

## 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*

## The Door of Liberation Seminar

Those present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Dhammadinna, Chintamani, Sagaramati, Malini, Sona, Sulocana, Ananda, Ashvajit, Aryamitra, Uttara, Mangala, Devamitra

S: Well, first of all let me say that I'm hoping we can get through the whole of the volume in the course of the next ten days. Which is quite a tall order, but I think we can do it. Towards the end of the seminar we may be having to have quite lengthy sessions, at least four hours, but anyway - we shall see. Fortunately for us we can start off in a rather easy, if not leisurely manner in as much as the first two or three sections of the book are more or less of the nature of background material. So what I propose is that we go through these first few sections rather more quickly. I don't think there will be all that much to discuss, though a few points on every page may need to be clarified or further information supplied. But, when we come to the chapter on the precepts after that the translations of some of the works of Tsongkapa, then we shall have to go very slowly and very thoroughly and in a very detailed manner indeed. And this will all be very much more demanding and also, I hope even more interesting. So, we'll start off quite easily, quite smoothly, just reading through the introduction and stopping at the end of each paragraph just in case there is any point that isn't clear to anybody. As we usually do, we'll read round the circle, Chintamani leading off, reading a paragraph at a time.

First of all, perhaps, I should mention that Geshe Wangyal's approach is profoundly traditional and the work as a whole, quite apart from its actual content gives one a very good idea of the extremely sincere and reverent approach of the Tibetan Buddhist to the Dharma and to material of this kind. So this is reflected in the introduction. In fact, from the very first sentence.

"I bow down to Buddha Sakyamuni, the teacher without equal, who attained the highest state and possession of the Four Aspects of Fearlessness, through his perfect accomplishment of the Six Paramitas and the Four Ways of Assembling. He is the originator of the Teaching, the great Compassionate One, who, in order to deliver all living beings, has shown the path that he himself travelled to liberation."

S: Anybody not familiar with these lists? Some of them are explained in the appendix. There's a glossary at the end and some of the translations that he gives for some of these terms don't quite correspond to other translations though they are very good in themselves. The Six Paramitas, of course everybody is familiar with, yes?

[2]

V: The four ways of assembling.

S: The four ways of assembling. These are the Sangrahavastus; very often translated the four means of conversion. I assume that Geshe Wangyal translates 'assembling' because the Sangrahavastus suggests bringing together, presumably bringing people together, you bring them together by the means of conversion, as it were.

First of all there is, I hope I can remember them all, Dana - giving, generosity. Then there is pleasant speech - priyavadita. The third one escapes me at the moment, I will have to come back to it, leave a space for it.

The last one is samanarthata, which means - it's quite difficult to translate this - it means, as it were, treating others like oneself. Or even working for others as one would for oneself. I mean, the Bodhisattva is supposed to be equipped with these four Sangrahavastus. Working for the good of others just as one would work for one's own good, yes that's probably a quite adequate paraphrase.

V: What are the Four Aspects of Fearlessness, there's no mention in the back?

S: This is usually translated as four confidences. These are all different expressions of the

Buddha's confidence that he has attained Enlightenment. First of all he is confident that no one could reproach him as not having gained what he professed to have gained, i.e. Enlightenment. Then the confidence that no one could have reproached him with not having destroyed the asravas totally. And also the confidence that no one could reproach him for having described as hindrance to Enlightenment what in fact was not a hindrance and vice versa.

V: I don't understand.

S: Well, the Buddha has said, for instance, that craving is a hindrance to Enlightenment. So craving is a hindrance to Enlightenment. So there is the confidence that no one could reproach him with having said that craving was a hindrance to Enlightenment when in fact it was not a hindrance to Enlightenment. In other words, the confidence that he knows what helps the progress to Enlightenment and what doesn't help it, this confidence, he has. That no one could reproach him with not knowing, or having declared something to be a hindrance when it was not a hindrance.

Again the forth one here I do not remember for the moment, I shall have to look it up.

So sometimes translated as the four confidences, sometimes as the four fearlessnesses. In Sanskrit it is vaisadya.

So Geshe Wangyal opens his introduction in the completely traditional manner by saluting the Buddha. He points out that the Buddha is the originator of the teaching who in order to deliver all living beings has shown the path that he himself travelled to liberation. So you notice that though this is on the whole a work about Tibetan Buddhism the note struck is, quite characteristically, just Buddhist. It is practically the same thing, or one might say exactly the same thing as [3] a Theravada Buddhist might have said at the opening of a book in Theravada Buddhism. All these lists are found in Theravada Buddhism, the Four Aspects of Fearlessness, the Six Paramitas, the four Ways of Assembling. The Theravadins also believe that the Buddha is the originator of the teaching, they also regard him as greatly compassionate and they also regard the Buddha as having shown the path that he himself travelled to liberation. So this is very standard, basic Buddhist teaching, at least to begin with. All right, let's go on to the second paragraph then.

"Buddha taught two great paths: to the Bodhisattva Manjushri he taught the path of Profound View and to the Bodhisattva Maitreya, the path of Extensive Deeds. After several hundred years, as Buddha had prophesied, these two paths were extended by Nagarjuna and Asanga. From them, these undefiled teachings descended in an unbroken succession through many great Indian and Tibetan scholars, such as Atisa and Tsongkapa. Remembering their kindness in extending the Teaching, I bow down to these great beings."

S: According to Tibetan tradition, there were, in Indian Buddhism itself, in Indian Mahayana, two great traditions, which went back to the Buddha and in terms of human teachers, these were represented by Nagarjuna and Asanga. Nagarjuna was the founder, virtually, of the Madhyamika tradition and Asanga was the founder, as it were, of the Yogacara tradition.

The Madhyamika school of Nagarjuna speaks more in terms of wisdom, more in terms of Sunyata. Whereas the Yogacara School speaks more in terms of meditation, more in terms of mind - the one mind, mind only, the pure mind and so on. The Tibetan tradition itself unifies these two schools.

Very often the Yogacara school or the Yogacara point of view is regarded as a stepping stone to the Madhyamika point of view. Sometimes, though, they are regarded as complementary.

V: Would you say, therefore, that the Madhyamika teaching goes further?

S: This is the view of those who hold that the Yogacara is a stepping stone to the

Madhyamika. On the whole, one might say, this is the view of the Gelugpas, as we shall see later on. This is the view of Tsongkapa.

Does anybody remember the story, what in the West would be called a legend, about the origins of the Yogacara school? Asanga is mentioned here as the human teacher but does anyone remember any sort of account, story, legend, about the origins of the school?

V: Didn't it come from Maitreya.

S: From Maitreya, yes. There is the account in the life of Asanga that Asanga ascended into the Tusita devaloka and there received teaching from Maitreya Bodhisattva who is to be the next Buddha. He is spending his last life prior to his attainment of Enlightenment on earth as Maitreya Buddha in that Tusita devaloka. This is the Mahayana tradition. [4] So according to this tradition, handed down, of course, from Indian sources, Asanga visited Maitreya in the Tusita devaloka and received from him teachings which are usually referred to as the Five Books of Maitreya. I have mentioned about these in the Survey, they are all listed there, with this story in brief. I have mentioned there that one can regard this as representing the fact, probably, if one doesn't want to accept the traditional account entirely at face value, one can regard this as representing the fact that Asanga had access to certain very exalted sources of spiritual inspiration. Perhaps he ascended in meditation to a very high level, high plane, where he had certain spiritual experiences which forms the basis of his interpretation of the Buddha's teaching in the form of the Yogacara doctrine.

On the other hand there are some Western scholars who regard Maitreya as the name of a human teacher, who was not the Bodhisattva Maitreya but who was Asanga's actual human teacher. The Tibetan view is definitely the traditional one, that Asanga's teacher was the Bodhisattva Maitreya and that Asanga received his teachings in the Tusita devaloka from Maitreya. And that Maitreya himself had been taught by Sakyamuni generations before. So in this way, according to Tibetan tradition the Yogacara doctrine emanates from Sakyamuni through Maitreya to Asanga. The Tibetan perspective is quite different from the modern Western, scholarly one, you notice. One can see that it contains, in a sense, a sort of truth, that the Yogacara teaching, as it were, codifies a point of view, an attitude which goes back, in essence to the Buddha's teaching.

So this particular school, this particular tradition is called the school or tradition of Extensive Deeds. Sometimes this is translated as Ample Practice and it represents the compassion aspect of Enlightenment as distinct from the wisdom aspect. When these terms are used then of course the Yogacara and the Madhyamika schools are regarded as complementary. That is to say the Madhyamika school as standing for wisdom and the Yogacara school as standing for compassion. The Madhyamika standing for theory the Yogacara standing for practice. The Madhyamika standing for profound view - the profound view of Sunyata and the Yogacara standing for the extensive deeds - extensive deeds, or ample practice of the Bodhisattva. So here they are regarded as complementary. traditions.

In much the same way as Asanga is regarded as having been inspired by the Bodhisattva Maitreya, Nagarjuna is regarded as having been inspired by the Bodhisattva Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom.

Subsequently the two traditions were unified and it is in their unified form that they come down through Atisa, who was the great Indian teacher who went to Tibet in the twelfth century and Tsongkapa the founder of the Gelugpa school to which, of course, Geshe Wangyal himself belongs.

V: So, Atisa then, belongs to the line of Asanga and Maitreya?

S: Atisa, he belongs to both lines, he handed down both these traditions, or both these traditions were handed down through him. They are not separate traditions in Tibet, they are unified, especially in the Gelugpa school.

V: Atisa was Indian?

[5]

S: Yes, Atisa was Indian.

V: Do you speak of the division or the lineage of Sakyamuni, the Bodhisattva, whoever the Bodhisattva is and the Teacher in terms of a Trikaya?

S: It's certainly not usually spoken of in that way, and also there are different personalities involved whereas the Trikayas, the three bodies as it were, are the bodies of one Buddha, one personality, as it were. But, in a way there is a certain correspondence of levels. Because Tibetan tradition often speaks in terms of the threefold transmission. That is to say, it's usually called the thought transmission of the Tathagatas, the sign transmission of the Vidyadharas and the word transmission of the Acharyas (?). So you could say that the Buddha transmitted to Maitreya and Manjusri, as it were telepathically. That Maitreya and Manjusri transmitted to Asanga and Nagarjuna not in ordinary thoughts and words, because they were all on a much higher plane of spiritual experience, but as it were symbolically. And of course from Asanga and Nagarjuna to their disciples it comes down in words.

And perhaps this is the significance of Asanga's alleged visit to the Tusita devaloka. That he ascend to, he has his experience on a plane that is not that of words or even thoughts and that is where he brings the teaching from. That is where he, as it were, contacts Bodhisattva Maitreya who is the next Buddha to be, the embodiment of compassion, in a sense. And in the same way Nagarjuna contacts Manjusri the Bodhisattva of wisdom or wisdom itself. He is in contact with wisdom itself, with the archetype of wisdom who is, of course, embodied as Manjusri.

So one mustn't think in terms of an actual contact with a sort of person, as it were. It is more a contact with the archetype of compassion, the archetype of wisdom. One can perhaps look at it in that way.

If one is thinking in terms of lineage one can think of the Buddha in the middle at the top. Then he teaches Maitreya who stands on his left and Manjusri who stands on his right. And below Maitreya is Asanga, below Manjusri is Nagarjuna then below them both, in between them both is Atisa, where the two traditions join back again. Then straight from Atisa we come down to Tsongkapa. You see the idea? This is how the Tibetans look at it and this is how Geshe Wangyal is looking at it. In other words, Geshe Wangyal, like the other Tibetan Buddhists sees Sakyamuni as the origin of the whole thing. From Sakyamuni through these two great Bodhisattvas his whole teaching divided into two great streams, as far as the Mahayana is concerned. These streams continuing as independent traditions in India, but at a later period as a unified tradition transmitted in Tibet.

V: How did the unification actually take place Bhante? Was it a question of having a lot of contact with both traditions?

S: Right, yes. When you have teachers of both traditions.

V: Why does it not say Avalokiteshvara rather than Maitreya as the...

S: Well I suppose the traditional answer would be it just [6] happens to be Maitreya. Maitreya features quite prominently in many of the suttas.

V: Presumably also you can draw a more readily historical connection between Sakyamuni and Maitreya if you want to bring it back to Sakyamuni, as the Tibetan tradition does.

S: Yes. And of course Tibetan tradition takes quite literally the statement at the beginning of Mahayana sutras that when the Buddha taught, in attendance on him there were not only Bhikkhus and Arhants but there were also Bodhisattvas. And it does believe that many of the

traditions were handed down through the Bodhisattvas who remained on higher spiritual planes and subsequently, some generations later, taught Mahayana teachers. Or taught people who became Mahayana teachers.

In other words the perspective is quite different from that of the modern scholar, looking at it all historically. So this is just background, so that we get for the feel for the way Geshe Wangyal is looking at it and the way that the Tibetans look at it. It doesn't square with history, perhaps wrongly, but there is a certain spiritual truth in it all, nevertheless. And perhaps a sort of unified account, some day or other, will be able to do justice both to history and to this kind of tradition.

V: What was the second transmission. The sign transmission of the ...?

S: The sign transmission of the Vidyadharas, these are the Tantric initiates.

Sometimes sign is understood as gesture, sometimes as symbol. But it could be either, it could be both.

So there is first of all the direct, telepathic transmission, then is the sort of symbolic transmission, transmission through symbols and then a transmission through words - which suggests thoughts. The general Tibetan view is that all spiritual traditions operate in this sort of way. First of all there is a purely telepathic transmission, then that becomes, at a lower level, a symbolic transmission and that at a lower level still is reduced to a matter of thoughts and words which are then transmitted.

V: The telepathic transmission being of the Tathagatas?

S: Yes, the Jinas is actually usually said.

So you notice that Geshe Wangyal rather cleverly, as it were, is giving us a historical summary under guise of his salutation. So, "I bow down to these great beings I bow down to His Holiness, Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. By the radiant illumination of his great Compassion, his wonderful methods and skilful deeds emanate in all directions, causing the lotus within all beings to blossom forth. May his blessings grant peace and happiness to all living beings."

S: So this paragraph suggests that the tradition extends right down to the present time. It doesn't mention all the intermediate teachers from Tsongkapa to the Dalai Lama, but this is definitely the suggestion here.

[7]

"I bow down especially to my own teachers, the Lamas from whom I directly received these precious teachings. Even what knowledge I have of English came from them, and from my heart, I honour them as would a son, though I can never repay their great kindness. I have tried to translate their teachings into English, with the sincere prayer that their profound meaning might be extended to others."

S: So here we come down to Geshe Wangyal's own teachers and to Geshe Wangyal himself. So here, the idea of a transmission, a lineage, is very strongly conveyed. And this lineage, one might say, is not doctrinal, essentially, though it finds doctrinal expression. It's certainly not ecclesiastical, but it is a sort of continued energy and inspiration coming down through a whole chain of teachers and disciples, down through the ages. A sort of spiritual life that is transmitted from one generation to another just like life is transmitted on the ordinary biological plane.

The doctrines, the practices, the teachings, these are only the vessels, as it were for the inspiration, the energy the spiritual life. It's the transmission of the spiritual life which is important. The form may vary a bit from generation to generation just like children won't

exactly resemble their parents and won't live exactly like their parents but they will be the children of their parents. They will have derived their life from their parents.

But in Tibetan Buddhism you find this idea of a spiritual life, a spiritual energy transmitted from generation to generation considered as very important, it is a really basic idea that something is handed on, handed down. But it is not something, sort of, external. It is not even a doctrine and a concept, ultimately. But the spirit of Enlightenment itself, one might say, putting it very roughly and crudely.

You notice Geshe Wangyal says, 'even what knowledge I have of English, came from them.' What do you think he means by that, it surely doesn't mean that his Tibetan teachers taught him English.

V: The Inspiration.

S: The inspiration, yes, to learn.

This teaching appeared in the world through the miraculous manifestation of Buddha Sakyamuni, who descending from the Buddha field of Og-min, took rebirth as a Bodhisattva-Prince Tampa Dokar in the Tusita Heaven. In order to benefit all living beings, he then descended to Jambudvīpa, taking rebirth as Siddhartha, Prince of the Sakyas. The events of his illustrious life are widely known. Manifesting full Enlightenment, he revealed his perfect Teaching to the world. To guide all living beings to the Door of Liberation, he presented his Teaching by many wonderful methods. A few descriptions of Buddha's miraculous activities have been translated here. These activities demonstrate the authority of his Teaching, for in the Tibetan tradition, the reliability of the teaching is established by the qualifications of the teacher."

[8]

S: What do you think Geshe Wangyal means by that last sentence?

V: It means that he's been thoroughly tested and not found wanting by his followers in the tradition.

S: It means that if somebody is practising something, actually practising it, there must be something real in that teaching which he is practising. If somebody is teaching something but not practising it, it suggests that he does not really believe in it. That he has not really tested it or tried it. But if he is practising it then one may say he has tested it. He has tried it, he knows it, so there is something there.

V: Actions speak louder than words.

S: Actions speak louder than words, yes. As Nietzsche says somewhere, "what you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say". In other words, if someone is practising a teaching it shows that it can be practised.

V: Isn't there a story about Gandhi, somebody taking a child to him and asking Gandhi to tell the child to give up sugar and he says come back in three days. And he comes back and said why was it three days and it was because he hadn't given up sugar himself.

S: Yes, right.

There is also this question of the Buddha's miraculous activities. Tibetan Buddhists do attach quite a lot of importance to these and do tend to regard them as demonstrating the truth of the Buddha's teaching. It is a bit doubtful whether this does represent the historical Buddha's own point of view. The historical Buddha, as far as we can tell from the Pali Canon, took the view, as the Pali Canon definitely represents him as saying, that the greatest miracle is when someone who was living unskillfully changes and starts living skillfully. That is the greatest of

all miracles, the miracle of conversion, as it were. And he certainly did deprecate the performance of miracles or super-normal feats on the part of some of his disciples.

Probably we can say that the miraculous incidents, the miraculous activities, have a sort of symbolic value, they have a meaning of their own. But if we take them literally as miracles we can't really regard them as demonstrating the fruit of the teaching. Because anyone can perform miracles, you don't have to be a Buddha to perform miracles. So miracles don't really, in the last analysis, demonstrate the truth of what you are saying.

The Tibetans, though, do tend to regard them as at least indicating or supporting the truth of the teacher but this is not really the general Buddhist view. Certainly not the original Buddhist view.

We shall be reading some of the accounts of these miraculous activities and they are very colourful indeed, quite inspiring and highly imaginative. They certainly arouse peoples feelings very successfully but one can't really regard the truth of the Buddha's teaching as being established by these miracles even if he did actually perform them. And that of course is rather difficult to know after the lapse of all these centuries.

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V: You said anyone can perform miracles, well I don't think that's quite so. I mean, there must be something special about people who can perform miracles.

S: Ah, but not spiritually special. I was reading recently a recent book by Colin Wilson called *The Occult* and there are some very interesting accounts there of different people with quite well attested supernormal powers. But they just seem to have had them and in other respects to have been quite unremarkable people. But they were able to perform what would be regarded as miracles. The lower miracles, of course, just seemed to be natural faculties which quite a few people have and which most people, if not all, could develop if they tried.

V: And presumably meditation makes one more sensitive and makes one more aware that one has them.

S: Mmm. It does also seem to be, to some extent, a matter of temperament. There seems to be a sort of psychic temperament, which is not altogether a happy temperament to have. Sometimes people of this temperament are rather disturbed, not very integrated, a bit immature and not very responsible. But they have these, sort of strange powers. Which are not very high level powers but certainly amounting to something supernormal.

We had someone on retreat once who had some of these powers. He didn't show them, but he had them and Colin Wilson subsequently wrote about him.

V: I guess the development of the more psychic powers ...

S: Mmm., or were the basis. Anyway let's not linger over that, I think the point is well taken. The Tibetans, perhaps, do attach somewhat more importance to the Buddha's miraculous activities than the Buddha's own attitude in these matters appears to warrant. Also the Tibetans do see the, sort of symbolical activities of these miraculous activities, and if one attaches more importance and significance to that, then no harm done.

All right, on we go then.

