaketu: It did, yes.

S: Perhaps it's not to be quite classified as gay diversion! But I think, as it were, on seconds thoughts it occurred to me that people in India do seem to be so much happier most of the time than people in England. It might be because they don't think about pursuing happiness. I mean there are certain things they've got to do, life is very hard, they've got to work, they've got to earn, they've got to look after their families. There's all sorts of things they've got to do. But their pleasure comes incidently - in the course of their doing all these things. Whereas, in England at least, it seems often not to be like that. people just think in terms of going after pleasure, not in terms of doing what has to be done.

Ratnaketu: It occurred to me then that though I believe this - and I know it - I don't know or I couldn't explain, why you can't get experience of pleasure through the quest of it. What goes wrong? What is the mistake that you're making?

S: Well, perhaps we should qualify the statement very carefully.

You can go in pursuit of pleasure and experience pleasure. For instance, you can make yourself a nice sweet cup of tea and enjoy that. But it's very limited, it's just a momentary pleasant sensation - it's no more than that. you can achieve that by just going in quest of it. But it does seem that you can't achieve anything more deeply satisfying in that sort of way. It's as though to be truly satisfying something must involve the whole of you, all your energies; and you can't do that simply by sort of titillating the senses, as it were. There's such a large part of you that just isn't satisfied. And you can't involve yourself completely in something - put all your energies into it - unless, in a sense, you believe in it; unless, in a sense, you're really interested in it. You're not really interested in a cup of tea; it's just a small pleasure, just a very minor pleasure when you drink it. So even any number of cups of tea won't give you what you really want perhaps. (pause)

So, well, when we speak of going in quest of pleasure, we usually mean pleasurable sensations. Well, you're not just a creature of sensations; you're also a creature of thought, and will, and emotion, and aspiration. So unless those things in you are satisfied, you can't really enjoy yourself, however many pleasurable sensations you are enjoying, or experiencing at least.

I mean, you may sometimes have had the experience, well sometimes these things seem quite empty; or maybe you're enjoying the pleasurable sensation but it doesn't mean much; it doesn't amount to much because there's so much of you - so many aspects of your being - which just remain unfulfilled.

So perhaps one should sort of slightly qualify; well, one can certainly go in the quest of pleasure, but pleasure is not very satisfying; one can't go in quest of happiness in the way that one goes in quest of pleasure. To achieve the experience of pleasurable sensations is not to achieve the experience of happiness - much less still of bliss. Well, you can be in the paradoxical sort of situation of experiencing pleasure while feeling deeply unhappy.

Ratnaketu: I've experienced that and it becomes that the pleasure becomes just sort of like sense impressions and it's quite obvious that it's just sort of your senses somehow being stimulated. And that's just what it is - it doesn't have meaning.

Prasannasiddhi: I suppose in a way this is what the Buddha was kind of doing, like when he sat down under the Bodhi tree; he was sort of going deeper into what would actually really kind of satisfy...

S: Yes. (pause) Perhaps one can speak in terms of sort of sense-pleasure, intellectual interest and emotional happiness, if one wants to make some kind of distinction. The fact that you enjoy a pleasurable sense-impression doesn't necessarily mean that you are intellectually interested or that you're emotionally happy. Maybe one needs another term. It doesn't mean - any of those - that we might call spiritually satisfied - though satisfied is not a very adequate word here, Let's say spiritually fulfilled - well, ideally there should be a combination of pleasurable sensation, intellectual interest or stimulating - let us say - or even intellectual excitement, emotional happiness and spiritual fulfilment.

S: Let me change that perhaps a bit. Let me say perhaps... (pause) one can think in terms of: sense-pleasure, intellectual - well you want a stronger term, intellectual enjoyment, even; sense pleasure, intellectual enjoyment - because one gets a real joy from understanding things, learning things; so - pleasurable sensation, intellectual enjoyment, and - what should we say - emotional satisfaction - well that's a little weak, maybe we don't have quite the right words, emotional satisfaction, emotional fulfilment; and spiritual realisation, one might say.