V: "Buddha showed his omniscience in many ways. One day while he was teaching a gathering of his disciples, a crow flew over and defecated on his robe. The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara stood up from among the assembly and asked Buddha to explain the significance of this occurrence. Buddha replied with a prophecy. He said that in the future that crow would be reborn as a powerful non-Buddhist pandit Asvaghosa or Matrçeta, who would severely criticize the Dharma. After being defeated in debate, he would see the truth,



and would write many famous praises of the Buddha. Avalokitesvara then asked Buddha, "May I be the one to subdue this great opponent of the Teaching?" "

S: This seems quite straightforward. 'The Buddha showed his omniscience', what do you think is meant by the Buddha's omniscience? Did the Buddha claim to be omniscient?

V: No he didn't.

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S: No, he didn't actually. He certainly did claim to know the way to Enlightenment and to know it thoroughly but he disclaimed any other kinds of omniscience. There were some teachers in the Buddha's day who claimed omniscience. Mahavira the Jain, for instance, claimed omniscience and said that he knew, for instance, the number of leaves on any given tree and knew everything of that sort. But the Buddha made it clear that spiritual Enlightenment did not include that sort of omniscience. So he himself disclaimed that omniscience.

All right, let's go on.

V: "Centuries later Buddha's prophecy was realized. Many Buddhist teachers in India were being defeated in debate by a non-Buddhist pandit named Matrceta. After he had conquered all the Buddhists in his region, Matrceta's mother, a devout Buddhist, persuaded him to challenge the monks of the renowned Buddhist centre of Nalanda. At that time, Arya Avalokitesvara, incarnated as the great Buddhist scholar Aryadeva, met Matrceta in debate and defeated him. Matrceta then began to study the Buddha's teachings and was compelled to acknowledge their truth. He sincerely repented his previous harmful deeds. Completely abandoning his wrong views, he said. "I have given up my other teachers, and I take refuge in Buddha, for Buddha has no faults and possesses perfect omniscience." "

S: Aryadeva was, of course, the famous disciple of Nagarjuna and the second most important in the Madhyamika lineage.

In medieval India, both Buddhists and Hindus attached great importance to these public debates. They were relatively unknown in the Buddha's own day, partly perhaps because the Buddha always won any discussion or debate and after a while nobody dared challenge him. But in the Middle Ages a lot of mutual challenging and debating was going on between the Buddhists and Hindus, mainly, or Buddhists and Brahmins. And a great deal of importance came to be attached to logic for this reason. And this sort of tradition of debate was again continued in Tibet, but as there were no non-Buddhists to debate with the Tibetans debated with themselves. And this is one of the favourite exercises of the Gelugpa, especially young monks when they are learning. They have, sort of, stylized debates just to perfect their knowledge of the teaching and sharpen their wits. This is called Tarksay (?) and it is also included in their examinations for their Geshe's degree when they pass out from one of the big monastic colleges.

The Gelugpas attach very great importance to this tarksay, the Nyingmapas don't go in for it, they don't think it very important. The Gelugpas are rather fond of it, these sort of stylized debates, on very technical points of Buddhist doctrine.

V: Do you think it would be any good for the Western Buddhist Order?

S: It would sharpen your wits anyway, and if wits need to be sharpened then maybe tarksay is a good way of doing it. It does mean that you are on the ball intellectually, but only too easily it does become an end in itself. Especially with these young monks with lots of energy and high spirits and a lot of time. I once really shocked my Gelugpa friends in Kalimpong by saying that I thought tarksay a very good exercise [11] but probably spiritually not much more use than football. (Laughter). They were really deeply shocked. That is virtually the Nyingmapa point of view.

V: What's the Nyingmapa's emphasis?

S: More on meditation or ritual.

V: Is there a greater influence of the Yogacara in the Nyingmapa tradition?

S: This is my personal suspicion, though none of my Tibetan friends would ever agree with this or confirm it. But that is definitely my own suspicion and feeling, yes.

V: Is the debating Madhyamika influence on the Gelugpa?

S: I would say yes. That does come much more from the Madhyamika side, yes.

V: Something that is bothering me actually and that is this word omniscience again. Because it's turned up again. I mean, is this general in Tibetan tradition that the Buddha is in fact regarded as omniscient?

S: I'm not sure. I don't think that they would go so far as to say that the Buddha was literally omniscient. I don't think that they would say that. But I think they would credit him with a much greater degree, if there can be degrees in omniscience, than he was originally credited with.

And also, for instance, what does one mean by omniscience, what is the Tibetan word? There is a Sanskrit term translated as omniscience but Dr Conze has explained that it doesn't quite literally mean that. The literal translation is, knowledge of all the modes - sarvakarajnana - which means all the modes of Enlightenment, the modes of getting rid of unskillful states, the modes of cultivating wisdom, the modes of insight - and so on. This is often translated as omniscience. But it is very definitely limited to different aspects of the path, not, as it were, unlimited scientific knowledge.

V: It seems to be something nearer a theistic tradition, like Christian...

S: Yes. You mustn't also forget that in Tibet the monks and especially the Lamas were the learned class. Just as the priests were in the middle ages in Europe. So there does tend, in circumstances like that, to be an association of spiritual knowledge and Enlightenment with worldly knowledge. The spiritual people are those who also have the knowledge of arts and sciences. So if you weren't very careful you might think of the Buddha as the most Enlightened and the most wise and knowledgeable of all. And think of him therefore not only as spiritually Enlightened in the highest sense, but possessing knowledge of all other kinds in a higher degree than anybody else. Just because in your mind there was always, from your own cultural tradition, that association of spiritual knowledge and Enlightenment and knowledge of a more scientific, artistic, even practical kind. Because in traditional societies the monks and priests, and so on, do have a monopoly of learning.

[12]

But the original Buddhist teaching is quite clear, that the Buddha is fully Enlightened as regards the goal and the path but not about mundane matters.

V: What does it mean then in the sadhana, it says, "and cause me to gain omniscience"? Does that mean knowledge...

S: Full Enlightenment.

All right, let's go on.

"The goddess Tara appeared before Matrceta in a dream and advised him to purify himself by writing praises to the Buddha and commentaries on the Jatakas..."

S: Does everyone know what the Jatakas are?

V: Stories.

S: Stories about the Buddha's previous lives, mostly legendary.

V: "... Following her advice Matrceta wrote many volumes extolling the Tathagata and his teaching. His praises of the Buddha demonstrate the truth of the Dharma with particular effectiveness, as they were written by a former opponent of the Buddha's teaching. An account of the debate between Matrceta and Aryadeva has been included in the first chapter of this book."

S: Right, straight on.

V: "Buddha Shakyamuni also prophesied that, after he had passed into Parinirvana, there would appear in the world many great scholars who would further the spread of his Teaching. Therefore, also included in the first Chapter, are short histories of some of these great Indian teachers such as Nagarjuna and Asanga, as well as those who spread the teaching in Tibet, such as Atisa and Tsongkapa. These great teachers are respected as is the Buddha himself. Their teachings are as clear and unerring as those of the Buddha, and are directly or indirectly those which have been translated in this book."

S: This indicates the lineage to which Geshe Wangyal belongs, which is the Gelugpa lineage. Which, again, is the revised Kadampa lineage. The Kadampa lineage going back directly to Atisa. And Atisa's lineage, of course, goes back to Nagarjuna and Asanga.

All right, let's go straight on. This is all more of the nature of background material, as I said.

V: "In the Tibetan tradition, which follows a system set forth centuries ago by the Indian poet Dandin, books begin with an expression of salutation, to show respect to the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas and scholars through whom his teachings have descended to the present. This is then followed by the subject matter of the book which is written according to two purposes, temporary and final. The temporary purpose is to produce in people an [13] understanding of the Buddha's teaching, which will inspire them to enter into the Dharma and make effort in its practice. Realization of this purpose can be seen in the history of the non-Buddhist pandit Matrceta. Having himself begun to follow the Dharma through the study of scriptures he wrote commentaries on the Jatakas and praises of the Buddha, so that others might understand Buddha's perfect knowledge and develop faith in the teaching. Through practice of the Buddha's teaching one can attain, temporarily, rebirth in happy states of existence, and, finally, the ultimate goal of liberation. This is the final purpose of a book, to show the way to reach the final attainment of Buddhahood. Although presented from a variety of viewpoints, all the translations in this book share in these two purposes. All show the way to reach the Door of Liberation."

S: In other words it is not just a scholarly exposition.

All right, straight on.

V: "According to the Mahayana tradition, the ultimate Door of Liberation is the realization of Voidness. However, to actually open this door one must produce the Bodhi mind of love and compassion. The generation of Bodhi mind is the basis for Method, and the realization of Voidness is the basis for Wisdom. To reach the Door of Liberation, according to the Mahayana tradition, the practice of Method and Wisdom must be inseparably joined. The following verse of sutra is the origin of the teaching of the Door of Liberation.

As those who do not understand Voidness, Peace and Birthlessness Wander in the world, The Compassionate One Taught Method and many different reasonings.

To elaborate on this: seeing that living beings suffer in the world through their lack of understanding of Voidness, Peace and Birthlessness, the threefold Door of Liberation, Buddha was moved to great compassion. In order to show living beings the way to free themselves from samsara Buddha taught many different teachings, expressed in a variety of different ways according to the capacity of his listeners to understand them."

S: In this paragraph, again we come to the two complementary aspects. Which are here called Wisdom and Method. Method, of course, corresponds to Compassion. So Wisdom is more preoccupied with the realization of the nature of the Voidness, ultimate reality. And Method, or Compassion is more concerned with the Bodhisattva's vow , the practice of the Paramitas.

But these two have to be joined together for the full, total, complete realization. Both the intuition of the Void through Wisdom and the realization of Compassion through living the life of the Bodhisattva in the world.

V: Is that the Bodhicitta? Is the Bodhi-mind here the Bodhicitta?

S: Yes.

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V: If the Bodhi-mind was Bodhicitta wouldn't that, in a sense, mean that it was something separate from Wisdom?

S: In a sense, yes. I'm not sure whether Geshe Wangyal means that to be taken quite literally, because the usual tradition is that the Bodhicitta is the product of the initial coming together of the seed of Wisdom and the seed of Compassion. So, I'm not sure whether this is to be taken literally. Maybe that will become clearer as we go on, in some later section. Make a little note of that and see if anything does come up.

All right let's go on.

V: "His teachings are of two kinds: those of direct meaning and those of derived meaning. Buddha's sole purpose is to guide living beings to liberation, and all his teachings are correct and non-contradictory. However, due to different understandings of Buddha's words, according to whether they are to be interpreted to be of direct or of derived meaning, there developed different systems of Buddhist tenets and the differentiation into Hinayana and Mahayana.

There are four main schools of Buddhist tenets; the Vaibhasika; the Sautrantika; the Cittamatra, or Vijñānavādin; and the Madhyamika, which is divided into the Svātrika-Madhyamika and the Prasāngika-Madhyamika. The former two schools belong to the Hinayana tradition and the latter two to the Mahayana tradition. The translations in this book are primarily from the viewpoint of the Prasāngika-Madhyamika."

S: This was the viewpoint of Tsongkapa and is the viewpoint of the Gelugpa tradition generally.

Just a word about these four schools, though Geshe Wangyal does explain them from the traditional Tibetan point of view.

The Vaibhasikas are those who follow, broadly speaking, those who follow the Abhidhamma, the Sanskrit Abhidhamma, the Sarvastivādins. Literally, those who follow the vibhāsa, or commentary. I take it everybody knows about the Abhidhamma, they've got a rough idea of what it is? There are two Abhidhamma traditions, those of the Theravādins, those of the Sarvastivādins. The Theravāda Abhidhamma tradition is handed down in Pali, that of the Sarvastivādins in Sanskrit. The Tibetan Buddhists, of course, follow the Sanskrit Abhidhamma tradition. So like the Theravādins, the Sarvastivādins had seven great Abhidhamma books which made up their Abhidhamma-Pitaka and a number of great teachers

gathered together, a number of great Sarvastivadin teachers gathered together and made a great commentary on these seven books. This is called the Mahavibhasa. So those who follow the Mahavibhasa, or vibhasa for short, the commentary, they are called Vaibhasikas, or in a sense Abhidhammikas, followers of the Abhidhamma, but the Abhidhamma in the light of that great commentary. And Vasubandhu's Abhidhamma Kosa is further a digest, a critical digest of that commentary. And his is, of course, the leading work in the Abhidhamma field. Especially for the Sarvastivadin traditions as continued in Tibet and China and Japan. So those are the Vaibhasikas.

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Then the Sautrantikas. The Sautrantikas are those who follow the sutras; sautra from sutra. They rejected the Abhidharma and they are generally called critical realists, they stress the importance of the Buddha's teachings in the sutras and they were not very happy about the interpretations given in the Abhidharma. They didn't consider the Abhidharma as being the word of the Buddha, which the Theravadins did and which the Sarvastivadins also did, in a sense.

The Cittamatra or the Vijnanavadin school is roughly the same as the Yogacara. Cittamatra means mind only, Vijnanavadin means the school of consciousness. So roughly corresponding to the Yogacara.

And then of course the Madhyamika. So the Sautrantikas and the Vaibhasikas are the Hinayana schools and the Vijnanavada and the Madhyamika these are the Mahayana schools.

V: What is the difference between the two different Madhyamika, well the division into two.

S: Ahh, Geshe Wangyal explains that a bit later on.

Let's go straight on, there will be an explanation of all these schools from a philosophical point of view.

V: "All the schools of tenets base their viewpoints on the statements of the Buddha; the differences between them arise through their varying interpretations of those statements. This is seen in their different understandings of Buddha's teaching that all compounded phenomena are like a magician's illusions."

S: So Geshe Wangyal is saying here that these are not really contradictory, these schools. They have their different points of view but they are all based on the words of the Buddha, that is according to the Tibetan tradition, and they all try to explain and to clarify the teaching of the Buddha. The differences arise simply because of the different interpretations of what the Buddha said.

So he gives an example; he says that according to the Buddha's teaching all compounded phenomena are like a magician's illusions. This is a very common statement in Buddhist literature though I must say you don't find it in the Pali scriptures. This sort of language is not used, actually, by the Buddha himself, as far as we know.

What do you think is the general significance of all compounded phenomena all conditioned things, being like a magician's illusions? What is the general significance of this? You come across it so often.

V: Unreal, impermanent.

S: Impermanent, yes. Unreal - but also real in a sense, yes?

V: Intransitorially real.

S: Intransitorially real, relatively real, phenomenally real not unreal in a sense of totally

non-existent. I mean, when the magician by his magic, conjures up, maybe, a palace ... something like that. You see it, you can go inside it, you can look around it. Then the magician dissolves it and it is no longer there. But you perceived it. It seems to be there, it has a certain reality, you experienced it but it is not ultimately real because it was dissolved. So it's neither [16] existent nor non-existent. Neither totally non-existent nor absolutely real, relatively real. So the illustration of the magician's magic is not meant to show that phenomena are absolutely unreal, but that they are only relatively real.

So anyway, this is the statement of the Buddha, according to Geshe Wangyal though actually we don't find in the Pali Canon the Buddha speaking in this way. And then he shows how these different schools, these four schools, interpret that alleged statement of the Buddha in different ways; thus illustrating their various approaches.

V: "The Vaibhasikas feel that this example indicates impermanence, in the sense that all things must be given up at the time of death. Though the illusory elephant and horse of the magician exist during his magical show, they cease to exist once the show is over; in the same way, the body and the enjoyments of this life must be abandoned at the time of death. This is the ordinary level of understanding of impermanence, as found among people like ourselves."

S: So this is very simple and commonsensical isn't it. The magic show doesn't last very long, it is impermanent. So everything is like that, all compounded phenomena are like that, they are impermanent. So for the Vaibhasika school, the Buddha's statement about the magician's display simply illustrates the truth of impermanence. Do you see that? So they take it no further than that, no more deeply than that.

But what about the Sautrantikas?

V: "The Sautrantikas feel that what is being indicated is impermanence in the sense of the momentary nature of phenomena. Just as the illusory emanations of the magician change from moment to moment so all phenomena are disintegrating at each moment, not depending on any later cause, but just from having been produced."

S: The Sautrantikas have a doctrine that all phenomena are inherently momentary. In other words, if they are not actually kept in existence by certain causes and conditions, they automatically go out of existence after just an instant. So they point out that with regard to the magician's show, with regard to the magic display, actually it is going out of existence and being brought back into existence all the time, by the magician's power. It is not that just at the beginning the magician exercises his power and then the magic show continues to exist for a while. No, every instant the magician has to exercise his magic power to keep the whole thing going. In the same way, phenomenal things are not just transitory, they have only a momentary existence. They are being born and perishing each instant. It is not that things don't last very long, that they only last a few years or a few centuries: nothing lasts longer than an instant.

This is the Sautrantika view and this is their interpretation of this particular illustration or statement of the Buddha. They take it a bit further, a bit more deeply. So the Sarvastivadins regard what the Buddha has said as illustrating impermanence in general. The Sautrantikas regard it as illustrating their particular doctrine of momentariness. [17] Of course there are these differences of interpretation with regards to every one, practically, of the Buddha's statements. Which makes it all rather complicated.

But what about the Cittamatras or Vijnanavadins, what do they have to say?

V: "The Cittamatras or Vijnanavadins, feel that this example indicates that phenomena are not established depending on the nature of external objects but are merely the nature of the inner mind, just as the horse and elephant which the magician manifests from pieces of stone and wood are not actually horses and elephants, but are merely the perceptions of a consciousness deluded by the power of the magician's mantras or power objects."

S: I am not quite sure what is meant by power objects, but anyway, the Yogacarins seem to interpret the magician's magic in terms of mass hypnotism. They say that actually there is nothing there, you don't really see anything, but the magician, through his mantras or his magic power, he affects your mind in such a way that you see or you think you see. So the Yogacarins say that it is just the same with regard to the whole universe.

Your mind has been affected by a sort of magic and you think that there is a world out there but actually it is just what you see. It is just what your own mind sees, it is all within your own mind, as it were. The magic of ignorance.

So they regard this statement of the Buddha as illustrating the truth that everything depends on the mind, or, in a sense that everything is the mind - Cittamatra - that there is only mind.

So what do the Madhyamikas have to say.

V: "The Madhyamikas feel that Buddha's example indicates that phenomena do not exist truly, but are merely put forth by the power of their appearing to the mind. However, the Svatantrika-Madhyamikas further say that it is not enough that an object be put forward by the power of its appearing to the mind; the object must also be established from the nature of its own basis of imputation. That is, the illusory horse and elephant of the magician are put forth not only by the power of their appearing to the mistaken mind, but also from the nature of the pieces of stone and wood that are their bases of emanation. They say that if this were not the case, one would be able to see the horse and elephant just from the delusive power of the magician's mantras or power-objects, without need for the pieces of stone and wood which serve as their bases of emanation."

S: Do you see the point of view of the Svatantrika-Madhyamikas?

V: No. (laughing)

S: First of all the Madhyamikas in general feel that the Buddha's example indicates that phenomena do not exist truly. In other words, if they exist only in dependence on the mind, well you can't really say that they exist at all. They are void, they are empty. This is the Madhyamika point of view. They are merely put forth by their power of appearing to the mind. There isn't anything really there, they only appear to be there.

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But the Svatantrikas interpret this in a particular way. The Svatantrikas, further say, it is not enough that an object is put forward by the power of its appearing to the mind, the object must also be established from the nature of its own basis of imputation. In other words, there must be something which you think you see, even if you see it as something else. For instance if you go along the road on a dark night, you think you see a ghost, but you don't really see a ghost, it is only an old stump or a tree trunk. So the ghost that you think you see, this is like the magical creation, but it has to have a basis; here the basis is the tree trunk or the stump. So the Svatantrikas say for there to be a magical illusion, for there to be, as it were, something phenomenally existing, there must be a basis of imputation. There must be a hook on which it is.

V: Is that saying that the tree trunk is real?

S: Yes, they do imply the tree trunk, whatever it may be is real. And on the basis of that real tree trunk that unreal ghost is imputed. On the basis of the unreal horse or elephant or what-not, a magical creation is produced. In other words, that the magician can make you see something that exists as other than it actually is. But there has to be, to begin with, something there, which he can make you see other than it is even though in the most general terms. So according to the Svatantrikas there must be a basis for imputation so far as phenomenal existence is concerned.

You see, the magician can take a small piece of wood and make you see that as a horse or an elephant, but he needs that small piece of wood to start with, as a basis for imputation. This is the Svatantrika point of view.

V: It's a bit like projections, isn't it.

S: It is a bit, yes.

V: Using, what I can only describe as relative reality to create illusion.

S: Yes, right. A bit like that, because even the Madhyamika doesn't reject relative reality.