If one has all these things together, this is happiness; this is true happiness or complete happiness. And one can then even dispense with the first. This sort of happiness will sustain us, will continue even in the absence of the pleasurable sensation; the pleasurable sensation will become less and less important.

So the mistake that people often make is to try to find spiritual realisation, emotional fulfilment, intellectual enjoyment - to have all these things - they try to find happiness itself in the pleasurable physical sensation. No wonder they don't succeed.

Prasannasiddhi: From the basis of only really experiencing sense they try to...

S: they try to find all those things that they sort of lump together as happiness, in simply the enjoyment of pleasurable sensations; whether eating, drinking, sex, travel, dancing.

Silaratna: Could you say that as the last category becomes more established that the former ones all fall away, or become less important?

S: Yes, I think one could say that, yes. I think perhaps it's difficult to expect people to give up what little pleasure they have before they've achieved much in the way of enjoyment or satisfaction or fulfilment or happiness. But having achieved these things, pleasurable sensations, physical pleasures all become less important to them. Not that they will cease to experience them or cease to be capable of experiencing them - they won't. Maybe they'll experience them more keenly than ever; but they'll become much less important, much less crucial. They'll be able to

get on without them if necessary, if circumstances demand that.

Prasannasiddhi: There seems to be this tendency when people first come across the Buddha; they first hear about the Buddha, they try and think of the Buddha's experience, and they try to make the leap up to the Buddha's experience of reality. They might sit down in meditation; you know they're trying to get this; they think of it as some abstract experience, or that the Buddha suddenly had this experience rather than just sort of flowering on the basis of the framework of even sense-pleasure, and then intellectual... his life is a sort of flowering, and it just happened to...

S: A constant process of refinement and intensification.

Silaratna: It's almost as if his actual life story, it follows these patterns; in the palace he was involved in sense pleasure and then, you know, he went out to meet his teachers, and so that was sort of the intellectual side, and that didn't hold much more, so, you know, he went through his asceticism.

Prasannasiddhi: Although even when he was in his palace he was apparently - he became quite learned in the traditions and he was apparently quite good at the martial arts, so they say.

S: It's as though when he was in the palace it was sort of pleasure without knowledge and when he went off into the forest it was knowledge without pleasure; but when he became enlightened he combined the two - the pleasure principle and the reality principle.

In the Vajrayana, they speak of the experience of Mahasunyata with Mahasukha. So the Mahasunyata - the Great Emptiness - represents the reality principle one could say, and the Mahasukha clearly represents the pleasure principle par excellence - the Great Bliss. It's the union of the Great Emptiness with the Great Bliss. And this is what the skull cup filled with blood or amritar represents - this dual experience; this enlightened experience if you like, the Great Void and the Great Bliss.

Aryamitra : Which is which?

S: Well the skull cup is the Great Void - which is also one could say the Great Wisdom - and the nectar or ambrosia or blood or whatever liquor fills it, often symbolised by some kind of alcoholic beverage, represents the Great Bliss. I hope no one at Heruka is going to misunderstand all this. (laughter) Drinking beer out of skull cups or something and thinking they're all Padmasambhavas. We're speaking of the beverages.

I think it's pretty clear that the quest of pleasure as an end in itself is simply futile and self-defeating, but let's go on to the Jackdaw.

Amoghavajra: *"Thereupon the Jackdaw rose, bent his head three times and said: khu skyun khu skyun, which means, Khu, leave behind! Khu, leave behind!  
"Leave behind this world of endless activity!  
Leave behind that desire to act which brings unending weariness!  
Leave behind that pious talk which leaves your own nature unchecked!  
Leave behind those brave sayings wherein fine words conceal and evil heart!  
Leave behind that urge for finery which is not yours!  
Leave behind that urge towards success yet knowing not how to pray!*



*Leave behind that urge for greatness when you cannot bear its burden!*  
*Leave behind those admonition when you have not learnt to listen!*  
*Leave behind those angry brawls unworthy even of wild bears!*  
*Leave behind those religious acts which are mere hypocrisy!*  
*In short, how plentiful indeed this world's activities which one should leave behind."*

S: So leave behind. 'Leave behind this world of endless activity!' What do you think that means essentially? (pause) Well I suppose essentially it means to leave behind the Conditioned, leave behind the Samsara, commit oneself to the Unconditioned, lead the spiritual life.

: (unclear)

S: Yes, yes. 'Leave behind this world of endless activity!' In the world, the activity never ceases; there's always something to do - usually something futile or at least not very useful.

Prasannasiddhi: Sort of connected with the sense-pleasures in a way, or connected with the sense..(unclear)

S: Of course, very often the activities are a futile quest for pleasure. (pause) So, 'Leave behind that desire to act which brings unending weariness!' Why should a desire to act bring unending weariness? What does that mean? What sort of actions bring unending weariness or what sort of desires to act bring unending weariness?

Aryamitra: (obscured by jet plane passing overhead) just distractions.

S: The unending weariness suggests something like frustration because your desire is never really fulfilled, however hard you try, however much you do.

Prasannasiddhi: It's unskilful activity.

S: Yes.

Prasannasiddhi: Greed, craving.

S: Well leave behind the desire to act in those sorts of ways which - they don't bring true happiness. And 'Leave behind that pious talk which leaves your own nature unchecked!' So, what does that mean?

: It could be sort of ( ) speech.

Buddhapalita: It could be talking about others' faults.

S: Yes, well 'pious talk'; I mean, there's not much use in talking piously when you haven't learned to bring your own unregenerate nature under control.

: Practise what you preach.

S: Practise what you preach. It's no use preaching without practising.(Pause) It really means, in a way, stop talking about those things which you yourself do not in fact take seriously. because if you did take what you yourself said seriously you would put it into practice, you would act upon it.

Aryamitra: You quite often find that people, certain things that people talk most about is the very

thing that they're avoiding to do themselves. Sometimes you can almost pinpoint.

S: Well this has been said of Christianity as such - that Christianity is always talking about love or Christians are always talking about love but looking at its history, love is the thing that has been most conspicuous by its absence (unclear) one might say. So I think this is psychologically true. If there is someone who is always talking about something or insisting upon something then it does suggest that he or she is rather deficient in that particular quality. That's why they are sort of preoccupied with it.

Prasannasiddhi: What about the Buddha always talking about the spiritual life?

S: Well (laughter) the fact that one says 'The Buddha' answers that question.

Prasannasiddhi: Well, all the monks?

S: Well one might look at it in the same way that the ancient Egyptians looked at the Greek institution of the Gymnasium or in the same way that Lao-Tsu, the founder of Taoism, looked at virtue and morality; if someone has to talk about religion, it means there is no religion around. He may or he may not be practising himself, but if it's necessary for someone to preach the Dharma, it means that things must be in a pretty bad way. If someone finds it necessary to go on admonishing people not to commit acts of violence, and not to take what is not given and not commit adultery, and not tell lies, well what does that suggest? It suggests that those things are all going on in society. I mean, no one goes around in England exhorting everybody to wear clothes. Or to eat three meals a day. No one goes around exhorting people to do that, for the obvious reasons. So it has been said that the sign that religion is being taught, that it has to be taught, is a sign that degeneration has already set in. In the Golden Age, no such thing was necessary presumably. In the Golden Age, there was no need for anyone to teach religion. Because people, as it were, naturally behaved in a religious manner; at least in an ethical manner. They were naturally kind, naturally helpful, naturally co-operative, naturally generous.

Prasannasiddhi: Golden Age? When was the...

S: Well, it's a mythical period. (pause) But coming back to the original point, it is, it seems a psychological fact that very often people do over-emphasise the importance of something which they themselves are conscious of lacking.

Ratnaketu: Which isn't to say that you should ignore them.

S: Which is not to say that you should ignore them. I once sort of asked myself - thinking along these sort of lines - well what is it in the FWBO which is always being emphasised but perhaps actually is emphasised because there isn't very much of it around. I did come up with an answer - I wonder whether anybody else might come up with an answer?

Silabhadra: Mindfulness?

S: No. I (unclear)

Ratnaketu: Metta?

S: yes, that's a possibility; though I didn't actually think of that one.