But anyway, let's go on to see what the Prasangikas say.

V: "The Prasangika-Madhyamikas refute this position of the Svatantrika-Madhyamikas. They say that one does not see the illusory emanations of the magician by the power of their being established from the nature of the pieces of wood and stone that are their bases of emanation. If the sight of "horse" were to depend on the nature of a particular piece of wood or stone, then that particular piece of wood or stone, then that particular piece of wood or stone could be seen only as "horse" and not as "elephant". Further, if the sight of "horse" were produced from the nature of its basis of emanation, even those not under the magician's power would have to see the horse. The Prasangika-Madhyamikas say that one sees the illusory horse and elephant of the magician by the power of whether or not one's mind imputes "horse" or "elephant" to those bases of emanation, for they say that phenomena are established by the mere imputation of concepts and terms (Tibetan: ming dang doke bay dak tsam). In the [19] Tibetan scholarly tradition, the Prasangika system of interpretation expresses the actual meaning of the Buddha's teaching."

S: This is the interpretation accepted by the Gelugpas, following Tsongkapa. Now, what actually does that criticism mean? 'The Prasanghika-Madhyamikas refute this position of the Svatantrika-Madhyamikas. They say that one does not see the illusory emanations of the magician by the power of their being established from the nature of the pieces of wood and stone that are their bases of emanation.' In other words, there is no necessary connection between the basis of the imputation and the imputation itself, as there is according to the Svatantrikas. They say, 'if the sight of "horse" were to depend on the nature of the particular piece of wood or stone then that particular piece of wood or stone, then that particular piece of wood or stone could be seen only as "horse" and not as "elephant".' In other words if there was a definite connection, a specific connection between the basis of imputation and the imputation itself. A particular basis of imputation could only give rise to a particular imputation - not to any imputation. 'Further if the sight of "horse" were produced from the nature of its basis of emanation even those not under the magicians power would have to see the horse.' That is to say, if there was the necessary connection between, say, the particular piece of wood and the horse that that particular piece of wood was seen as; if the fact that you saw that particular piece of wood as the horse depended on the nature of that piece of wood, then everybody would have to see that particular piece of wood as a horse, without the intervention of the magician's power. But that doesn't happen therefore the fact that there is any specific relationship between the basis of imputation and the imputation itself is refuted.

Therefore 'the Prasangika-Madhyamikas say that one sees the illusory horse and elephant of the magician by the power of whether or not ones minds imputes "horse" or "elephant" to those bases of emanation, for they say that phenomena are established by the mere imputation of concepts and terms.' It is entirely the work of your own mind, as it were. It's is this that the magical display analogy is meant to illustrate. That there is nothing in the basis of the imputation that requires you to see the imputation on that particular basis, it is entirely the work of your own mind. So they summarize their view by saying 'phenomena are established by the mere imputation of concepts and terms.'

V: Isn't that the same as ... ?



S: No, it isn't actually. It's more epistemological, if you want to put it in a nutshell, in Western terms. It's an epistemological point of view rather than a metaphysical point of view.

So anyway, don't forget the reason why Geshe Wangyal has introduced this discussion. He is just giving an illustration of the way in which different schools of thought, different Buddhist philosophical traditions take up a single statement of the Buddha and interpret quite differently according to their respective points of view.

So, if, for instance, the idea that phenomena are like a magician's illusion just means to you that they are impermanent, well, you are a natural follower of the Vaibhasika [20] school. If the interpretation that appeals to you is that of Madhyamika Prasangikas, well you are a natural follower of that school. But according to the Prasangika-Madhyamikas the different points of view represent an ascending series, they are not just different, but they are deeper and progressively more profound. The other schools of course wouldn't necessarily agree with that, they would say that the Prasangika school is mistaken, that their view is right. But the Prasangika does view them in this way, of successive approximations to the truth. Not that the other views are wrong, but they don't go into it so deeply, they are right too. Of course phenomena are impermanent, that's true, it's also true that they're momentary, but that is not the whole truth. One can go into the matter more deeply even than that. So the Prasangika-Madhyamikas will believe that it goes into the matter more deeply even than that.

(End of tape 1)

So the Prasangika-Madhyamika school believes that it goes into the meaning of the Buddha's teaching as deeply as it is possible to go and therefore completely clarifies the Buddha's teaching in a way that it is not clarified in the other schools. And this is, of course, the dominant school of interpretation in the Buddhism of Tibet, the Gelugpa, in this Prasangika-Madhyamika form.

V: Do you agree, yourself, that that is the case. That these are, sort of, deeper insights into that?

S: I feel that they can be looked at in that way, yes.

They are certainly more abstruse, aren't then? They are more intellectually refined but whether they are actually deeper from a spiritual point of view is difficult to say. It depends on the effect. For instance, someone, just basing himself on a very simple interpretation of the Buddha's statement, say the Vaibhasika one, could just go and give up everything, have a profound recognition of impermanence, life, death, give up everything, got forth and become a monk, meditate, realize Nirvana. But somebody else might have a much more sophisticated understanding of that particular statement. (break in tape)

... I was just saying it might not have the same dramatic effect. It is not just a question of, as it were, objective validity but also it's effect for a particular purpose. After all, what is the purpose of the Buddha's teaching? It is to start you off, to set you practising, to help you realize. So intellectual refinement, though it may result, in a way, in a profounder intellectual understanding, does not necessarily do that any more, at least for some people. So a comparatively simple, common sense interpretation may spark someone off more effectively than a more subtle, more refined more abstruse interpretation. So that more common sense interpretation of the Buddha's teaching will be doing the work that that teaching was meant to do. It is not just a question of the degree of intellectual sophistication, but of what works with regard to a particular person.

So the more abstruse, the more subtle Madhyamika, especially Prasangika-Madhyamika interpretation is meant to spark off those people who are so mentally sophisticated, so subtle they can't be sparked off by more common sense interpretations because they can raise to those common sense interpretations all sorts of theoretical and intellectual objections. They have [21] to be satisfied on levels of increasing subtlety. But the resultant sparking off at

whatsoever level of subtlety is the same from the spiritual point of view. Do you see that? This is why you find that some people require more explanation than others, they require more of intellectual satisfaction, they require more questions to be answered before they will act. But some people will act on the basis of a very simple, straightforward explanation without asking any questions. But others will want to know and will want a justification, will want an explanation from an increasingly subtle standpoint and even then they may not act.

So, it is as if the four schools here are not so much really degrees of profundity in a spiritual sense, but they represent an attempt to satisfy the intellectual needs of people with increasingly subtle minds. But you can be sparked off, to use that expression, by the quite simple, straightforward, common sense interpretation of the Buddha's teaching; and it is the sparking off, that the teaching and the interpretation of the teaching is meant to effect. Do you see that? And broadly speaking, we may say, the faith sentiment is more easily sparked off than the intellectual temperament. The faith follower more easily than the doctrine follower. So it is a question of providing for increasing degrees of mental subtlety and intellectual sophistication.

V: Do you actually know what the Buddha's original teaching was of this?

S: Well, the Buddha's original teaching, one may say from Geshe Wangyal's point of way, is simply that phenomena are like a magician's illusion.

V: But, he actually said that?

S: No, as far as I recollect, in the Pali Canon the Buddha did not use that analogy. The Buddha spoke simply in terms of impermanence. In other words, in the early stages the teaching was more straightforward, more commonsensical. But as Indian philosophy developed and Indian thinkers became more and more subtle, well, the teaching had to adopt correspondingly subtle abstruse forms to satisfy them. Their objections and difficulties had to be answered, in this way what we call Buddhist philosophy arose. Otherwise the Buddhist teachers need not have bothered.

You find this very much with the people we meet ourselves. Some people are satisfied with a very short, simple explanation of things and they go away and put it into practice. Others will want to go practically through the whole course of Buddhist philosophy and raise all sorts of abstruse questions and expect those questions to be satisfied before they will actually do anything, before they will start practising.

There is also the question, which I have discussed, I think in Auckland, as to why some people require more intellectual satisfaction than others. I have my own views about this. I've come to the conclusion, on the whole, that people who need a great deal of intellectual satisfaction, are people who want to be quite sure, i.e. anxious people. Intellectuality is to some extent, at least this sort of intellectuality, an expression of anxiety.

V's: Yes.

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S: For instance, I will give an illustration. Someone asks you how to get to a certain place. You say, "you walk down the road and every ten minutes there is a number ten bus, you get on that bus and it will take you all the way." They say, "oh thank you", and they just go and do it. Then somebody else asks you the same question, you give them the same reply and they say, "suppose the bus doesn't come along, then what will I do?" So you say, well wait for the next one and then they ask, "well will there really be a next one, are you sure that they run every ten minutes, supposing there is a breakdown, what do I do, supposing I get run over on the way to the bus-stop, supposing the bus has a breakdown, or supposing they are not actually running today? Are you sure, how do you know, can you show me the timetable? Some people are like that.

V: It reminds me of the arrow story. What sort of arrow is it?

S: Yes, right. So, what is a sort of reasonable satisfaction intellectually depends very much upon the nature of the individual person. Some people will regard something as a reasonable satisfying explanation where others will not, they will want to go into it much more thoroughly. But this doesn't necessarily indicate a greater intensity of the search for truth. It usually indicates just a greater anxiety and a greater need to feel sure, which means they feel really unsure.

It doesn't mean to say that you should just swallow everything that you are told, but there is such a thing as a reasonable certainty. But there are quite a few people who want to be certain to an unreasonable degree, to a neurotic degree.

V: As far as the text is concerned, though, there is the question of a thorough understanding of the text.

S: Yes but what is thorough? I mean, thorough, from the Buddhist point of view really means an understanding sufficient to spark you off in terms of practise. If a common sense explanation does that, that is fair enough, that is clear and that is correct. If something more abstruse, more sophisticated, elaborate is required, well then that sparks you off. But that more elaborate explanation is not necessarily any nearer the truth, it is simply more elaborate and more abstruse.

V: I suppose it's whatever puts you; there is an underlying feeling there and whatever puts you in touch with that is the right thing.

S: So behind our so called intellectual conviction there are very often emotional factors. Or behind our lack of conviction, emotional factors.

V: It is sometimes a real inability to commit oneself to a course of action.

S: Yes, and it is the person who doesn't want to commit himself or herself to a course of action who will ask endless theoretical questions. Just to postpone that dreadful day of commitment. To have an excuse for not committing. On the plea, the entirely false plea, usually, that they are not sure and that they want to be sure. The thing is that they don't want [23] to be sure. Or you might say, more kindly, that they so much want to be sure that they make it impossible that they should ever be sure.

V1: Can I ask about the connection you've given between anxiety and this kind of intellectuality. Do you think there is a positive connection as for instance in hatred and wisdom, that there can be any kind of positive temperamental connection, as it were, between the two, anxiety and intellectuality.

S: What do you mean by temperamental connection? There isn't exactly an anxious temperament, strictly speaking, is there?

V2: Do you mean in terms of personalities?

V1: Well, yes. Like someone who has got a lot of hatred has got the energy that can cut through ignorance, this is a traditional Buddhist thought.

S: Yes.

V: I just wondered if there was, if anxiety, being an emotion like hatred could also be viewed in this way.

V3: Transformed.

V1: Yes, if there is some kind of connection between, someone who is very very subtle, intellectually, has sort of transformed that anxious energy in a sense.

S: Well, perhaps you can just become a good debater. You deal with other people then.

There is a sort of secondary list of temperaments or characters in Buddhagosa where the 'vitaka' temperament develops into the 'buddhi' temperament. That is to say, the mentally active, or one could even say, overactive into the intelligent. How exactly that differs from the wise temperament is perhaps difficult to say. But certainly the buddhi temperament is a sort of more positive form of the vitaka - the merely mentally active or overactive temperament. Usually translated as the intelligent temperament, or even sophisticated.

I don't see, though, that this sort of anxiety can be transmuted into anything positive.

V: Not even by the fact that it can penetrate intellectually into these points more and more subtly in order to convey...

S: Well, that would seem to be the quality of anger. You could say that there is in the anxiety also quality of anger. There is that quality of anger in anxiety which enables it to penetrate and to justify itself and to put up its defences. So if you eliminate the anxiety what would be left would be the anger, as it were in the positive sense, that analytical and critical faculty in a more objective form.

V: The anxiety, it doesn't seem to have any penetration. It's all on the same level with people like that, they seem to be ...

S: Yes, it's very defensive.

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V: If you meet someone like that is it better to try and meet their points as they come or to face them with the fact that they are...

S: I think you can meet their points but it gets you nowhere. They don't see or feel that their points have been met. Or they usually just pass on to another point, or raise a side issue. And you can go on raising side issues indefinitely. So sooner or later you have to get back to their basic problem which is the anxiety and they have to have reassurance, it seems. You can't deal with them on purely objective, intellectual grounds. You might have to start off like that, because you might not even know what they are like to begin with, but when they become unreasonably demanding in that way, then you start realizing there is something more behind it than the objective search for truth or the need for reasonable certainty. So then you have to start dealing with the reason for their insecurity and anxiety and you may, depending on circumstances, think it best to confront them with it and ask them to consider that possibility. Or maybe not mention it and deal with it indirectly by just suggesting certain things that you know are going to help them or just getting them involved without, sort of, trying to argue them into being involved. Sort of 'catch' them, as it were.

For instance, if you think the Puja is going to help them, don't say, "Oh I think the Puja will do you good," because then they will ask why and then you'll explain and then they'll say "oh but so and so". It is much better to say, "I'm just going to join in the Puja, like to come?" Like that, not, "I think it will be good for you, because.." But just sort of take them along, carry them along with you.

But argument with such people is fatal in the sense that it just doesn't work. You can go on all day, go on for years and years.

V: Perhaps this is what they want.

S: Well, not even what they want, but they are afraid of the alternative.

V: Because I had this experience last weekend with somebody who dumped himself on me for a while. Without even saying anything he obviously wanted something and each time I suggested something he said "but" and the whole thing just spun round in a circle again. In the end I virtually had to say, "look, do this and leave me alone." That was all I could do.

S: Sometimes, of course, such people are expressing at the same time resentment. They want to defeat you, they want to reject all your suggestions, they want to make you feel helpless, they want to make you feel frustrated, even angry, yes?

Anyway this is all just illustrative.

V: I was wondering, what you were saying about logic before. I always understood that discussions like that did have quite positive value, it clears the mind.

S: Discussions like what?

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V: Like those Tibetans, in debates.

V: But that's when they have already committed themselves, that's different.

S: Yes, I think they do but presumably, yes they have already committed themselves but they are just, sort of, clarifying something they already accept in principle.

V: Yes, it's on a different basis altogether isn't it?

V: I was trying to say, as a means.

S: In the case of the Tibetans, in the case of the Gelugpas it represents a more thorough going over of ground with which they are already familiar, getting to know all the ins and outs of the subject. In other words there is no real debate, it is more an exercise in whether you know the arguments which are supposed to convince you - although you are already convinced but you ought to know all the arguments.

V: Ahh, yes. It's not a ...

S: It's not real, no. It's a sort of performance in a way. But it gives you a nice feeling because you know all the arguments for what you do, in fact, already accept.

V: Well presumably if you are going to have any confidence and assurity in what you are debating about you must have had, well in terms of those two transmissions, higher than the word ones.

S: I think one can say that you get quite a different feeling when a certain argument convinces you of something of which you weren't already convinced and the sort of feeling you get when an argument convinces you of something, or rather shows the truth of something that you were already convinced of.

V: The first one's quite rare?

S: Yes, and it's the second one that the Tibetans experience in connection with this debate. They are convinced of the truth of something of the truth of which they were already convinced but in a more elaborate and detailed and precise manner. But to be convinced of the truth of something that you haven't seen before, that is quite a new, different experience. Especially if it goes counter to what you believed before and is really a quite new insight.

V: It must be quite striking when you get some great debater who defeats you. It must have quite an effect, right through the school.

S: Yes, right. I mean, people are mostly experienced, sort of listening to arguments and being rationally convinced but in their heart of hearts not really accepting. Even in the absence of anxiety, there's that deep inner resistance to accepting something which you are unable to refute, which as far as you can see is completely reasonable, rational, conclusive, but you don't feel able to accept it. There is something in you that won't or can't.

The Tea Break

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The Tea Break Discussion:

V: People have been talking about food recently, particularly about macrobiotics and apparently there has been some great macrobiotic teacher giving lectures in London. And I've met quite a few questions as to why in the Friends and in the Order we don't take food into consideration in the same way. In the sense of this fine balance or much more sensitive doing without sugar and things like this. I don't really have any argument because at the same time I can see that say, if you do cut out tea, coffee, sugar, that you do become more sensitive and it is a form of increasing your sensitivity more and more and I don't have any arguments against it. I wondered how you felt about this.

S: I think the important thing is to go from sensitivity.

V: Go from sensitivity?

S: Yes, that is to say you start with your sensitivity and that sensitivity tells you, as it were, or you discover in your own experience what is good for you, what suits you and what doesn't. And I think this is what is more important to follow rather than any sort of predetermined scheme. Otherwise you can become quite fanatical and faddy.

V: But then the argument is that people are so alienated that they don't know what is good for them.

S: In that case you could find out for yourself, not just accept someone's ready made scheme or solution. It is quite true that many people don't know and therefore they accept quite blindly the first sort of thing that comes along, sometimes for quite unconscious reasons.

V: I heard somebody say that if they followed their feelings they would just eat cream cake all the time, but that's not the point is it.

S: Well, OK. follow your feelings and just eat cream cake all day, what will happen?

V: You'll be sick.

S: Exactly, nature will restore the balance. You will find out that eating cream cakes all day is no good. If you really feel like it, well do it. Nature will soon teach you a lesson which you will learn.

I think on the whole the Friends as a movement isn't too bad in this respect. I think it would be good if we could abolish white sugar and certainly anything made of white flour, colourings and sweetenings.

V: Biscuits.

S: Well, what about wholemeal biscuits?

V: I think they've still got sugar.

S: Bake our own then, a biscuit factory of our own. (laughter)

## End of Tea Break Discussion

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V: Did these four different ... ever debate together, as it were? How come that there were these four separate view points?

S: Well they did debate together in India very vigorously, but in Tibet the Gelugpa school is dominant and as far as they are concerned the Prasangika-Madhyamika view is the ultimate one, there's hardly any view for debate, because nobody holds any different point of view any more. They've all been converted to the Prasangika point of view. So in the tarksay the opponent, that is to say the monk who is acting as the opponent will raise the other points of view but only so that they may be refuted to the satisfaction of all concerned.

V: So the Nyingmapa then, perhaps might have a different point of view and are not interested in that sort of debate anyway.

S: That's true. Though some Nyingmapa teachers have written books which express some divergence from the Madhyamika-Prasangika point of view.

V: Is there any predominant influence in the Kagyu school and the Sakya school?

S: Not really. As far as the Nyingmapas and Kagyupas are concerned they are not so much interested in doctrinal discussion. There was an offshoot of the Sakya school which is I think the Jonongpa school which had a completely different metaphysical approach but which according to some authorities strayed beyond the limits of Buddhism itself. But they are no longer extant as a living tradition, they died out long ago.

V: Can the Nyingmapa's traditions be said to have any particular philosophical or metaphysical viewpoint?

S: Not as such. That is to say, not the Nyingmapa school as such. But it accepts the whole general Mahayana philosophical position but has its own particular spiritual methods and practices and traditions. The Nyingmapa school as such is not a philosophical school.

V: Do they have a monastery?

S: They do have or they did have.

V: Is Buddhism in Tibet; well I get the feeling that it is very central and prominent to everybody's life. Rather, very much to the forefront of their everyday life and activities.

S: That is, it was. As far as we know it is no longer so.

V: That's something I noticed in Tibet House, the shop in Chelsea, the Tibetans in there seem to be more concerned with Tibet and Tibetan culture, almost as a kind of souvenir, tourist industry, national pride and all that, rather than the fact that it was Buddhist. That was just secondary.

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S: You find this with the Sinhalese and the Thais too.

V: ... you could say that to them, well in a sense the word religion didn't exist.

S: No, not as a separate activity.

V: No, it was just...

S: The totality of their culture. Couldn't help being a Buddhist, even if you didn't want to be.

But you couldn't imagine being anything else.

All right let's carry on now.

V: "This short description of the tenets of the different schools has been mentioned here because they are not specifically described in any of the translations. An understanding of them helps to clarify the concept of the illusoriness of phenomena, as that concept appears throughout the various translations from the viewpoint of the Prasangikas. Ultimately, thorough study of the tenets is necessary in order to develop the understanding needed to achieve the realization of Voidness.