Amoghacitta: I was thinking actually of friendship itself.

S: Friendship. yes, that's getting closer to what I thought. What I thought was communication. People are always talking about communication. It is certainly one of the things that is emphasised in the FWBO had it did occur to me that perhaps there wasn't all that much communication - real genuine communication - around. maybe this was not unconnected with the fact that it was, well, constantly emphasised. People do talk about communication quite a lot; improving their communication, or having communication or finding time for communication, or how many people you can communicate with etc., etc., but it does still seem that there isn't really much deep communication going on - much more goes on outside the FWBO - but still, not as much as one might think in view of all the talk that there is about communication in the FWBO.

Prasannasiddhi: I used to be a little wary about talking about things too much in a way that I came to the conclusion that these things did need to be aired - these ideas, and if you just spoke for a while, we have to float a whole lot of ideas, all these things out in discussion and look into them and then gradually perhaps things will kind of settle down and we can perhaps drop that. It won't be necessary to...

S: Well, I hope there is more communication than there was a few years ago. I think probably at least more people trying hard in this area.

So, 'Leave behind that pious talk which leaves your own nature unchecked!' One might be able to give a very good talk, a very good lecture on communication, but might be quite inept at it when it comes actually to communicating with other human beings.

'Leave behind those brave sayings wherein fine words conceal an evil heart.' Well, that's an even more extreme form of the previous statement: brave sayings are sort of fine, confident sayings but 'where fine words conceal an evil heart'; in other words, leave behind hypocrisy.

'And leave behind that urge for finery which is not yours.' How is one to take that? Finery in the literal sense? Do people have an urge for finery which is not their own?

Aryamitra: Like window-shopping?

S: Perhaps there is a suggestion of actually wearing, not just looking.

Ratnaketu: Maybe it's - like yesterday, where everybody wants to dress like royalty.

S: Well, what is meant by "which is not yours"? 'Finery which is not yours'? this suggests here, the line seems to be speaking of an urge to dress yourself up in such a way as to create a misleading impression of yourself.

Silaratna: A bit like Pygmalion.

Amoghacitta: It also suggests that you may even have some finery but aren't satisfied with that, you just want more of it.

S: Why do people indulge in finery anyway? What exactly is finery?

Aryamitra: I mean will it be jewellery? Fancy clothes?

S: One might well ask why shouldn't one wear fancy clothes, why shouldn't one wear jewellery? In what sense are they finery in the general sense?

Aryamitra: One may compensate for a lack in the individual. You do see on the Refuge Tree, you

see monks in orange robes and you see Bodhisattvas on the other side in their silks and jewels and things. So they're obviously dressed in finery.

S: Well presumably that sort of finery, that sort of dress is appropriate to Bodhisattvas. you know you don't necessarily become a Bodhisattva by decking yourself in that sort of way any more than you become a monk by just donning a yellow robe.

But the idea of finery as such does seem to be associated not just with creating an impression, but with creating a misleading impression. Finery which is not yours, which is really not appropriate to you.

Ratnaketu: It's just generally about make-up and facelifts to try and give the impression that you are younger than you are.

S: The saying goes: 'The old mutton dressed up as young lamb.' (laughter) This one would certainly include things like face-lifts, breast-lifts; one hears of women having their breasts injected with silicone to fill them out. In the long run the results are really awful, apparently the effects are really awful, but it is sort of effective for a short periods.

Silabhadra: This whole speech of the Jackdaw is about external things covering up the internal things.

S: Yes, yes, that's true.

Silaratna: Do you think that line could also perhaps be interpreted in perhaps a different.... exhorting someone who's gone forth that perhaps any sort of desire that's lingering around for finery - it's not theirs because you've gone forth, you've gone away from that?

S: That's not the literal meaning because he's urging people to go forth and leave behind those things, not that they have gone forth but have not fully left behind those things. But you can sort of deck yourself in finery, not only literally but even metaphorically. You can make yourself out to be better read than you are; better educated than you are; from a better social position than you actually have. It's all the same sort of thing: decking yourself in finery that doesn't really belong to you; trying to create a false impression; trying to impress people; maybe even changing your accent.