In all the teachings of Buddha, mind is essential. It is first of all necessary to have mind-practice, whether following the Hinayana or the Mahayana path, for it is only from mind-practice that one can abandon wrongdoing and purify oneself from all defilements. Therefore, throughout all of Buddhism there is nothing that is not based upon mind. In the systems of practice that follow the Hinayana tradition, one develops the mind-practice of controlling selfish feelings and extending the concept of renunciation of samsara. The final goal of this practice is the attainment of Arhantship. According to the Mahayana tradition, it is most important to develop mind-practice from the viewpoint of the deeds of the Bodhisattvas. These deeds are the Six Transcendences: Giving, Moral Practice, Patience, Effort, Meditation and Wisdom. From this viewpoint one develops the Bodhi-mind of love and compassion, and the realization of Voidness. Through the joint practice of these two a Bodhisattva can ultimately attain Buddhahood, the final goal of the Mahayana."

S: So by mind-practice the author seems to mean a sort of mental attitude, that whether you follow the Hinayana or the Mahayana it all starts from your mental attitude. It is the mental attitude which is decisive, the mental determination. So therefore, in any form of Buddhism mind-practice comes first, in whatsoever form.

All right go on.

V: "The beginning of all mind-practice in the Buddha's teaching is the taking of Refuge. In order to free oneself from the pain and suffering of existence, one must seek protection from the best possible source. Just as one must have a reliable guide when undertaking a long and difficult journey to an unknown place, so one must follow a guide who has the proper qualifications when one seeks to travel the path to liberation."

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S: Just one point here, this expression 'taking of Refuge'. Literally of course it is going for refuge, you say, 'gacchami' - I go.

It is rather interesting that in Pali they do speak of 'taking' the precepts but 'going' for refuge. It just occurs to me to wonder why this is. You get for instance, 'sila grahana' that is to say grasping the silas, but when you speak in term of the refuges it is going for refuge. What do you think this suggests, or might suggest? You take the precepts, in a sense of taking hold.

V: Refuge is given.

S: Refuge is given, yes.

V: Well, when you go for refuge you then 'take' the precepts.

S: Yes, right, in a way. You can of course take the precepts without going for refuge but they are not then, strictly speaking, precepts. Precept as such is related to the going for refuge.

If you take something it suggests that it is relatively near at hand. If you have to go, it suggests that it may be quite far away.



V: It's like the precepts are the rungs on the ladder to where you're going.

S: Yes.

That's the only point in that paragraph, unless anybody else had a point?

V: "Sakyamuni Buddha attained the final goal of the path, Buddhahood, by first generating the Mind of Compassion and then perfecting himself through the stages of the Bodhisattvas, during any lifetimes. He practised the difficult Bodhisattva deeds of compassion and purified himself of all the defilements of the three mental poisons."

S: These mental poisons, of course, are craving, aversion and ignorance.

V: "Having attained perfect omniscience, he works exclusively for the benefit of other living beings, and by the power of this great compassion is able to guide living beings to liberation. Buddha's compassion is such that he feels toward all living beings as a mother feels toward her children. He makes no discrimination between those who are good or bad, high or low, friend or enemy - he works for all living beings equally without expecting that his kindness will be repaid."

(end of side 1)

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"Therefore Buddha can be relied upon as a guide. Knowing that his motivation is pure and his knowledge complete, one can understand that the Dharma, his Teaching, is the right teaching to follow, and that the Sangha, those who practice and teach the Dharma, can be depended on for help. Thus the Three Jewels, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, are the most suitable objects of Refuge."

S: Yes. There's one point, of course, that isn't brought out here, but which certainly the Buddha himself brought out; that one goes for refuge to the Buddha in that one sees in the Buddha the ideal of what one can oneself become. The Buddha made it quite clear that what ever he had achieved others could achieve if they made the effort, if they followed in his footsteps. So when we go for refuge to the Buddha we take the Buddha, or the figure of the Buddha as an ideal for actual realization by us. So the Buddha is a guide, not just to Buddhahood, the Buddha is the guide to the Buddha.

All right on to the next paragraph.

V: "All three objects of Refuge are indispensable. For example, if one is sick, a doctor is needed to diagnose the illness, medicine is needed to cure the sickness, and attendants are needed to give medicine and care until one is cured. The Buddha is the doctor, the Dharma is the medicine, and the Sangha are the attendants. All three are needed to eliminate the suffering of Samsaric existence."

S: One could say that this analogy isn't quite complete, isn't quite perfect in as much as when one is cured, one isn't just cured one, as it were, also becomes oneself a doctor. It is more like that.

It is also interesting that the Sangha are the attendants, members of the Sangha are simply attendants upon the sick. Well sometimes it really feels like that.

The Dharma often seems like a rather nasty medicine that you are trying to force down someone's unwilling throat. (laughter) You guild the little pill as best you can but they often suspect that underneath the gilt that little pill is really rather nasty and painful to swallow.

V: "The Three Jewels can be understood in both their relative and their actual sense. The Trikaya of the Buddha - Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Dharmakaya, are the actual

Buddha, while images, paintings, and statues are the relative Buddha. Because the relative is an aspect of the actual, images of the Buddha are placed in the temples and respected in the same way as is the actual Buddha. By honouring these relative images one can receive the actual blessings of the Buddha.

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S: In other words the images paintings and statues are not symbols in the mathematical sense, they are symbols in the more deeply imaginative and creative sense. There is a, sort of, actual correspondence between the images and the paintings and the statues and the Buddha himself. It's as though the images and the paintings and so on are the reflections of the Buddha at a lower level. Not just arbitrary signs of the Buddha's existence somewhere. This is a very important point in Tibetan Buddhism generally.

It's as though the thangka, for instance, mirrors the deity, has a sort of actual relationship with it. This is why in Tibet thangkas are consecrated, if that is the right word. When they are consecrated the letters, om ah hum are painted on the back of the thangka at spots corresponding to the head centre, the throat centre and the heart centre. To signify that the thangka, or the deity in the thangka is 'alive'. Is not just a painting of something alive but itself shares a measure of the life of the deity, the Buddha or Bodhisattva.

V: It seems then that Tibetan art in many ways has actually let that down, because they just seem to produce, mechanically, things which are devoid of any inspiration and you just become mechanical.

S: Yes. So one could say that purely conventional religious art, is religious art, art in which the paintings, images and so on no longer mirror the higher spiritual reality. In other words in which the painting is no longer visionary. I mean as Blake said, "All true art is visionary art". The artist sees a higher spiritual reality and he mirrors that in his painting. You see the Bodhisattva then you represent the Bodhisattva in your painting. Or at least your teacher saw or your teachers teacher, and the Tradition has come down as to what the Bodhisattva looked like and you try to faithfully reproduce that in your painting. So that by seeing the painting, by contemplating on the painting you get an actual feeling of what the actual Buddha or Bodhisattva is like.

Not that he literally has four arms and is white in colour but you have a hint, a feeling of the inner quality, the inner essence of what the figure represents. A really good thangka can convey this, can give you a feeling of the personification of wisdom, or the personification of compassion or of Buddhahood or of Enlightenment.

V: Very rare

S: Very rare, as you say. So therefore, we can appreciate the force of this statement, that images and paintings and statues are the relative Buddha. They are not just images paintings and statues, they are relative Buddha's, as it were. And this is why the Tibetans, traditionally, always used to show such great respect to images, thangkas and so on. And why they were so horrified by any disrespect. Unfortunately this has changed quite a bit since the Tibetans came to India, they have lost quite a lot of this. Originally a Tibetan would never dream of selling an image or a painting. I remember Tibetans coming round and trying to sell me, really embarrassed that they had to offer an image or painting for sale but they just had to, they needed the money and that is all they had to sell. But they were so embarrassed and ashamed that they had to suggest that you bought it. And they put it in the most round about way possible, they'd say sometimes, [32] "I'd like to leave this image with you but I do need a little money." They'd put it as indirectly as that. But after two or three years you would find Tibetans coming around and just offering the image for sale just like anything else. Some of them at least had lost this so quickly.

V: So was the person who produced images and statues, he was supported, he didn't produce the image and then sell it? He was supported to produce it, was he?

S: Yes, especially if he lived in a monastery. And also the Tibetans had a separate word for the money that you gave when somebody handed an image over to you. What we would call buying an image - it was called ransom money, you ransomed the image. It's probably quite impossible for us to recreate these traditions, it would be too artificial, but certainly one should feel that the image or a painting isn't just an image or a painting. It is just a support for some kind of spiritual practice, some kind of spiritual attitude.

V: Could we not have consecration of our images?

S: We could have, but, I mean, if especially it means anything to the people who are going to make use of them and not just have it done mechanically, as it were. Just because it was done in Tibet.

V: Do you have an actual ceremony or would...

S: The doing of it is quite simple. It is simply the inscribing of the Om Ah Hum and, as it were, meditating. It's really as simple as that. Most lamas spend no more than two or three minutes consecrating a thangka, unless they take it very very seriously indeed. But usually that is not done or was not done even in Tibet. Consecrating images usually takes longer because they seal up things inside and there are much more elaborate things to do. It might take about a month. I myself, in India, consecrated, at someone's request, three images in the full traditional way according to Nyingmapa tradition and rather to my surprise it took me about a month to get the necessary things together, first of all the various operations, and I did hardly anything else at the same time. It took about a month.

But consecrating thangkas is a much simpler business. In ordinary terms, as far as we are concerned, it simply means treating images and paintings with respect. It's not really not very much more than that, but even that is quite an important thing.

V: I've hear you criticize attitudes towards images and so forth in the past. Do you feel that generally this has improved?

S: I think it has somewhat, I think it has. I certainly haven't noticed any sort of very definite infractions of this sort of attitude. Maybe people are still a bit disrespectful in the way that they treat books, but books in general. I don't quite like to see people cracking the spines of books and turning down pages and smearing the pages with cocoa or tea stains - this rather offends me, whatever kind of book it is. It suggests a rather unmindful, careless, irreverent attitude.

[33]

V: "Buddha's Teaching is the actual Dharma; the books in which this Teaching is written down are the relative Dharma. In these books one can find all the ways of practising the Teachings for the attainment of Buddhahood. Therefore, in temples one finds books placed even higher than images of the Buddha. One should respect the books, not place them on the ground or mistreat them."

S: Where it's said that the Buddha's teaching is the actual Dharma, it means the teaching in principle. And the books in which this teaching is written down are the relative Dharma in much the same way that the images embody the Buddha, the volumes of the scriptures embody the Dharma.

Though the two are not identical, you notice. You can have the Dharma apart from the books, apart from the Scriptures, if you are sufficiently developed to be able to have direct access to the spiritual principles or spiritual realities that the scriptures describe.

V: It said earlier on here, 'having himself begun to follow the Dharma through the study of scriptures' so there is a differentiation between Dharma and scriptures there.

S: Yes. I don't know how literally one should take that, but it is there. All right, on to the Sangha then.

V: "The actual Sangha are those who have attained the position of Arya, but we respect as the Sangha all those who have taken the vows of a monk or nun, because they are the representatives of the actual Sangha."

S: What do you think is meant by Arya here?

V: Stream entrant and above?

S: Yes, originally in the Hinayana texts it meant the stream entrant and so on. In the Mahayana context, of course, it includes the Bodhisattvas too.

V: The archetypal Bodhisattvas or anyone whom the Bodhicitta might have...

S: No, the archetypal Bodhisattvas. Those on the Refuge Tree, you have the Arhants on the one side and the Bodhisattvas on the other.

"Taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha produces great benefits. One enters the path of the Buddha and is able to take the vows of that path. One is able to purify oneself of [34] defilements and accumulate immeasurable merit; by this one will not fall into lower states of being and will never be harmed by natural or super-natural obstacles. One can achieve one's right desires and will be able to attain Buddhahood quickly."

S: You notice that one of the benefits is that one is able to take the vows of that path. This is, in a way, rather significant, the fact that one can take vows is considered as a benefit. But what do you think is meant by taking a vow, what is the significance of vow?

V: You know that when you say you will do something you will do it, it won't be in any way ...

V: A deeper commitment.

S: Yes. A vow means an open and public promise to do something. Not just doing it but saying, openly and publicly to all concerned that you are going to do it. So if you make a vow in that sense, or take a vow in that sense, then obviously the fact that you have told everybody that you are going to do it, that means that you are definitely going to do it. Because you could hardly dare not to do it when you had told everybody that you would. So Tibetans usually regard the taking of the precepts as representing vows in this sense. You are telling everybody that this is what I am going to do or what I am not going to do. Well at least you are telling the Buddhist community.

So this is quite a different matter from merely practising the particular virtues which the vows pertain to. And a breach of the vow is much more serious than just not doing something that you have not vowed not to do. Do you see the difference?

Because if you break a vow it means that you are going against your own publicly expressed determination, your own publicly expressed commitment. If you just fail to do something that you haven't told anybody that you are going to do, that is a much less serious matter. So breach of vows is regarded as quite serious by the Tibetans, whether on the Hinayana, Mahayana or Vajrayana level; because you are letting everybody down. If you break your Buddhist vows you are letting the whole Buddhist community down, as it were. You are letting yourself down also, very very much. Because you are going back on your publicly expressed commitment.

V: When he says vows here does he actually mean a vow or is that just the word that is translated for precept?

S: I think precepts. But precepts understood as vows.

V: How does this relate to our own?

S: Well we do speak of the Upasaka vows in the ordination. Because when you, for instance, say, "I undertake the precept not to take life", you are making public your determination not to do that thing. You are saying it publicly and openly, this is what makes it a vow.

[35]

V: So when one takes the precepts before an ordination it is just taking the precepts but the ordination is taking a vow?

S: You could say that, strictly speaking repeating the precepts before ordination is not really a repeating of precepts, it is just joining in the chanting, sort of thing; with just a general feeling for the whole thing. Or you could say it was anticipatory. But it's the actual occasion when you think, well this is the time when I am committing myself, I am now going for refuge. I am not just joining in other peoples chanting, I am committing myself. I am going for refuge myself, taking these vows myself. So that is a quite different thing.

It's almost like, you can go into a church and you can join in the hymn singing and quite enjoy it, and hardly bother about the words. But a committed Christian will be singing the words of the hymn in a quite different way, with a quite different sort of experience. It is a bit like that, without pushing the analogy too far.

V: There's another point here where he says, 'one enters the Path of the Buddha and is able to take the vows of that Path.' I thought that meant the Bodhisattva vows actually.

S: It could also mean that, yes. But it could also mean the different sets of vows, the Upasika vows, the Bhikkhu vows, Bodhisattva vows even Tantric vows.

V: Tantric vows?

S: Yes, Tantric vows are called dum-tshig, oaths it is sometimes translated.

V: Is there a specific set of four Tantric vows or...?

S: The position of Tantric vows is a bit different. Usually there's a set of fourteen but they are not really parallel to the Bodhisattva vows or the Precepts. Somewhat different sort of concept. Different terms.

V: There were some that were published in a Newsletter, about two years ago about...

S: Ah, no. That was in a quite different sense. That was using the Tantra quite loosely. I'm not even sure that I gave them that title myself.

V: The Tantric version.

S: Yes, a version in terms of energy, yes. But this was not a traditional Tantric one. I hope I didn't mislead anybody.

V: They were very useful.

S: Yes.

[36]

V: "There are different levels of taking refuge in the Three Jewels. At the lowest level one sees only one's own misery and, seeking happiness, takes refuge in the Buddha from faith in his qualifications rather than from great understanding of his Teaching. Here, one follows the

precepts of the Teaching and learns that the practice of virtue brings happiness."

S: In traditional terms this is following the teaching, going for refuge in order to go to heaven. Which isn't regarded as a very high ideal.

V: It also seems to imply that taking refuge from faith is a bit, you know, a bit simple-minded. Since you haven't got the great understanding of this Teaching.

S: But in view of what I said earlier on this is not altogether correct. Faith is not such an affair of simple-mindedness as one might think. I mean, if you have an understanding which enables you to go for refuge, well that is surely sufficient. There is no question of it being simple-minded or elementary, it has done its work, it has done the trick, it's sparked you off. So one could say that the great understanding is that which galvanizes you into action; whether it may be expressed in relatively simple or in relatively complex conceptual forms. That would depend on the degree of your intellectual sophistication. But a greater degree of intellectual sophistication doesn't necessarily mean a greater understanding in the spiritual sense. So perhaps, maybe unintentionally, Geshe Wangyal is being a little bit derogatory to faith here.

V: In fact it seems to me to be quite a reasonable achievement, seeing one's own misery and seeking happiness in the Buddha through faith in his qualifications rather than from great understanding.

V: But, he doesn't say specifically intellectual understanding, he just says great understanding. So maybe that distinction is not being made.

S: But great understanding is, as it were, contrasted with faith.

V: It produces faith.

S: Anyway, perhaps it is rather a fine point. Let's go on.

V: "At the middle level, one sees that the nature of all samsara is suffering, and, being afraid of this pervasive suffering, one takes refuge in the Buddha and seeks the happiness of Nirvana. This person begins the practice of the Three Precepts - Exceptional Moral Practice, Exceptional Meditation, and Exceptional Wisdom. At this stage one can either immediately enter to the highest level or one can become a Sravaka or Pratyekabuddha. However, even Sravakas and [37] Pratyekabuddhas will eventually admire the compassionate deeds of the Bodhisattvas and will enter to the highest level of being."

S: At this stage one can either immediately enter 'to the highest level' that means the level of a Bodhisattva, one who is aiming at the full Enlightenment of a Buddha.

One must remember that Geshe Wangyal is correlating certain teachings here. Usually it is just said that there are three goals, as it were, from the spiritual point of view. You can either think in terms of a happy rebirth in heaven, which is a mundane goal though higher than our present mundane state. Or you can think in terms of Enlightenment just for yourself, which is the goal of the Hinayana supposedly. Or you can think in terms of Enlightenment, the full Enlightenment of a Buddha for the benefit of all living beings. That is the highest goal, the goal of the Mahayana. So Geshe Wangyal is correlating the refuge going itself with these different levels, or with these different goals.

That the first kind of person goes for refuge to the Buddha impressed by his good qualities, but just so as to get to the happy state of a heavenly birth. The next kind of person wishing to gain Nirvana for himself alone. And then thirdly, as we shall see, someone goes for refuge with the ultimate objective of gaining full Enlightenment for the good of all.

So here the refuges are being interpreted in terms of the three Yanas, not the usual Yanas but

the Heaven or Devayana, the Hinayana and the Mahayana.

V: Is he also correlating them with Morality, Meditation and Wisdom?

S: Yes, to some extent you could say. But that is a bit artificial. What he translates as exceptional moral practice and so on is, 'adhisila, adhicitra or adhisamadhi and adhiprajna'. Adhi meaning higher.

One could say that the first level is really very simple. It is hardly Buddhist in a way, one could say. Though it is made to appear Buddhist for the sake of symmetry. It is more like, you might say, the poor villager in a Buddhist country. Who doesn't really know anything about Buddhism. But there is the temple there and the image of the Buddha and he has got some sort of faith, or even some sort of belief that it is good to worship the Buddha and it is good to go for refuge and this will make him happy and he will get to heaven after he dies if he does this. It probably represents not much more than this. It's not, strictly speaking, even faith, in the Buddhist sense. It's more like a sort of belief in the Buddha's miraculous power, kind of thing.

V: Reward.

S: Mmm. Perhaps we shouldn't take that level very seriously.

V: It does say, 'from his faith in his qualifications', rather than faith and great understanding of his teachings. I think the two words looked for are qualifications and teachings. One is looking at the Buddha from what one has heard of him, what one understands of the Buddha as such.

S: But if one is really appreciating the qualities of the [38] Buddha, this is a very high thing and would certainly get you further on than just to heaven. When for instance we were studying Dhyana for beginners we found that in the case of the most developed Bodhisattvas what corresponded to Vipassana in their practice, was rejoicing in the good qualities of all the Buddhas. So you could think of this more in this sort of way. That if you really do appreciate the attributes of the Buddha, the qualifications of the Buddha and have faith in them, that is to say respond emotionally to them. This is a very profound and important experience. Certainly not just a sort of thing that would get you only to heaven.

Therefore I say that if one is speaking of this level of taking refuge in terms of it just being enough to get you to a happy heavenly rebirth, then your faith in the qualifications of the Buddha is not of that kind that I have just been describing. It must be of another kind altogether, just the ordinary villagers, sort of, faith in the Buddha as a great personality, a famous teacher. Why he is famous he doesn't exactly know but he knows that everybody worships the Buddha as the village god, as it were. And he just has this simple, not even faith from the Buddhist point of view. This is the only way one can make total sense of that particular level of going for refuge.

V: It doesn't actually say it's for a happy rebirth, it just says, 'the practice of virtue brings happiness.'

S: No it doesn't but this is what one knows just from the general background. There are these three sort of Yanas. The Devayana, the Hinayana and the Mahayana and these are considered progressive. And one often gets this sort of classification.

'One sees only ones own misery and seeking happiness', but in the next one 'one see all samsara is suffering' and 'seeks the happiness of Nirvana,' not just happiness. Not just happiness within the conditioned at a higher level. You could say that the first level of going for refuge, which is not really going for refuge at all, is that of the born Buddhist, especially in an agricultural society where Buddhism is just part of the culture and you believe that by worshipping and praying you get to heaven when you die. You are not interested in much

more than that. But you don't have any real appreciation of the Buddha's qualifications or any real faith in them in the spiritual sense. So this is hardly Buddhism, you could say, even, if you wanted to be a bit strict, this particular level. Though it is the level of most of the born Buddhists in the Buddhist countries.

V: "At the highest level one sees the misery of all sentient beings and seeks to attain the perfect Enlightenment of Buddhahood for the sake of all beings. Motivated by this, a being of the highest level takes refuge in the Three Jewels. He generates Bodhi-mind, and, practising the Six Transcendences and the Four Ways of Assembling, [39] attains the qualities of the Buddha.

Those who have reached the highest level and selflessly seek only to help others are called Bodhisattvas, the offspring of Buddha. Though they could seek to escape the misery of existence, they wish instead to be reborn in samsara in order to help living beings. They accept the conditions of life, whether good or bad, wherever they are born, and suffer along with other living beings. Yet they are never corrupted by worldly attachments; each one is like the lotus, which is itself pure and undefiled though it grows from the mud. One can recognize a Bodhisattva from his deeds, just as, when one sees a seagull, one knows that water is near, and, when one sees smoke, one knows there is fire."

S: So the nature of these different levels of taking refuge is quite clear. The second level represents the rather individualistic Buddhist in classical Mahayana terminology, the follower of the Hinayana. And the third level represents the more altruistically minded Buddhist who is not concerned just about himself but also about others. That is of course the Bodhisattva ideal.

So then the Geshe makes a quite neat transition to Avalokiteshvara and the Buddhism of Tibet.

V: Before we go on can I just raise a point. It's here, 'They accept the conditions of life whether good or bad wherever they are born and suffer along with other living beings'. Could you enlarge on that a bit especially the bit about 'suffering along with other living beings'.

S: Well, it means that they don't mind involving themselves in circumstances which result in difficulties and hardships for themselves, provided that they can pursue their overall objective. This is what it really means. Not that they suffer along with them for the sake of suffering along with them. They suffer along with other beings because they involve themselves in the circumstances of other beings so they can help other beings. They choose to be reborn, or allow themselves to be reborn on the human plane where they have to undergo all sorts of unpleasant experiences as human beings just so that they can be near human beings. And by being near to them, help them. They accept the suffering, as it were, in order to be able to fulfil their mission. Which means that perhaps it isn't, for them, suffering in quite the same sense as it is for other beings. The Bodhisattvas accept the suffering as part of the total package, as it were. As part of the necessary conditions under which they are going to work.

V: It's interesting, here it says one can recognize a Bodhisattva by his deeds. I think it was yesterday when I was talking to you you mentioned that you can't always recognize a Bodhisattva from his actions because ...

[40]

S: Actually we were talking more about Buddhas than Bodhisattvas but it is true in a sense even of Bodhisattvas, you can't always recognize a Bodhisattva from his deeds. In the sense that there is not always a necessary connection between deeds and state of mind. Because you can pretend and you would have to be quite a wise person to see through the pretence. A Bodhisattva practises generosity, but you are not necessarily a Bodhisattva because you are practising generosity. You could be practising generosity to get to heaven or to get to Nirvana just for you alone.



I mean, what sort of deeds would reveal that there was a Bodhisattva spirit there. That wouldn't be very easy to tell, not unless you had some more direct insight. Someone might be very very active, very altruistic, but it might not be the Bodhisattva spirit inspiring them, it may be something quite different, even though quite positive. So you can recognize a Bodhisattva from his deeds provided you are a Bodhisattva yourself, otherwise it is very difficult. The best you can think is that maybe this person is a Bodhisattva, he is certainly acting in a very fine way. But you can't be completely sure of it unless you know that person really well and for a long time.

Perhaps you could put it round the other way and say that you can be pretty sure of who is not a Bodhisattva from their deeds.

V: But could you even then?

S: You couldn't absolutely but there would be a greater likelihood. Because a Bodhisattva might occasionally perform what might seem to be an unskilful action for a skilful purpose.

All right, on to Avalokiteshvara then.

V: "An example of such a being is the Bodhisattva Arya Avalokitesvara, known in Tibet, the Land of Snow, as Chenrezi. While listening to the Mahayana teaching, as a disciple of Buddha Sakyamuni, he vowed to help all living beings. Even long before this, he made the following vow before the Thousand Buddhas:

May I be able to establish in emancipation all the living beings in the barbaric Land of Snow, where beings are so hard to discipline and where none of the Buddhas of the three times have stepped. May these beings be disciplined by me. May I be like father and mother to those who are now helpless. May I be their guide, leading them to freedom. May I burn the lamp to chase away the gloom of barbarism. In that [41] "country, may I extend, for as long as possible, the teachings of the Tathagatas of the three times. In hearing the name of the Three Jewels, may the many beings of the Land of Snow go for refuge and obtain rebirth as men or gods. May they have the opportunity to enjoy the Holy Dharma. May I be able to mature them and emancipate them, each according to his own way. May that gloomy, barbaric country become bright, like an island of precious jewels.

Throughout Tibetan history Arya Avalokitesvara has manifested himself in Tibet in many different forms: sometimes as a Dharmaraja, sometimes as a Lama, and even sometimes in the form of an animal such as the Bodhisattva-monkey, as described in Chapter One. From the time of Tsongkapa's disciple Gendundrup until the present he has manifested himself as the Dalai Lama of Tibet. The present Dalai Lama, His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, is the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. It is our good fortune that Arya Avalokitesvara has manifested in the world even now, seeking to help all living beings."

S: The Dharmarajas are the so called religious kings of Tibet. The Tibetans believe that the series of four, especially great religious kings that helped in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet were also all manifestations of Avalokitesvara who afterwards manifested in the line of the Dalai Lamas. I think I have spoken about this in my lectures on Tibetan Buddhism.

Of course things are rather different now, but in the old days, Tibetans, especially the ordinary Tibetans felt this very strongly, that a great Bodhisattva was with them in the person of the Dalai Lama. And this had a very great effect on their religious life. It's rather like it would be, for instance, Catholics believed that the Pope was the re-incarnation of Christ, for instance, it would be a little bit like that. It would reinforce their belief very strongly. So most Tibetans in the old days took quite literally the statement that the Dalai Lama was the incarnation or manifestation of Avalokitesvara. So that they felt quite definitely that they had a real live Bodhisattva in the midst of them, not to speak of other lesser manifestations of other Bodhisattvas.

V: Have they now stopped feeling that?

S: Well, in the sense that in Tibet itself, the whole system has changed, young Tibetans have been brought up as Marxists and it seems that even in India many Tibetans have to all intents and purposes lost their faith in the Dalai Lama in that sort of way. It is as though that sort of belief was possible only within a special sort of context, and that whole context has been virtually destroyed. And also they had more [42] contact with the Dalai Lama, and that contact also to some extent (break in tape) ...

V: ... "Tibet is my country." The Dalai Lama's brother said that after the Dalai Lama took flight from Tibet he told them not to bow down to him any more ...

S: This is quite significant perhaps. Geshe Wangyal said, I think right in his little preface at the beginning that in Tibet he never had a chance to see the Dalai Lama, the Dalai Lama was such a remote, inaccessible figure. But after the Dalai Lama came to India as a refugee Geshe Wangyal visited India several times from America where he had settled and had the opportunity of meeting him. Formerly he would not have had that opportunity. He had just been an ordinary Geshe and the Dalai Lama being such an exalted figure. So for the average Tibetan the Dalai Lama was this great incarnate Bodhisattva dwelling in the Potala who hardly anybody ever saw. Who was very remote, very mysterious, governing the whole country and working miracles on everybody's behalf and they all had this sort of profound faith. But once they started coming in direct contact with the Dalai Lama, and seeing that, as regard outward appearances at least, he was just like an ordinary human being, that sort of intensity of faith diminished, maybe quite naturally.

V: Do you think that is a good thing?

S: It depends on ones point of view, doesn't it?

V: I read somewhere, that when the teachers and that had been away from that situation that they lose their sort of power, and that you hadn't to expect these teachers to have the same power as they did have in Tibet.

S: I've heard that, I don't think it can be taken too literally. That sort of power, I would say, wasn't real power. Not power that was inherent in the Lama himself, but depended upon his position in a certain society and the effect that he was able to produce and the influence he was able to wield by virtue of his position and what was believed about him. Real power that was inherent in you, you wouldn't use and you couldn't lose.

For instance, in the case of the last king of France, Louis XVI, no he wasn't quite the last because there were two after the restoration, but the last of that series, as it were, before the revolution. When he was king then he just said do this and do that and it was done. It wasn't by virtue of his power as an individual but simply of the position which he enjoyed. When that system disintegrated, i.e. the monarchy, disintegrated he lost his power as king, because if the country is no longer a monarchy the king is no longer king. So that power he lost, he became just a citizen, he was called citizen Louis. So all that was left to him was his personal power as an individual.

So in the case of the Lama, you can deprive him of the power that he possessed by virtue of belonging to a certain ecclesiastical system, but that is not his real power. You can't deprive him of his real power. And if, when he comes out of Tibet he doesn't really have any power at all, then you suspect that he never did have any power within himself but it was all the power of his position. And this is certainly the [43] case of some Lamas who are just high ecclesiastical dignitaries really with nothing within themselves to fall back upon. Nothing very much.

V: Isn't this one of the dangers of having an ecclesiastical system?

S: Right indeed. Well it is not just one of the dangers of, it is part of the nature of. If you want to avoid that sort of thing you avoid that sort of system. And this we find throughout the world, that in different ways, in different contexts, that somebody's power depends not upon themselves but upon the position that they occupy. Which often doesn't correspond to what we may call their natural status. So if you, for instance, are born in Tibet and are identified as an incarnate Lama and you are installed as the head of the monastery and people believe that because you are such and such, miracles will happen and you have got great influence; well of course you do wield great influence. But supposing that whole system disintegrates, that whole context disintegrates and you are just left on your own, maybe dealing with people who are a quite different kind, who are not brought up in that context, who know nothing about it; then you just fall back upon your own, bare individuality. But if you have anything in you it will come up in any circumstances.

So it is quite untrue to say that a Lama can't exercise his powers, his real spiritual powers outside Tibet. All he loses is his ecclesiastical influence. But I do know that some people suggest that outside Tibet the Lama, as it were, lose their spiritual powers. But I totally disagree with this. All that they have lost is the influence associated with a certain ecclesiastical position. I think this is true to some extent of the Dalai Lama himself. His power as an individual does not seem commensurate with his influence by virtue of the position which he occupies or occupied. Whereas I have seen other Lamas whose, as it were, power as individuals, exceeded their status in the ecclesiastical system.

Like in the middle ages you had poor barefoot friars who spoke their minds to the Pope and got away with it. Because they had force of individuality.

V: Is this sort of phenomenon, of the ecclesiastical rating being higher than the spiritual rating, is it common to any one particular school more than others?

S: In Tibet?

V: Yes.

S: I mean, possibly more to the Gelugpas simply because they are the, as it were, established school and the dominant school.

Anyway lets go on with this.

V: "One reaches the level of such a high Bodhisattva through many lifetimes of unselfish deeds. However, if one makes exceptional effort in this life, one can enter the path of the Mantrayana, through which it is possible to attain Buddhahood in one lifetime. Even on entering this path, one takes Refuge in the Three Jewels."

[44]

Mantrayana corresponds roughly to Vajrayana. Sometimes it is said that the Mahayana is subdivided into two stages: the Paramitayana or Mahayana proper, and the Mantrayana or Vajrayana.

Just to add something to what we were saying before, or what I was saying before: some Tibetan Lamas I know, when they have to leave Tibet and have to function outside feel genuinely powerless but don't understand what has happened. They feel as though they have lost their spiritual powers but actually what has happened is that they were unable to distinguish between their personal spiritual powers and the influence that they exerted by virtue of their position. Their position in society and so on.

Ashvajit: Is it true that one would say, if you had say just the attention and the energy of maybe a thousand odd people, that would give you a feeling of personal power and energy?

S: Yes, of confidence, everybody accepted what you said and never questioned it, at once

obeyed your orders. Even if you were quite serious and healthy person, a sincere person, you would get a very incorrect idea about yourself. You couldn't help but do that.

Devamitra: So it must be quite difficult to sort of see that very clearly for oneself. I suppose a sort of parallel situation for us could be in a class situation, on a much lower level of course, but that element comes into play and must be looked...

S: There is also the question of the common language, if you've got a common language with other people then you can express yourself more easily and you can influence them more easily. But if you haven't got that common language you have to create a language before you can communicate and influence. And that, of course, is one of the tests of whether you have got anything in you. It may take time to create that language, but in the end, if you can do it, it means that there is something in you.

V: When you say "create that language" do you mean...

S: A medium of communication.

V: Yes.

S: For instance, supposing an Upasika is taking a beginners meditation class, well at least there is a certain language already which he can use. It's known that it is a beginners meditation class and those who have come along want to learn meditation and at least have got a very vague idea about it. But if you put that same Upasika down in the midst of 30 other people who haven't heard about meditation and don't want to practise it, the fact that he can't operate at once so easily with them doesn't mean any loss of personal power on his part. It's a quite different sort of situation. But in that situation a really capable Upasaka, over a length of time, could create a language and start getting those people to use it and communicate with them and eventually perhaps get at least some of them meditating.

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Devamitra: So presumably, the, getting back to Tibet, that some people who have come down from Tibet haven't created the necessary means of communication.

S: Right, they haven't been able to do that.

Devamitra: Even though they maybe quite well experienced people.

S: Yes. The capacity to create that medium of communication is, in a more general way, a sort of Bodhisattva like quality which certainly they should be expected to possess if they are Lamas and so on. But many of them just don't seem to have this at all. So in a way, the exodus of the Lamas from Tibet has been quite revealing. It was really clear to me as they came pouring out of Tibet through Kalimpong that for some of them being a Buddhist had hardly any meaning apart from just their Tibetan way of life in a social and cultural sense. As soon as that support was gone Buddhism was gone. They became completely Westernized in six months and forgot all about Buddhism. It ceased to mean anything to them at all.

Devamitra: It seems to me also that many of the Lamas that I've hear about, or read about that have come over here very few of them seem to have actually made any effort to do that, to create a new means of communication and that they rely upon their ecclesiastical paraphernalia and so on and so forth.

V: And the cultural aspect.

Devamitra: And the cultural aspect, yes.

S: Yes, and you getting interested in things Tibetan and then they can communicate a bit through that, yes.

But it is as if they can't take the initiative and come to terms with your culture. Strange to say, some of the Theravadins are better in this respect though they are technically Hinayanists. It's quite odd.

Devamitra: Could you give any example of that.

S: Well some of the Theravadin monks who have been over to the West and have learnt more about Western culture, in some cases, and been able to communicate through that medium than some, at least, of the Tibetans.

Devamitra: Do you feel there's a greater will in them to do that?

S: Sometimes one feels that.

V: There's also, I find that even if you don't find people wanting people to latch on to Thai culture particularly, you do find that people want to latch on to Tibetan culture so that whole thing is still being perpetuated.

S: Yes, right.

V: So there's less need for creating...

S: I don't know of a single Tibetan Lama who has started creating a medium for communication other than Tibetan [46] culture itself. One just doesn't find that.

Sagaramati: What about Trungpa?

S: I don't know, no, not even Trungpa. He's the nearest, one could say to that. But in his case he seems to have taken up a bit of the language of psychotherapy and of course here there's a danger you get misled by that and you start taking the language literally and you succumb to the language instead of using the language to convey what you want to express.

V: I don't quite follow that.

S: Well it's quite simple really. Supposing for instance, you want to communicate, you want to communicate about Buddhism. All right, you want to tell people about enlightenment. So you know that if you start speaking about Enlightenment in the Buddhist sense they won't know what you are talking about. So you choose an equivalent from their language. Let's say you speak in terms of complete integration as a psychological concept. So you start by trying to express your idea of Enlightenment through that expression 'complete integration' but the people who are listening to you, if you are not very careful, they think you are thinking about psychological complete integration. They take it in that way and in the end you, yourself, may get so used to that language and so used to their way of looking at psychological integration, you yourself start using the expression complete integration in a purely psychological way after a while even forgetting the Buddhist conception of Enlightenment that you were originally trying to express through that term. So you come down to the psychological level, as it were. So this is what I mean by succumbing to the language instead of using the language. And you see this happening with the Tibetan Buddhist Centres in America, already, if you read their publications there is a subtle change over the last couple of years.

So, one, you must be very clear what you are trying to communicate and two, you must have a medium of communication. And you must not succumb to your medium, otherwise what you want to say doesn't actually get across. You get bogged down in the medium itself.

V: Because the people you talk to have only that.

S: And you are unable to use the medium, it's your fault really. You are unable to use the medium, you lose touch with what you are trying to say.

Asvajit: It seems to be fairly easy to spot really. It seems to be a preoccupation with an analysis of meaning. That's what it seems to be degenerating into, it's going into words.

V: People automatically use language without thinking.

S: Yes. Anyway that's a bit of a digression, let's go back otherwise we are not going to get any lunch to do.

V: We can feed off of this!

S: Well for a few days maybe.

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"In short, taking refuge is intrinsic to all of the Buddha's Teaching. Though Bodhi-mind is the gateway to the Mahayana and initiation is the gateway to the Mantrayana, the foundation of both is Refuge. Refuge is taken not only on entering the path to liberation but repeatedly throughout the path. The Refuge is repeated before every meditative session as part of the preliminary practice. One says:

Lama la gyap su chio. Sang-gye Ia gyap su chio. Cho la gyap su chio. Gedun la gyap su chio.

I take refuge in the Lama. I take refuge in the Buddha. I take refuge in the Dharma. I take refuge in the Sangha.

S: There are one or two points here. 'Though Bodhi mind is the gateway to the Mahayana' . This means that there's no real entry upon the actual practice of the Mahayana unless the Bodhicitta has arisen. So it is the arising of the Bodhicitta that constitutes the gateway to the Mahayana, in any real sense. 'And initiation in the Tantric sense of initiation is the gateway to the Mantrayana and the foundation of both is refuge.' This is why it is so ridiculous for anybody to try to get initiation into the Vajrayana and learn all the Tantric secrets and they are not even prepared to commit themselves to Buddhism and go for refuge.

And then, a very important statement. 'refuge is taken not only on entering the path to liberation but repeatedly throughout the path.' Not that you go for refuge once and for all, in a sense you do but your refuge is continually deepening. Your commitment is continually deepening, you see the implications of it more and more. So you are going for refuge again and again at ever deeper and deeper levels in ever fuller and fuller ways, more comprehensive ways. So the refuge is not something that you take or that you go for and then you are finished with it, you've done it once and for all and that's that, no. It represents a continually deepening experience, a continually deepening commitment.

V: If Bodhicitta is the gateway to the Mahayana and initiation is the gateway to Mantrayana, what does it mean by initiation here?

S: The Tantric initiation, which is called the (?) in other words transmission of power, transmission of energy - that's the literal translation. In other words, there is no practice of the Vajrayana without that initiation just as there is no practice of Mahayana, really, without the arising of the Bodhicitta. And no practice of the Hinayana without the formal going for refuge.

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"The Lama is not considered a fourth object of Refuge, but in the Tibetan tradition embodies all Three Jewels - the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. When Buddha Sakyamuni was about to enter Parinirvana, he told his disciples, "In the future I will appear in the form of the Lama. Feel that your Lama is the Buddha, and have the same faith in the Lama that you have in me." The Lama is the one who transmits the Teaching to us and he is the spiritual friend who assists us on the way. From him we derive the benefit of the Buddha's actual presence as a Teacher.