Aryamitra: You could have 'The Times' when you prefer to read 'The Sun'.

S: So, leave behind that urge for finery which is not yours. Be yourself, don't try to pretend to be otherwise than you are. Don't try to create any false impressions.

Prasannasiddhi: In a way, the Bodhisattvas with the silks and the things; in a way that's appropriate.

S: yes, they are an appropriate expression of what the Bodhisattva is really like; they set off or enhance his true nature, his true character.

Aryamitra: You made a list and you said accent and a few other things.

S: One might try to make out one is better read than one is; better educated or a higher social position; or one just knows more than one actually does.

Ratnaketu: It's trying to gain something without changing yourself; by changing superficially.

S: Or like people might go off to India or Nepal and they get all sorts of Tantric initiations, decorating themselves with different coloured feathers and they come back to tell you that there are all these wonderful initiations and they expect you to be very impressed - but really they're no more than feathers that they've decked themselves out with.

'Leave behind that urge towards success yet knowing not how to pray.' I think success is here used in the sense of 'siddhi' - sort of spiritual attainment or spiritual success. it's not unlike the saying that we had some time earlier on. What was that? 'To hope for miraculous blessings and still have wrong opinions; that prolongs the bondage.' And, 'When we perform the acts of worship, help will come from the guardian angels', not unlike that. But, 'Leave behind that urge towards success yet knowing not how to pray', knowing not how to do those things which will bring about the success.

Prasannasiddhi: This perhaps is you mentioned in the study group, in the small discussion group that I was in, that in Tibet they were trying to attract people into the spiritual life by saying that they would become wealthier if they did certain meditation practices - it would make them physically rich. (unclear) In a way it's perhaps the other side of the coin.

Amoghavajra: Maybe sometimes somebody's got a quality but maybe (unclear) you're not suited to do that sort of thing; but you shouldn't... maybe it's not appropriate to do that sort of thing.

Aryamitra: Could you give an example?

Amoghavajra: Like giving talks or something; perhaps someone's really a good speaker and you hear them talk and you're really quite inspired and you think 'I could....'

S: It's not enough to have an urge to be like that; you must go about it in the right way; you must study how to speak, learn how to speak, how to prepare your talks. It's not enough to have an urge towards giving talks or just a feeling that you'd like to do that; you've actually got to take those steps which will enable you to do it successfully.

Again, this touches on something we were talking about yesterday. It's not enough to indulge in day-dreaming; it's not enough to indulge in pipe-dreams or just wishful thinking in connection with the spiritual life; you have actually to take practical steps to fulfil the feeling.

Amoghacitta: So what would be the positive correlative of this thing. What should you ....?

S: Learn how to pray if you want success - success in the spiritual sense.

Prasannasiddhi: It's a bit like the asura who kind of wants the result without...

S: Just wants to grab the results; he doesn't really know the right way of going about getting them.

Prasannasiddhi: It's sort of saying that you've got to have intelligence as well as that desire; you've got to go about things intelligently.(pause)

S: 'Leave behind that urge to greatness when you cannot bear its burdens.' What sort of greatness do you think the speaker has in mind here?

Buddhapalita: Worldly... political.

S: Worldly greatness involving responsibilities.

Ratnaketu: Or even position within the organisation like a spiritual community.

S: Say within the FWBO. There's not much point in having an urge to be the chairman of a Centre if you're just not able to bear the burden of that responsibility. If you do have that sort of urge without the capacity to bear the responsibility, it means you're just hankering after the position, not the job itself; not the work itself - just the position, the glory, the (unclear).

Prasannasiddhi: It's a bit like some politicians perhaps.

S: yes.

Prasannasiddhi: They just want to lead.

S: They just want to enjoy the limelight. They don't have any real capacity to fulfil their responsibilities.

Amoghacitta: Can I just take us back to the last one; the 'urge towards success yet not knowing how to pray.' I was wondering if you could take success to mean in a spiritual or material success - in either sense - and pray kind of suggest a humility; or not being able to pray suggests that you can't really make - can you see what I'm getting at? Suggests that you're trying to achieve something on your own egoistic terms, rather than trying to achieve something from a more proper attitude.