Reliance on the Lama is the foundation of all excellence. It is not enough merely to learn from books and accumulate knowledge; one must learn from a teacher who has internal realization and then follow his precepts."

S: One will find throughout this volume great stress on the precepts of the Lama but we'll go into that when we come to a later chapter.

"In following the Lama, one must develop faith in him through the purification of one's own perceptions. One must always hold in mind the thought that one's Lama is the manifestation of all good qualities. If one perceives a fault in the Lama, it should be accepted as one's own, arising through the influence of desire, hatred, and ignorance. Buddha's cousin Devadatta could not even see the wonderful qualities of the Buddha, because of the great force of his own obscuring passions."

S: One can even say that one should practice seeing the positive rather than the negative qualities of all beings, not only the Lama. Because we tend so easily to see the negative side and not the positive side. So this could have a much wider and more general application.

"Therefore, one should always listen to the words of the Lama and learn from him the precepts of the Teaching and the way to practise. Because this is so essential, Atisa, when asked which was more important, the precept of the Lama or the scriptures and commentaries, always answered, "The precept of the Lama"."

S: Precepts meaning, the actual personal instruction, not precepts as in the sense of laying down a rule or a saying, but actual personal instruction directly related to one's own individual spiritual needs. Not a general teaching. You could say that a precept represents specific teaching, whereas the sutras and commentaries are the [49] general principles. But the precept represents the Lama's direct application of the principles of the sutras and commentaries to your specific spiritual situation in the light of his personal knowledge of you.

"Chapter Three is a translation of a collection of many precepts, given by different Lamas of the Kadampa lineage to their disciples. This lineage, begun by Atisa, has always placed strong emphasis on the precept of the Lama. A true Lama is in a direct lineage descended from Buddha Sakyamuni himself. The Lama's teaching therefore never contradicts the intention of the Buddha, the teachings of the Bodhisattva path, or the precepts of the great Lamas."

S: 'The Lama's teaching therefore never contradicts the intention of the Buddha.' It is the spirit that the emphasis is laid on, not the letter.

Asvajit: He's clearly talking about an ideal situation here and not any old Lama.

S: Well in a sense there wouldn't be any old Lama, not with a capital 'L' anyway. Any old monk, perhaps you should say.

Chintamani: What exactly does Lama mean?

S: Lama here meaning Guru, spiritual superior, in the real sense.

Chintamani: It isn't an ecclesiastical term is it?

S: No.

V: "The Bodhi path is the path travelled by all the Buddhas of the three times past, present, and future. It is the system of the two great vehicles: Nagarjuna, who extended the lineage of the Profound View of Voidness, and Asanga, who extended the lineage of the Extensive Deeds of Compassion. It is the teaching followed by the highest level of beings who travel to Enlightenment and the perfect omniscience of Buddhahood.

Atisa, or Dipankara Srijnana, gathered these two lineages of teaching, descended from Nagarjuna and Asanga, into the teaching of the stages of the path of the three levels of being, which are set forth in his book *The Bodhipathapradipa*."

S: That's "Light on the path to Bodhi".

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"Though this book is very short, it includes the essence of all the Buddha's Teachings. Because of its conciseness and clarity, it is easy to practise. As it is ornamented by the two great lineages, it is pre-eminent among all other systems of explanation."

S: So you see Atisa unifies the two great lineages of Indian Mahayana. Those of Nagarjuna and Asanga and transmits them as a unified lineage in Tibet.

Just carry straight on because we will be going into all these matters in detail when we come to the succeeding chapters of the book.

"In praise of Atisa's teaching of the stages of the path in the three levels of being, and of the Lamas through whom it has descended, Tsongkapa wrote:

I bow down to my spiritual teachers, Who moved by mercy and by skilful means, illumine  
This best gate for the fortunate travelling to liberation, This eye through which all the  
glorious scriptures are seen.

Though an eye is very small, through it one can see a vast area. In this same way, though the teaching of the stages of the path is very concise, through it one can see all the teachings of the sutras and tantras. It is the great entrance to the Mahayana teaching, the entrance of fortunate beings who seek to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all living beings. By entering and following this path, one can reach the Door of Liberation.

The great Tsongkapa, King of Dharma, then developed and explained this teaching of Atisa's. In the later chapters of this book several short works by Tsongkapa, expressing this teaching from slightly different viewpoints, have been translated. Tsongkapa wrote his books through the direct inspiration of Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, and therefore his teachings are accorded highest reverence.

Another verse work of Tsongkapa's, "The Essence of Good Explanation, Praise of Munindra," in which Tsongkapa praises Buddha [51] Sakyamuni from the viewpoint of dependent-origination, has been translated in Chapter Four. The usual understanding of Buddha's teaching of dependent-origination is as the twelfold interdependent chain of cause and effect, by the power of which all living beings wander in samsara. This corresponds closely to Buddha's first teaching of the Four Noble Truths. However, Buddha taught dependent-origination from a different viewpoint in the following three lines:

By existence of this, that comes forth; By production of this, that is produced; Conditioned by ignorance come conditioned activities.

The concept indicated by this statement, that by the existence of a previous cause, an effect comes forth, has been widely commented upon by Buddhist scholars, for its profound meaning indicates the highest teachings of Buddha, and clearly shows his skilful means. Tsongkapa praised Buddha from this viewpoint in order to honour him in the highest manner.

Such renowned members of the Sangha as Tsongkapa and the other great commentators did not create any new teachings, but rather, clarified the original word of Buddha as it is preserved in the Tripitaka - the Sutras, Vinaya, and Abhidharma. Through their great kindness they have shown us the way in which to apply the teachings contained in these Three Baskets.

The teachings contained in the Tripitaka are divided into Three Precepts for practice: the



Vinaya is the basis for the Precept of Exceptional Moral Practice, the Abhidharma is the basis for the Precept of Exceptional Meditation, and the Prajnaparamita sutras are the basis for the Precept of Exceptional Wisdom. These Three Precepts comprise the Instruction aspect of the Dharma: all that one studies, memorizes, and practices. The corollary to the Instruction aspect of the Dharma is the Understanding aspect: the inner realization attained as a result of the practice of the Three Precepts."

S: This is a different explanation of the Tripitaka than one usually finds. Usually the Vinaya-Pitaka is the Pitaka or basket of the Vinaya or monastic discipline and the Sutta-Pitaka is the Pitaka of discourses of the Buddha and the Abhidharma-Pitaka the Pitaka of philosophical explanations. [52] Usually it is said that the Vinaya-Pitaka corresponds to Sila, morality; the Sutta-Pitaka to Samadhi or practice of meditation and the Abhidharma-Pitaka to Wisdom. But here a different explanation has been given, a more Mahayanistic explanation.

"Once one has decided to follow the Teaching, one should listen to, contemplate, and meditate on the precepts with great care. Through this one can develop the understanding leading to the realization of Voidness, the ultimate Door of Liberation."

S: These three are very important. Listening to, reflecting on in ones own mind, that is reflecting on what one has heard, then meditating and realizing the import of what one has heard and reflected on.

"Having obtained the leisure and opportunity necessary to practise the Dharma, one should strive to use one's life purposefully rather than wasting it. If we devote ourselves to senseless worldly activities, we are like the man who spent his whole life rubbing a stone. When his friends asked him to go with them to gather precious gems, and not waste his time rubbing the stone, he told them, "I am too busy. I have to rub my stone." After spending his whole life rubbing the stone, he finally found that it was useless, and threw it away."

S: No need to point that moral. Another little story in the next paragraph also.

"Do not just accumulate senseless bits of knowledge when studying the Teaching, but try to increase your understanding. The story is told of a man who was listening to a lecture on the stages of the path. At the end of the lecture, a friend asked him what he had learned. He answered, "Something very important. I learned that Mrayicakra is another name of the old Lhundrup-dzong fort to the north of Lhasa."

S: This must have been referred to in a very incidental sort of manner but he just picked up this bit of historical/etymological information. Ignoring the rest of the lecture on the stages of the path. But you know this is often what happens.

[53]

"For the proper transmission of the Teachings, three conditions must exist. Not only must the teacher and the teaching be pure, it is also necessary that the listener be a suitable vessel. Such a listener is honest, intelligent, and intent on the Teaching. If one is inattentive, one is like a vessel turned upside down into which nothing can be poured. Therefore one must listen closely. One must also attempt to retain what one hears, for otherwise one is like a vessel that has no bottom. Although something may be poured into it, nothing will remain and one gains no understanding or benefit from listening. One should not listen to the Teaching when filled with passion, hatred, or ignorance, or out of desire for name, fame, or wealth, because then one is like a vessel filled with poison. When the pure nectar of the Teaching is poured into it, the Teaching will be contaminated and will not take effect.

All happiness in the world comes from virtuous activities, and all misery from wrongdoing. From the Teaching of Buddha one can learn to discern what activities are to be taken up and what activities are to be abandoned, in order to achieve happiness and avoid suffering. Therefore you should attend to the Teachings undistractedly and with awareness. Listen

correctly and concentrate on the meaning, remembering it and making every effort to put it into practice. Buddha Sakyamuni himself said: "I have shown the method of liberation. Remember, to actually achieve it, you must rely upon yourself." "

S: So we end with a characteristically Buddhist emphasis, as we began the introduction.

V: There was one point in there Bhante, 'one should not listen to the teaching when one is filled with passion, hatred or ignorance.' I think very often people who are in a bit of a state find great benefit at that time if they get the point and can penetrate through. Would this be a sort of general view?

S: I think certainly as regards anger and hatred one should be very careful because if you try to listen to the Dharma or you allow yourself to be in a situation where you have to hear the Dharma, very often your irritation and anger will rub off on the Dharma itself. And you will develop almost a sort of dislike to the Dharma. Just as when you are in an angry state you develop anger towards almost anything you come in contact with. And you don't want to have that sort of attitude towards the Dharma, so best to keep clear of the Dharma. So I would say that it certainly applies with regard to anger unless of course you are in contact with [54] someone who is trying to help you get over the anger and you want to get over it. But to be listening to a lecture on the Dharma when you are in an angry and resentful frame of mind, I say wouldn't be desirable. Maybe as regards passion, well maybe not quite so dangerous there. Maybe if something does catch your attention good could be done and no harm to the Dharma, as it were.

But there is also the point that if you are in a sort of craving state and you hear the Dharma you might try to turn the Dharma to your own purposes, there's that too. Obviously you can't say when a person is sick he mustn't come anywhere near any medicine, he might spoil the medicine, it's not that that is being said, but simply how you should be careful to apply the medicine, obviously.

Chintamani: In my own experience I know that if I come into contact either with written Dharma or lectures, taped lectures, and I've been in a particularly bad state, angry or something, the gap between me and it is too great and it produces a very unpleasant sort of alienated state.

S: Yes, and you can start feeling guilty.

V: And resentful.

S: Resentful, yes. So in a way, if you know this and you keep clear of the Dharma as expressed and spoken at that time, in a way you are practising the Dharma. Because you are, even in that state, taking steps to ensure that in the long run at least the Dharma will be able to exert a maximum influence on you.

Anyway have you got a sort of general impression from this introduction? About Tibetan Buddhism, about Geshe Wangyal's particular approach and especially about this conception of and feeling for the lineage. This is very important, so has that been conveyed by the introduction? It is something coming down from the Buddha through all these saints and sages who have handed it on and kept it intact, handed it on right down to the present.

(End of side A)

V: I think the whole emphasis is on refuge is very strong. And this changing round of the three different baskets, is that traditional in all the schools in Tibet?

S: This I couldn't say but it is definitely Tibetan. I imagine that probably it is general.

Devamitra: Just a little point that I noticed was that in this little story about the man who

listened to the lecture; I've never read anywhere before about anyone listening to lectures in a Tibetan context. It seems very strange.

S: Hmm, that's true. I think I've mentioned in my lectures on Tibetan Buddhism that the Tibetans don't go in for lectures usually.

Devamitra: So that is in fact, just general that there aren't many lectures?

[55]

S: There aren't no. Of course maybe 'lecture' shouldn't be taken very literally here. It might be the exposition of a text or the explanation that is given in connection with an initiation. I think lecture here means not a formal lecture but just the Lamas discourse in a particular situation or context.

Well, any query on the introduction as a whole. I think it does give quite a good preview, a good birds eye view of the subject matter of the volume as a whole. And we will have to go through the volume as a whole at least at that pace. We've done thirty pages today and there are at least three hundred in the whole volume, that's not bad. Maybe tomorrow we can go a little more rapidly through the legendary material and spend more time on the precepts of the Lamas.

Asvajit: "The Lineage of the Teaching"

"The first chapter contains histories of some of the great teachers in the lineage that has descended to us in an unbroken succession from Sakyamuni Buddha. These histories are not mere myths; they are incidents drawn from those teachers' lives and passed on as examples of the activities of those who were masters of Buddhist practice.

The import of these narratives lies in their actual relevance to us. The practices and realizations of the beings described are real, and can be developed by individuals capable of applying themselves with similar effort.

Though the histories are often humorously expressed, their subject matter is as serious as religion itself. They serve as inspiration for self-development and as assurance that such attainment is possible."

S: I think that is quite straightforward so let's start on Chapter One.

"Sakyamuni, the teacher without equal, first generated Bodhi-mind. Then he accumulated merit and wisdom for three kalpas and finally, while seated on the Vajra throne at Bodh-gaya, he became the perfect Buddha. After his Enlightenment he turned the First Wheel of the Dharma, that of the Four Noble Truths, for the five ascetics at Varanasi. Then he turned the Second Wheel of the Dharma, while teaching at Vulture Peak. Finally, at Vaisali, he turned the Third Wheel of the Dharma. In his glory, he outshone all erroneous teachers such as the six Indian pandits, and made known his precious Teaching, the origin of happiness and blessings. [1]

{ 1 } From Precious Garland of Tenets by dKon-mchog Jigs-med-dhang-po (1728- 1781). [56]

S: This is just a very traditional summary of the life of the Buddha. It take it that everybody knows what these three wheels of the Dharma are. The three wheels, or more correctly the three turnings of the wheel, represent the teaching of the three successive, progressive yanās. The Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. The Tibetans, of course, like the Indian Buddhists before them regarded all three yanās as the personal teaching of the Buddha himself, Shakyamuni himself. So he was regarded as turning the wheel of the Hinayana when he taught the four noble truths to the five ascetics in the Deer Park at Sarnath, or at Visipatan, Sarnath near Benares. Varanasi is Benares. That inaugurated the teaching of the Hinayana.

Then he turned the second wheel of the Dharma, or turned the wheel of the Dharma for the second time, when he taught at or on the Vultures Peak near Rajagriha. Usually he is represented as teaching on that occasion the Saddharma Pundarika Sutta, the White Lotus. Sometimes the Perfection of Wisdom sutra, but the Mahayana sutras in general. Thus inaugurating his teaching of the Mahayana.

Then at Vaisali the Tantras.

One mustn't forget that the Tibetans, like the Chinese found themselves confronted by a mass of suttas, a mass of scriptures all attributed to the Buddha. Actually they had been produced in India over a period of many hundreds of years, but they were actually all attributed to the Buddha. So the Tibetans, like the Chinese and the Japanese had to find room for all of these within the actual lifetime of the Buddha. So the general view was that he'd taught the Hinayana suttas then the Mahayana sutras and then the Tantras. This is, of course, not quite historical, not in this literal form anyway. The Chinese devised other methods of distributing the different suttas throughout the earthly life time of the Buddha, but we won't go into that now. This is simply to explain these three wheels or these three turnings of the wheel of the Dharma.

V: It says that the first one, the first teaching of the Dharma was at Varanasi, is that the same as the Deer Park?

S: Yes, as I said, that is the Mrigadava - Deer Park, at Isipatana, also called Sarnath, near Varanasi or Benares.

V: But traditionally it is the same place?

S: Yes. Miryagadiya means Deer Park, Isipatana means the place where the rishis arrived or landed and Sarnath means the Lord of refuge, where the Buddha in a previous life gave refuge to deer. But they're all names for the same place about ten miles from Benares.

Anyway this is just a traditional summary of the Buddha's career closing with a reference to those six Indian pundits; that is to say the six most important non-Buddhist teachers in the Buddha's own day.

Devamitra: "When Buddha passed into Parinirvana at the age of eighty, thousands of his followers, who had attained Arhantship and thus had the power of voluntary death, chose to enter Parinirvana with him. Mahakasyapa, Buddha's appointed Successor, was forced to decree that those who had this power and wished to join the [57] Buddha should refrain from dying so that the Teachings of Buddha might remain in the world. At that time, many of those who had met Buddha, as well as many who had not had that good fortune, deeply regretted that they had not followed his Teaching more diligently while he was alive. By the Force of their regret, they were inspired to make one-pointed effort and a vast number of them attained one of the four stages of perfection: stream-winning, once-returning, non-returning, and Arhantship!"

S: Any queries there, anything that isn't clear to anybody?

Dharmapala: As far as I understood that Parinirvana was something that the Buddha entered into but I didn't know that other Arhants could go into Parinirvana. Could you say a little bit about it?

S: Well, first of all what is the distinction between Nirvana and Parinirvana. Nirvana is the state of extinction of craving, aversion and ignorance in this life itself, while the physical body continues. When the physical body comes to the end of its term, when it drops off, as it were, what remains is Parinirvana. So there is no difference in content between the two. The only difference is that a body, a psycho physical organism is associated with the one, a conditioned psycho-physical organism, but not with the other. So this term, as you say, is

applied to the Buddha but it is also quite often applied to others, to Arhant disciples, in as much as like the Buddha himself they have extinguished the craving, the aversion and the ignorance. All this really hinges upon the question of, to what extent, if any, the Buddha's realization differs from that of the Arhant disciples. Some of the Pali texts make it clear that there is no essential difference even though there is also the suggestion that over and above the actual Enlightenment in the sense of getting rid of craving, aversion and ignorance the Buddha had certain extra qualities or attributes which distinguished him even from the Arhants. But in respect of extinction of craving aversion and ignorance they were equal. Therefore the Parinirvana of Arhants is also spoken of.

Dharmapala: Is it correct then that an Arhant can just voluntarily choose to let go of the body.

S: This is what is said here. It seems to have been a belief of the Sarvastivadins. Many of these older traditions came down to the Tibetans through the Sarvastivadins. So there are certain similarities with the corresponding Pali traditions but also some differences.

For instance it says here, 'Mahakasyapa, Buddha's appointed successor.' But from the Pali scriptures which are probably a bit older it is clear that the Buddha didn't appoint any successor. Maybe after the Buddha's Parinirvana certain Bhikkhus played a leading part in the development that then took place but there is no record that the Buddha himself actually appointed a successor. In fact according to the Pali scriptures he refused to do so and he rejected Devadatta's suggestion that he should hand over the leadership of the Sangha to him. Devadatta suggested that as the Buddha was old he should retire, as it were, and hand over the leadership [58] of the Sangha to him, to Devadatta. But the Buddha replied that he would not even hand it over to Sariputta or Moggallana not to speak of Devadatta. And then on another occasion he said that he did not think that he led the Sangha, he said if anyone thinks that he leads the Sangha let him come forward. So the Buddha's attitude does not seem to have been this of leadership, certainly he was the teacher of the others but not a leader. And therefore one can't really say that he appointed a successor in the sense of a leader to succeed him. The Sangha as a whole was the leader, as it were, or the Sangha was its own leader. There was no one individual leader. In other words, if there is a body of Enlightened beings, or a body of beings, most of whom are Enlightened they don't need a leader. Because all being on the same level of consciousness, all being Enlightened if not fully at least to a very great extent, they will all see with the same insight and the same wisdom what needs to be done. You only need a leader when you have got a lot of confused people who are in certain degrees of conflict and have to be told to do because they don't know themselves. But if you have got a community of Enlightened beings or at least of experienced, spiritually experienced beings they ought to be able to come to, quite spontaneously a sort of consensus.

So for such a community, for such a Sangha, a leader would be quite out of place. Well what would he do? I mean, all the others would be, spiritually speaking, as capable as he was. So in that sense the Buddha didn't appoint any successor. Though no doubt there were, after the Buddha's Parinirvana certain Arhants who were more active than others and who seemed to play a leading role and Mahakasyapa was certainly one of those, Ananda was another.

V: This seems to have changed, I mean, this idea of a leader of the Sangha seems to have developed in monastic situations where you have Abbots and ecclesiastical systems.

S: Yes and no. In the whole history of Buddhism, you never have Abbots in the sense of Christian monasteries. You never take a vow of obedience to an Abbot in Buddhism. There is absolutely no such thing. Even the Abbot is a member of the community and almost always all important decisions are taken by the community as a whole. This has been the, almost universal, Buddhist tradition, certainly the dominant tradition. In many cases the Abbot has no real power, he is an administrator but the power is vested in the community as a whole. In most parts of the Buddhist world this autonomy and, in a way, sovereignty of the community is very strongly, really carefully safeguarded. So the Abbot of a Buddhist monastery, if you can use the expression Abbot, isn't anything like the Abbot of a Catholic monastery in most Catholic orders. The individual monk, the member of the monastery takes no vow of

obedience to the Abbot. This would be quite unthinkable.

Chintamani: So, sort of applying it to us in, say, Bethnal Green (laughter) if there is a community of Order Members and Mitras how are the decisions taken.

S: Well, decisions? Well, I must say I've not thought about this in detail, partly because we haven't got Bethnal Green yet, so it is a bit speculative, but decisions will be taken by the Order, by the Order members. But also there is the point, I mentioned earlier on, spiritually enlightened members of the community or spiritually experienced. [59] So you don't need a leader, only when you have got members of a community who are more or less equal in spiritual attainment and insight. But if some are very raw and some are beginners whereas others are much more experienced, well they will take the leadership, quite naturally. But there isn't a leadership in an ordinary, sort of organizational sense.

One must be very careful not to misapply some of these principles, forgetting what the original basis was and not say, well the early community, the early Sangha didn't have a leader and therefore no spiritual community should have a leader. The fact that they didn't have a leader or didn't need a leader depended on the fact that they were spiritually advanced and developed and didn't need one. Everybody knew what should be done.

All right let's go on then.

V: "The Arhants had memorized the Teachings as Buddha taught them, and many were able to recite the entire Tripitaka by heart; to provide for the future, Mahakasyapa called a great convocation of all the bhiksus in order to write these Teachings down."

S: This isn't actually correct, though it is according to Tibetan sources. None of the teachings were written down until very much later but the bhikkhus did assemble to recite the teachings together on that occasion.

"When they had gathered in a cave near Rajagrha, Mahakasyapa realized that there were only four hundred and ninety-nine Arhants - one less than the necessary five hundred, the number that had been decided upon by a council of monks at the time of Buddha's Parinirvana. Ananda - Buddha's cousin and disciple, and for twenty years his closest attendant - was also there, but he had not yet attained Arhantship. To help Ananda attain Arhantship quickly, Mahakasyapa ordered him to bring water for the Assembly, though Mahakasyapa knew there was no good water in the area. When Ananda returned with dirty - water from a muddy pond, Mahakasyapa scolded him severely: 'Ananda, you have too many faults to be allowed to stay among the Arhants. You did not ask Buddha to remain in the world, you answered incorrectly when Buddha questioned you, you used to step on Buddha's robe, and you did not ask any questions about metaphysics. Now you bring dirty water into this assembly; you can no longer be allowed to stay with the Arhants.' "

S: There seems to be some historical basis for all this in as much as there are many accounts of Ananda's humiliation after the Buddha's Parinirvana. It seems that Ananda despite his long and close association with the Buddha was not yet actually Enlightened and it was considered quite [60] important that in as much as he knew so much of the teaching by heart he should also be enlightened. Not just be a mere - walking tape recorder - as it were. So apparently, according to all accounts, though details vary, Mahakasyapa treated Ananda with great severity and as a result of this severe treatment he became very sorrowful and upset and went off on his own and meditated, and in this way, as a result of that treatment, which of course was Mahakasyapa's intention all along, he gained Enlightenment. And in that way was able to take his rightful place. So this is just one version of those incidents. In some of the sources there are quite a number of episodes mentioned.

Devamitra: I've heard, actually, I don't know if this is true, but that Ananda gained Enlightenment while he was in mid flight, jumping into a bunk or something. Is that true?

S: I've never heard that one. (laughter)

Devamitra: It comes in the Vinaya somewhere.

S: Well there are many versions. But the essential point is that; one - he hadn't gained Enlightenment by the time of the Buddha's Parinirvana, two - that he was humiliated in various ways by Mahakasyapa with the intention that he should be purified from his last remaining faults or unskilful mental states. And that actually as a result of that harsh treatment he did realize Arhantship, he did become Enlightened and subsequently played a very important part in the propagation of the teaching.

All right, any query on that little point? This question of stepping on the Buddha's robe, according to Indian custom this would be very disrespectful, to step on the robe of a teacher or a superior, so what he was being taken to task for was not showing proper respect for the Buddha.

V: "Ananda sorrowfully left the Assembly but went only a short distance away. There he meditated unceasingly for an entire day and night and attained Arhantship, as - Mahakasyapa had intended. Ananda returned to the gathering at once. The completed Assembly of five hundred Arhants proceeded to collect the discourses of Buddha, gathering them all into the Tripitaka: [1] Sutra-Pitaka, Vinaya-Pitaka, and Abhidharma-Pitaka. Mahakasyapa supervised the collection of the Abhidharma, Ananda that of the Sutras, and Upali that of the Vinaya."

S: This is one account, there are various others.

V: What's this about the necessary five hundred?

S: Well, they had agreed apparently, according to this account, that there should be five hundred. Don't forget what they were doing, they were going to recite collectively all the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha had taught orally, there was nothing in writing despite what this passage says here there was nothing left in writing at the time of his death. The teaching wasn't committed to writing for another five [61] hundred years. So you could not have a rehearsal of the Buddha's teaching unless you had quite a large number of monks present, all of whom would recite or repeat what they had personally learnt at one time or another. In other words they pooled their recollections of the teaching. So apparently, according to this account it was decided that there should be at least five hundred so that as comprehensive a collection of the Buddha's teaching as possible should be made. We don't definitely know, these again are details that may have arisen later. But we do know, or at least we can be pretty sure that soon after the Buddha's death the monks did meet together and they realized how important it was that the Buddha's teaching should be preserved and that even during his lifetime the Buddha had encouraged the monks to gather together and recite together the verses embodying his teaching. So it seems that they decided to keep up this practise after his death and to get together in large numbers and pool their resources and all teach one another what they had committed to memory and recite collectively the whole oral tradition. And in this way perpetuate it, in this way hand it down to the next generation. And Ananda was especially important in as much as he had spent much of his time with the Buddha, the last twenty-five years of the Buddha's life in fact and he had an incredible memory and recollected more than anybody else, apparently. So his participation was very important, at the same time he wasn't fully spiritually developed and it was considered important that he should be spiritually developed too. In addition to simply knowing by heart the letter of the teaching.

So this account, in broad outline, is common to all the different early traditions but the details do vary considerably from one account to another. So what we can be sure of is; one that the teaching was orally transmitted during the Buddha's lifetime and that after the Buddha's death the monks all gathered together to pool their resources, to pool their recollections and to hand down as much of the Buddha's teaching as possible. That Ananda played a very important part in those proceedings and that Ananda was made to undergo a certain amount of, almost,

suffering to remove the last trace of his unskilful mental states. And that he did become Enlightened after the Buddha's death.

V: To what extent is memory co-relative with the spiritual attainment?

S: Presumably not at all. Presumably, if what they were concerned with, was not that he should not simply transmit the letter but also have an appreciation of the spirit. So long as he was just rehearsing, saying, "well this is what I have heard" it might not matter so much but subsequently, as we learn, Ananda did become quite an important teacher and if he hadn't been properly Enlightened then he might well have distorted the teaching however good his memory of the letter of it might have been. It had to be backed up by experience.

This isn't definitely stated, but this is what we can infer. And in any case it is better to have an Enlightened Ananda than an unenlightened Ananda. Perhaps they thought also, that in view of all the time he had spent with the Buddha it was a bit disgraceful that he shouldn't be Enlightened. So Mahakasyapa gave him that final jolt, as it were, by his seemingly harsh treatment.

[62]

V: "After some ten years of training Ananda to be his Successor, Mahakasyapa entered Parinirvana. At that time, Ajatasatru was King of Magadha. He was the son of King Bimbisara, one of Buddha's most loyal followers. During Buddha's lifetime, Ajatasatru had followed Devadatta, who was envious of Buddha and of the support King Bimbisara gave him. Devadatta had persuaded Ajatasatru to seize the throne and imprison his father. After many years however, Ajatasatru realized how very kind his father had been to him, and he repented and sent men to release him. But when King Bimbisara saw the men coming, he thought they had been sent to kill him and he died before they could reach him. When Ajatasatru heard of his father's death, he truly regretted his evil deeds and became a disciple and patron of Ananda.

During Ananda's years as Successor, there was great happiness and peace in the land, and the people were devoted in their practice of religion. After Ananda had led the Sangha for fifteen years, a young boy named Suvarnavarna became his disciple and quickly attained Arhantship. The people were impressed that such a young boy could attain Arhantship without difficulty, and the fame of Ananda spread far and wide."

S: Any query about that? You do find in the Pali Canon quite a few instances of very young people gaining Arhantship.

V: How young, when you say young?

S: Well there are cases, if you take the words of the scriptures literally, seven years of age. This even is mentioned.

V: It says here that Ananda led the Sangha again.

S: Yes. Probably what one should say is that Ananda was the most prominent member of the Sangha. I mean, at the same time one must be careful not to misunderstand this when I say that Ananda didn't lead the Sangha. If Ananda had more spiritual experience and more insight than other members of the Sangha then it would have been right, even that he should have led. But assuming that they were all equal in spiritual attainment then it is simply that he was most prominent and most active member of the Sangha. One mustn't suggest any sort of pseudo-democratic ideals here.

V: "Hearing of his fame, a Brahmin named Bharadvaja, who was a great sorcerer, came from Kimmilimala in South India to challenge the bhiksus to a contest of magical powers. King Ajatasatru, with all his ministers, and Ananda, with all his Arhants, assembled to witness the spectacle. With great pomp, Bharadvaja magically created four mountains: one of gold, one



of silver, one [63] of ruby, and one of blue indranila. In the midst of the mountains were four pleasure gardens full of blossoming fruit trees and exotic birds. Each garden had a pond covered with lotuses of many colours. Regarding his work with pride, Bharadvaja challenged Ananda to outdo him."

S: Well let's see what Ananda does then.

"With his miraculous powers, Ananda in his turn created a herd of fierce elephants who ate the lotuses and trampled the ponds. Then he raised a great wind that felled the fruit trees, and a terrible thunderstorm whose lightning bolts shattered the four precious mountains. Then Ananda multiplied his body into five hundred emanations, of which some rained like giant thunderclouds, some rose in the sky, and some radiated fire. Then they all vanished at once, leaving Ananda sitting quietly as usual. Bharadvaja was completely overcome, and he and his attendants became disciples of Ananda. For seven days and nights Ananda taught them the Holy Dharma. They achieved understanding of the Four Noble Truths and attained various stages of realization.

Ananda taught for forty years, ordaining tens of thousands of bhiksus and leading thousands to Arhantship; finally, he perceived that it was time to die. In order to divide his relics equally between the people of Vaisali and the people of Magadha - for he knew the two would dispute over them - he created an island in the middle of the Ganges, the border between the two lands, and went there with five hundred bhiksus. Five hundred rishis joined him on the island and asked to be admitted to the Sangha. Ananda ordained them, and in one hour magically established them in Arhantship. Then, before the thousand assembled Arhants, he passed into Parinirvana. His body spontaneously consumed itself in fire and the waves of the river divided his relics into two parts. One part was carried to the north bank of the river, where the Licchavis of Vaisali took them and built a great stupa in which to enshrine them. The other part was carried to the south bank, where King Ajatasatru of Magadha also built a stupa to house the relics."

S: One can imagine that these were the sort of stories which were circulating about Ananda even in his own life-time. How seriously we are to take them is probably another question. How seriously, that is to say, as historical fact. I'm afraid, I myself have been rather sceptical about these sort of stories ever since a few experiences of my own, some of which I have mentioned, in which I heard legendary accounts [64] of my own life given in India in front of me while I was listening to them myself. (laughter) And someone was recounting these by way of introduction to my lecture, without a scrap of truth in them at all. I mean, highly flattering, no doubt, but simply not true. So I've been a bit sceptical about these sort of accounts ever since.

But still one can understand that Ananda was highly popular, a great teacher with great powers so no doubt it was natural that these sort of stories should be told about him. Perhaps even during his lifetime.

V: Is it possible that a teacher could magically make disciples enlightened?

S: I'm not quite sure what is meant by that. If you take it literally, it says 'established them', which is a bit ambiguous. But that he should actually give them Arhantship or make them Arhants by magical means, well this of course is quite out of the question, quite impossible. While it might be interpreted to mean, well after all there are five hundred of them, and he had only one hour, he'd have taught them in five hundred different bodies. He'd sort of multiply himself and each individual body taught a particular Rishi, you could look at it like that. But even so he would then be teaching them and not, as it were, planting them in Arhantship. I mean, that sort of idiom would be quite misleading. We do sometimes get that in the later Buddhist scriptures, people being established in Nirvana or led there, as though they play a quite passive role, but this is quite misleading. I should beware of this sort of language.

V: Could it not possibly refer to the fact that he gave them a certain practice which would itself, if they were doing the practice, establish them in Arhantship?

S: Well, it doesn't say that does it? But you could take it to mean that. But even so to teach five hundred of them in an hour, so we are told, and they practised also and gained realization, well some sort of magic must have been involved, in the means even if not in the end.

I think we just take this to mean that it is a glorification of Ananda, he was a very popular figure, a highly successful teacher and with a sort of aura about him which led to the creation of so many legends. Even perhaps during his lifetime and certainly soon afterwards.

V: It occurs to me that magicians are taken for granted in the East whereas they are not here. Is this to do with, say, just the Indian imagination? Or is it just, I mean are there magicians that can conjure up illusions?

S: Well, there certainly are magicians, I think, who can conjure up illusions, I've heard so many stories about these. I can't say that I've ever witnessed any but Tibetans certainly believe that magicians can conjure up illusions. No doubt some spiritual teachers have these sort of powers. It is more a matter of temperament than state of spiritual development. In others, like Sariputta they don't have any such powers, but some do. So presumably those who have the powers can use them. But even a spiritual teacher with magical powers can't make you an Arhant by virtue of his magical power. That is [65] completely beyond him, it is beyond even the Buddha, all he can do is to teach you and show you the way. But he may teach you or show you by magical means, but even so it is up to you to practise and to follow the path and realize yourself. Even if Ananda had, by virtue of his magic powers, created a hundred Anandas, all of whom then taught the five hundred Rishis, he would be teaching by magical means but the Rishis would still have to understand the teaching themselves, practise it themselves and realize it themselves even though they were taught in a magical fashion.

(End of tape 3)

The great point that Buddhism always makes is that nobody can actually Enlighten you, no one can make you Enlightened. This is something you have to achieve and experience for yourself. Though it does recognize the possibility of your being taught by magical means, in some cases. It doesn't exclude that.

For instance a teacher who was also a magician might conjure up a picture of the, sort of, transitoriness of life in a very vivid way. So he would be teaching you by means of his magic power, but you would have to see that, you would have to understand it, you would have to have insight into it all the same. So there are limits to magic.

V: It seems to be very strong Tibetan..., Buddhism, or in Tibetan culture, magic.

S: It is indeed.

V: Is that handed down from the Bon tradition?

S: Some aspects, but not all. To a great extent it's a heritage from India, but certainly reinforced by some magical, especially Shamanistic elements in the Bon tradition, and Bon religion.

V: To what extent does the ritual in Tibetan Buddhism come from that Indian, sort of, feel, or does it come from Tibet?

S: It's mixed. There are some details which are definitely of indigenous origin. But the general significance, the general structure, outline, procedure, this is entirely of Indian origin. For instance, just to give you a detail, the bali, what became the tormas, you know the tormas is

an offering made of barley flour. Originally in India this bali was just a flat cake of unleavened bread, but the Tibetans elaborated this into the torma which became quite a work of art. Which was ornamented and painted, but the fundamental idea remains the same. The Tibetans just elaborated it and also they used barley flour because that was what was available in Tibet, not wheat flour.

All right on to the next section.

"Sanavasika was the third Successor. He had been a wealthy householder and had maintained Ananda and five thousand bhiksus for five years, at which point Ananda had told him to take the bhiksu vow himself. As soon as he did so, Sanavasika attained Arhantship and Ananda then appointed him Successor.

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S: Well that seems quite straightforward, let's go straight on.

V: "King Ajatasatru died shortly after Ananda. Because he had caused his father's death he was born in hell for an instant of time, but he was then reborn in a godly realm as a disciple of Sanavasika. He attained the state of stream-winner."

(Break in tape)

"While Sanavasika remained in Magadha teaching the doctrine, another Arhant, Maha-madhyantika, the foremost of those rishis who had obtained Arhantship in the middle of the Ganges, went to Kashmir with five hundred bhiksus. There he subdued the demons and Naga and spread the practice of Buddhism. He obtained saffron from the Nagas and gave it to the people of Kashmir. From that time it grew abundantly there, its golden hue reflecting the light of the bhiksus' robes."

S: There seems to be a certain historical basis here because we do know that, two perhaps three hundred years after the Buddha's Parinirvana a number of monks did go to Kashmir, which eventually became quite a stronghold of Buddhism. And you notice it is said of Maha-madhyantika, 'he subdued the demons and Nagas and spread the practice of Buddhism'. He, sort of, incorporated the ethnic cults, you could say, even, the ethnic energies, the primitive energies. He didn't destroy them he merely subdued them and harnessed them to the Dharma, as it were. Just as Padmasambhava did in Tibet.

I think the general psychological cum spiritual significance of this is generally understood. I've dealt with it in several lectures.

There is also a touch of folklore, 'He obtained saffron from the Nagas and gave it to the people of Kashmir.' Saffron is grown in Kashmir, it is always been quite an important crop there. Saffron is very sort of rare and expensive, so there is a little bit of folklore here as to the origin of the saffron, that Maha-madhyantika got it from the Nagas and gave it to the people of Kashmir. 'From that time it grew abundantly there, its golden hue reflecting the light of the bhikkhus robes'. Often the bhikkhus robes are referred to as saffron robes, but that is quite incorrect, the original colour was much more like khaki than saffron because the robes were discoloured with earth, with clay. Not with saffron which would be much too expensive.

Saffron actually is the pollen dust from a certain type of crocus, it's used in cooking and used for dying too. It is very very expensive, that is real saffron. What is often called saffron is in fact turmeric, what you put in the yellow rice. It isn't saffron although sometimes it is called saffron rice, only the really wealthy can afford saffron rice.

Any query on that? This is a sort of historical cum legendary resume of the progress of the teaching in the centuries after the Buddha's Parinirvana. Mainly from early [67] Sarvastivadin sources which were incorporated into Tibetan Buddhism. But it isn't a very critical account.

V: Is this in fact Geshe Wangyal's own account?

S: No, this is based upon Tibetan sources. He says at the end 'The story of the seven successors was adapted and translated from Taranatha's History of the Holy Dharma in India written in 1608.' Taranatha was a Tibetan historian who used, of course, Indian sources. In this case Sarvastivadin sources.

V: Can you say anything about the demons and Nagas that need to be subdued in the West?

S: Well you could say that they include printers devils. (laughter) But seriously the trouble is we don't have any healthy demons and Nagas. Just to discuss the question in those terms. You see, in the case of the demons and Nagas in Kashmir; before the coming of Maha-madhyantika, they existed and flourished, they were worshipped and they had an important place. But when Maha-madhyantika came along what happened was, he didn't crush them, he didn't destroy them; he gave them their proper place. They continued to receive offerings but they were incorporated in a larger and more elaborate structure, as it were. So if you regard the demons and Nagas as representing or symbolizing certain psychic energies, then the point is that the teaching of Buddhism did not crush or repress those energies but utilized them, channelled them. But nothing like this happened in the West. When Christianity came along all the local cults, all the local religions. The local practises, demons, Nagas, they were crushed and they were identified with the forces of evil and darkness. Not simply something less developed, something on a lower level but something bad, something evil, something diabolical. So they were completely crushed and exterminated. So in as much as they corresponded to something in the human psyche, at least very broadly, maybe not in the precise Jungian sense, something in the human psyche also was crushed. So what we have got now are crushed and maimed demons and Nagas, which because they were crushed and because they were maimed have turned vicious and nasty. This is the situation that confronts us. So we haven't even got any proper demons and Nagas, we may say. We have got very angry and resentful demons and Nagas. Not the happy, healthy ones that Maha-madhyantika encountered. This is the situation here.