S: One could take it like that. I think it probably will be a bit far-fetched; but yes, you could if you like take it in that way. I mean there's nothing wrong with the interpretation itself, the point is whether it is an interpretation of that particular statement.

You know, there's quite a lot of people who would like to enjoy a certain position but don't really want to discharge the responsibilities which go with that position; in other words, they don't look on the position as an opportunity for, as it were, performing a service but only as an opportunity for self-aggrandizement.

People do unfortunately, very often, look upon ordination in this sort of way - do you see what I mean? It's a sort of position that is achieved, not a sort of act of commitment that entails certain responsibilities, but it's a position within the movement that you attain; a position that people look up to. So this is one of the sort of wrong attitudes towards, as it were, being 'ordained', inverted commas, that people have to get rid of before they're really fit for ordination.

Ratnaketu: Sometimes they say, 'You won't let me go for Refuge.'

S: yes, yes.

Ratnaketu: Which shows they've completely got the wrong idea because nobody can stop anybody from...

S: It's as though they were ready to fling themselves at the Buddha's feet and here you are standing in the way. (laughter) But you can imagine, you can really feel that certain people have this attitude because when they think of themselves as Order Members, sticking out their chest as it were, you can imagine the sort of attitude that they have towards that, or how they would feel if they were ordained. They'd feel as though they'd made it, as though they'd achieved a certain position; a sort of higher perch as it were to which people would look up.

Khemananda: The other thing I find is that people who are occupying positions of responsibility, often they're criticised quite a lot by people who aren't and yet when you suggest to them, well,

perhaps they'd like to do it - take on that position - they want to run a mile; it's like an abstract criticism, because they could possibly take on the responsibility, take on the task or whatever, but they don't, they choose not to; but they criticise those who do and when you do, you do make mistakes; you are involved, and the nature of it is that you sometimes make mistakes.

S: Well, I'm sure most people have encountered that at some time or another. But not to say that one should reject someone's criticism just because they're not actually involved themselves. Sometimes, even so, there may be some basis for criticism (unclear) or you should at least consider it, at least briefly. But very often, such criticism is in fact baseless. Sometimes it's expressing their own negativity, not to say feelings of guilt because they themselves are not discharging any responsibility; they feel they ought to and feel a bit uneasy about that, so they sort of in a way fulfil the responsibility by criticising you for the way in which you discharge your responsibility.

So, 'Leave behind that urge for greatness when you cannot bear its burden.' Don't aspire after any position, the responsibilities of which you know you're really unable to discharge.

'Leave behind those admonitions when you have not learned to listen.' What do we mean by admonitions?

Aryamitra: Orders, giving directions.

S: Directions, advice, good advice. I mean, don't try to be a guru - as it were - before you've really been a disciple.(pause)

Aryamitra: Even on a very ordinary level, it seems that it's very difficult to be able to, you know, give directions unless you have been able to take directions yourself and know the whole situation.

S: Yes, you know the job, you know the difficulties of the job. I mean, there must be a few things more frustrating for an honest worker than to be under the control or supervision of a boss who doesn't know anything really about the job, but who has the authority, the power.

Silaratna: It causes resentment then.

S: I mean for instance, there's the sonnet by Shakespeare - which is not unlike one of these little speeches - the one beginning:

'Tis'd with all these, for restful death I cry, -  
As, to behold desert a beggar born,  
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,  
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,  
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,  
.....

Anyway, the line I'm especially thinking of is: 'And folly (doctor like)' doctor like in the sense of a learned man, 'controlling skill.' This is the situation we get. The foolish man is in charge of the man who is skilled. This is one of the sights that makes Shakespeare weep and wish he was dead. Yes:

'And art make tongue-tied by authority,  
And folly (doctor-like) controlling skill.'

The last line of the quatrain is: 'And captive good attending captain ill.' Good the captive attending upon evil, which is the captain.

*The Buddha's Law Among the Birds Seminar*

Aryamitra: Ah yes.

S: This sonnet, as I say, is not unlike one of these speeches of the birds.