V: It seems that the word demon itself is a corruption, from the Greek daemon.

S: Right, yes. So throughout European religious and cultural history you get the upsurging of these repressed forces. Sometimes in a very negative and destructive manner because they haven't been given their due place.

V: In what sort of way do they actually manifest?

S: Destructive.

V: Can you give a concrete example of that.

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S: Well just look at the whole history of Europe, you could say.

V: History of Christianity.

S: History of Christianity. Look at the inquisition, look at the witch hunts. It was really awful. We get used to these things as episodes and or in chapters in European history but we don't realize how calamitous they were and how unnecessary and how closely related to Christian attitudes.

V: The whole thing of corporal punishment that has existed almost up to the present day.

V: One of the features of Western life generally, one of the trade marks is to stamp on things.

S: Mmm. So you see one of the difficulties that we are confronted by in teaching Buddhism is

not simply that we have to teach Buddhism but sometimes we have to restore the crushed and maimed demons and Nagas to health before we can incorporate them, as it were. So we are having to work on two levels simultaneously. This is very often what happens. Do you see what I mean, or do you see what this represents?

In other words, put it in psychological terms, you have got simultaneously, sometimes, to help people over their psychological difficulties and at the same time to help them develop spiritually. Whereas the ideal situation would be to have somebody who is psychologically healthy and whole and hale - in the full sense - and who just wants to grow up into this higher, so called spiritual levels, and just proceed to do so. But we don't have that sort of situation usually, or very rarely you have it.

V: Do you have it in New Zealand.

S: I think you do there far more than you do in England, certainly far more than you do in London. I think that's the nearest to it that I've seen. We certainly don't have it, say, in Finland, at least in Helsinki, but you do have it in New Zealand, at least a very good approximation to it.

V: I wondered if that was one of the factors involved with the lack of problematic approaches to the Friends out there.

S: Yes, right. As I look back it does seem that all the New Zealand Order Members and Friends are very healthy people. The, sort of, happy pagans, thoughtful pagans, before they take up with Buddhism. So they don't come in as emotional cripples or with great problems or hang overs and things of that sort.

V: Do you think that would have anything to do with the contact with the Maori?

S: Possibly. The Maori are a quite healthy kind of people though possibly a bit crude, as it were. They are not very refined, not particularly cultured but they are healthy and happy. And certainly something of that will rub off on the pakeyas (?) as they call them.

It is also quite interesting that the Maori are having [69] increasingly a slight cultural influence on the white New Zealanders, in a quite positive way. And of course there is no race problems there, the relations between the pakeyas and the Maori are very easy, quite relaxed, quite friendly. The Maori traditions are, I won't say they are reviving - because they were vigorously stamped on by the Christian missionaries and almost exterminated almost wiped out. But a few are reviving. It can't be said, frankly, that the Maori were completely admirable people, they did practise cannibalism, so no doubt it was a good thing that the missionaries stamped that out but they also stamped out a lot of other things that should have been preserved, could have been preserved.

But it is interesting to notice that in New Zealand there are now a few Maori, sort of, to use probably an inappropriate term, 'priests'. Who have some influence. And one of the things they do is to put taboos on things, or tapoos, as they say. And these tapoos are always respected by the white New Zealanders too. The Christian priests aren't too happy about it but everybody respects the Maori taboos. If a Maori priest says that that bay is taboo no one shall fish there then nobody does fish there. Everybody respects the taboo. And the New Zealanders just do this quite naturally, they just take it for granted that it applies to them too. So in this way there is a, sort of, subtle influence coming from the Maori who are much more in contact with the land. Though there are urbanized Maori too, but on the whole they are much more in contact with the land and indigenous traditions and an indigenous way of life which includes living in communities. Maori do not live, traditionally, in separate families, they live in communities. And New Zealanders, even New Zealanders who have no contact with anything Oriental or spiritual, as such are beginning to consider the possibility that the Maori tradition of living in communities might not be preferable at least to the nuclear family. Even quite ordinary New Zealanders are aware of that possibility, the community. It may be

thirty, forty, fifty, even up to a hundred people, as a sort of extended family. Quite a few New Zealanders are aware of that possibility, they know about the Maori communities. Some Maori still live in this way, although not too many. There are even communities that you can visit where the Maori are living in the traditional way.

So though the Christian missionaries have done their best they haven't completely destroyed the gods and demons and so on of New Zealand.

V: So do you feel then that, to come back to what you were saying, that the difficulties that people encounter within themselves and in each other are perhaps not so much due to what a lot of people say, "oh it's something in your childhood"; but it's something that they are stamping on here and now?

S: Well, it's due to something in the whole culture, the whole cultural history and religious history in the West.

V: I think what Brock (?) was doing at Findhorn regarding Pan. Its relationship to Christianity, was projected on to, demon things projected on to that and this is having quite an effect in bringing people to a different sort of awareness and appreciation of nature and certain levels in that.

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S: I think this is quite important, although of course one mustn't idealize this or limit spiritual life to that, sometimes this does happen and you just get an idealized paganism instead of genuine spiritual life. But probably even that is better than a distorted Christianity. But best of all, if you can have the healthy pagan levels properly developed with a proper feeling for nature and have that leading up into spiritual life in the true sense.

V: He recognized there was a negative aspect of that and he did point out before he died that there was a much higher aspect.

S: This is why I think that any interest in traditional origins and ancient and pre-Christian cults and beliefs is quite interesting and significant and important. And also this "new" attitude towards nature, this is very important. This greater sensitivity to natural forces, even on a quite mundane level. This is all very important indeed and sooner or later we have to, sort of, link up with these.

But one must, at the same time, have the awareness of the even higher spiritual levels. So we must recognize that so far as we are concerned we are in a very unusual and aberrant situation, a very abnormal situation, when, fifteen hundred years ago, when Christianity was first introduced into great Britain (it may have been a bit before that according to some), there was this sudden interruption of cultural continuity. And no doubt many very valuable things came in with Christianity but our link with nature was snapped and we were taught to regard nature not just as natural but as evil. This was a great pity, and natural forces not just as natural but as evil. Or even not just as lower but as definitely bad.

V: Can you give an example?

S: Well the glaring one is sex for instance. In Buddhist literature it is quite clear that this is one of the lower instincts and certainly to be brought under control, but Buddhism doesn't adopt the attitude of crushing. It doesn't label it as evil and diabolical and so forth which Christianity does. Maybe not in all of its forms but certainly in the forms that it has reached us.

V: Do you think it is necessary, or even possible for us to pass through this stage of happy paganism?

S: I think some individuals can but I think it is for the majority impossible. Just because the

situation doesn't exist. If you have led, for instance, a fairly sheltered life, you have been brought up by quite healthy parents who are not particularly Christian and in the country, then maybe, yes you as an individual can go through this happy healthy, pagan stage. But, I think, if we haven't we can't sort of go through it artificially and think our way through it. I don't think this is possible. If we have been brought up in an unfortunate way, or got a bit twisted on route, as it were, well we just have to say good-bye to the possibility of a happy, healthy, pagan, early life and just carry on from where we are, and sort things out as best we can. That is all we can do. But provided we get on in the end to the spiritual path, in a sense it doesn't matter.

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V: So we are using our spiritual practises to a great extent to sort out, I mean to partly sort ourselves out psychologically. For a while, anyway.

S: Yes, very often we are, for a while, yes. And we can't avoid this in the situation that we find ourselves in. They have a sort of retroaction, as it were. Whereas had we been brought up more naturally and healthily in this respect then we would have simply carried on from where we are, or where we were.

But anyway, we mustn't shed too many tears over spilt milk, it's been spilt and that's that, we just have to mop it up, now, as best we can and pay another visit to the cow. (laughter)

Anyway, that was a digression, let's go on.

V: "The Fourth Successor was Arya Upagupta. He travelled far and wide disseminating the Teaching, and in his travels happened to come to the city of Mathura. After he had taught there for a time, many people were ordained as bhiksus and obtained great realization. The demon-king Mara became jealous, and, with his followers, assumed the forms of heavenly dancers in order to distract people from attending to the teaching of the Dharma. Seeing this, Arya Upagupta went to their show place and said to the dancers, "I am delighted to see you dance and sing. I would like to offer you these flowers." He then presented them with exquisite garlands of many-coloured lotuses.

The dancers were delighted, and placed the garlands around their necks. As soon as they did so, they turned back into demons. They were old and ugly, clothed in rags; the lotus garlands became the rotting corpses of dogs. All the spectators were filled with fear and disgust, and the stench was so foul that many could not help vomiting.

Then Arya Upagupta approached the demons and addressed them gently: "This is the effect of your resentful minds. It is the retribution you receive for distracting my disciples, who were peacefully listening to the Teaching."

The demons replied, "We regret our actions; please get us out of this predicament."

"I will help you," Arya Upagupta said, "but first you must promise not to disturb my disciples any more."

"We promise, we promise," they said. "We will die before we ever harm them again."

Immediately the demons became beautiful as before. "O Reverend Sir," they said, "you should not be so harsh. We were merely having a little fun and you caused us great trouble. We also tried to harm Buddha when he was sitting under the Bodhi-tree but he did not retaliate. He remained seated in the meditation of love and compassion."

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"Arya Upagupta said to the demons, "I was never privileged to see the Rupakaya of Buddha; I have only seen his Dharmakaya. Please, O magical actors, show me his physical form as you saw him under the Bodhi-tree." At once the demons created the form of Gautama Buddha.

When Arya Upagupta saw their creation, he wept tears of pleasure and bowed down before the image of the Buddha. Unable to bear his devotion, Mara and his demons disappeared.

After Arya Upagupta, Arya Dhitika was appointed Successor. The sixth Successor was Arya Krsna, and the seventh was Arya Sudarsana. [1]

S: You notice that attitude of Arya Upagupta to the demons, 'he addresses them gently'. This is quite characteristic, that even when the demons trouble you, even when these natural forces are disturbing, address them gently. Certainly these Maras do appear in Buddhist literature but we talked about this quite a bit on the last seminar and pointed out that Mara in the Buddhist scriptures is never taken too seriously, that he is mischievous rather than wicked and naughty rather than evil. As soon as he is detected he can't do anything any more, he just flees away. But you certainly don't get Mara built up into this gigantic figure of evil of which you go in terror as happens in the case of Christianity with the devil, or did happen in the past. Some Christians went so far as to say that not to believe in the devil was a form of atheism. Because the existence of the devil proved the existence of God. The fact that evil was there meant that good must be there too, so if you weren't sure of evil you weren't sure of good. So the more you believed in the devil the more you believed in God. The less you believed in the devil the less you believed in God. So very often people ended up believing in the devil but not in God.

V: I really noticed that in the Church, in the Catholic Church full of lots of lovely colour and paintings and sculptures and things. It was all nice, there wasn't anything "nasty" no wrathful deities, all a bit sweet, one sided.

S: So there has been this terrible split in the West, this sort of dualism. That the spiritual is identified with the good as opposed to the evil and the evil is regarded as having a sort of existence of its own. And it is taken very very seriously, in fact too seriously. It is best just to see through it and laugh at it as the Buddha and his disciples did. Mara in the Buddhist scriptures is quite a figure of fun.

So this episode does illustrate a rather light-hearted attitude of the Buddhist teachers towards the demons who disturb them. Whereas if you read an account of Christian priests coming to Western countries and pagan countries and encountering demons very seriously indeed. That these are evil, they are all emissaries of the evil one, they are all from hell.

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V: How do you think that sort of attitude developed?

S: It's very difficult to say in a detailed manner. It seems to have been right there from the beginning. Even in the gospels there are instances of Christ casting out demons and sending demons to dwell in swine and sending the swine to destruction, the Gadarene swine.

V: So when Padmasambhava is exorcising demons he's really having fun.

S: From his point of view. Maybe it wasn't such fun for the demons. But he wasn't destroying them, he wasn't killing them he was only cutting them down to size, as it were. Any query on all that? It is still the nature of background material.

V: Interesting that they were able to show the Buddha's body.

S: No, the Buddha's physical form. It also suggests that if you do happen to see the Buddha's physical form don't take it too seriously, it is still a conditioned thing even though it is the Buddha's or is like the Buddha's. Even demons can assume that sort of form, as it were. And it is also interesting that the text says, 'When Arya Upagupta saw their creation he wept tears of pleasure and bowed before the image of the Buddha. Unable to bear his devotion Mara and his demons disappeared.' That is very significant isn't it? Unable to bear his devotion, the devotion was genuine so it dissolved, as it were, the pseudo object of the devotion. You see



the point of that? If it had really been the Buddha himself the form wouldn't have dissolved, but it was only the form assumed by the demons. So Upagupta's devotion was sincere, but when he directed it to that illusory form thinking, not exactly thinking it was the Buddha but feeling as though it was the Buddha, it just dissolved. It couldn't sort of stand in the face of his genuine devotion.

So you can say that genuine devotion dissolves unreality, dissolves illusions. Through genuine devotion you come into contact with the truth. Or even if your approach to something which is not genuine is genuine you will dissolve whatever is not genuine in what you are approaching with your genuine feeling. So this is why sometimes one should not think in terms of 'I shouldn't have a genuine feeling, I may be deceived', you can't be deceived really. If your feeling is genuine it will dissolve whatever is not genuine in what the feeling is directed towards.

V: So the question of, the thing of motive comes in here. You can sometimes go into something for totally the wrong motive and find the feeling and that will dissolve your original false motive.

S: No, well we are assuming here that the original motive is right, is true, is genuine. But some people use the fact, for instance, that you may be deceived when you enter into a certain situation as an excuse for your not having the appropriate feeling. Some people, as it were, reason, why should I be genuine in my attitude, what I am getting genuinely involved with may turn out to be something not genuine. So therefore I don't need to have a genuine attitude [74] or perhaps a genuine attitude isn't necessary. But that's all wrong, if your attitude is genuine you won't lose anything but the genuineness of your attitude will dissolve anything not genuine, anything false in what you are becoming involved in. So you lose nothing.

Often people have got this sort of attitude towards other people. When they enter into some sort of contact or relationship, "I may be deceived, OK. therefore I am not going to give myself fully, I am not going to be very genuine. I might be taken in." But in a way you can't be taken in if you are genuine, if you go into it with your eyes open, with real genuineness, you can't be taken in. If you went in with improper expectations well then you may be taken in but not if you go in with complete sincerity and genuineness, you can't be deceived then. Even if things turn out other than what you expected you can't be deceived. Do you see what I mean?

V: Could you say that being genuine is equivalent to being open in a situation.

S: By genuine I mean more the integrity of your own feeling and your own approach, which could include openness though it's rather a vague sort of virtue, isn't it? We did have quite a discussion about it on the first study seminar, it's being transcribed by the way and is going to come out in Shabda, that particular bit. Padmaraja is doing it.

V: Would that, to be genuine involves a certain amount of awareness doesn't it?

S: Sure, yes. So if you become involved with a lot of people, say, who are not genuine, you shouldn't think well let me not be genuine too. Even though you know that they are not genuine, even though you know that in a sense they may try to take advantage of your genuineness; never mind, be genuine in that situation. You will lose nothing and your genuineness will dissolve the falsity in that situation, eventually, if you are strong enough. But don't sort of enter into it without genuineness because there is no genuineness in the situation, as it were. Just retain your own genuineness.

V: Could one say in fact the converse of that rule, that principle, is that if you don't trust your own feelings, your own higher feelings or whatever, devotion or whatever, you can't develop any real love or compassion? Whatever you are actually feeling, if you distrust that it will prevent the arising of devotion?

S: Well if you distrust your feelings you can't have feelings. I mean to distrust them would just prevent them from arising. You won't even be having them in the end if you distrust them.

Well if you distrust a person it doesn't encourage him very much does it? It is just the same with your feelings, if you distrust your feelings, well it won't encourage them very much so you will be less likely to have feelings.

V: How can you distrust your feelings? You either feel it or you don't, you can't really think about your feelings you just experience them and are in touch with them.

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V: That's what people do isn't it, they rationalize them and think about them and they just push them out of existence.

V: But that means that they're not really feeling them, that's just all head stuff.

V: Yes but the feeling is there but you get out of touch with it because your head says you shouldn't be feeling it.

V: But if you are out of touch with it then you are not feeling it.

V: That's what it ends up as, you don't actually feel it.

S: What you're saying is that a weak feeling is not really a feeling, but Ananda is saying that even a weak feeling counts as a feeling.

V: Not even a weak feeling, just a feeling that you don't accept.

S: Well, weak in the sense that if it was really strong you couldn't but accept it, it would just insist on being accepted. It would burst through regardless.

V: I think a feeling is an experience rather than a thought, there isn't really anything you can...

V: But if your nature is such that your head says you shouldn't be feeling something, then the effect is that it disintegrates that feeling, it becomes less of a feeling.

S: It inhibits that feeling, even though you started off with some genuine feeling, even though not a very strong one.

V: You see this in people who are predominantly negative, they do have a positive feeling, they experience it to a certain extent but they then crush it because they distrust it, they think it can't be real...

S: Or can't be right.

Anyway let's stop for tea or coffee because we are half way through and we go on to the succession of the Mahayana teachers afterwards.

V: "During the centuries that followed, there were many schisms among the followers of Buddha's Teaching. There arose variations in the understanding of the path to Enlightenment and Sakyamuni's Teachings became clouded by the misinterpretations of false teachers, all of which disturbed the flow of his doctrine. About four hundred years after Buddha, Arya Nagarjuna was born. The coming of Arya Nagarjuna fulfilled a prophecy made by Buddha in several sutras. This prophecy stated that in the time when the Teaching had [76] deteriorated, there would come one who would clarify the Teaching and thus revive it. Though he would state the Teachings in a new form, their intent would be the same.

Nagarjuna was born in south India, in the country of Vidarbha."

S: That is now in Maharashtra.

"His Brahmin parents were childless and had begged the rishis to give them a son. When he was born, the rishis gave him only seven days to live, but by worshipping and begging the rishis, his parents were able to extend his life to seven months and then to seven years. Hoping that Nagarjuna could find a way to keep himself alive beyond that span, his parents sent him to study Buddhism at the great Buddhist university of Nalanda. There, after taking the vows of a novice, he received training in the way of extending his life."

S: You see the parents motivation. This sort of thing quite often happens in the East. When a child is born his horoscope is cast and quite often according to the horoscope his life is going to be very short, so quite often the parents then think in terms of dedicating him to the religious life so that he may accumulate some merit which will help him to prolong his life. This is a very common belief and practice. And in this way in those Buddhist countries where boys are admitted into the monasteries at a very early age you often get boys being given to the monasteries by their parents with this sort of reason, this is quite common.

So this sort of thing happened to Nagarjuna according to the traditional account of his life.

V: Who are rishis?

S: Rishis are Hindu sages, Vedic sages who usually live in the forest on fruits.

(End of side 1)

V: Could you comment upon that relationship, do you think that is a valid thing, doing certain meritorious deeds actually prolongs life physically in this lifetime.

S: Well, put it this way, if you the shortness of your life is due to absence of sufficient merit then obviously to create merit will help prolong it.

V: That is rather begging the question, though.

S: It is but you just have to know that to begin with, if you do fair enough then you know what to do. Or you can just think it may be due to that so be on the safe side.

V: You can't lose.

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S: You can't really because even if it wasn't lack of merit that was shortening your life, well you've created some merit. That's not only good for the future it's good for here and now too.

V: Nagarjuna lived for six hundred years, and his life is divided into three stages.

S: Western scholars don't agree that it was the same Nagarjuna, but a succession of people with the same name. Like for instance you might have King Henry VII then King Henry VIII. Well not just one king Henry it is only the name that is the same. But the Tibetan tradition is definitely one Nagarjuna who lived six hundred years.

"For almost a century he was prefect of Nalanda, during which time he sustained and taught the many monks of that university. The second stage of Nagarjuna's life began when he was nearly one hundred years old."

S: Which shows it's never too late to turn over a new leaf. (laughter)

"He went to the land of the Nagas, where he taught the doctrine of Buddha. He received from

the Nagas the One Hundred Thousand Verse Prajna Paramita Sutra and returned with it to India. Nagarjuna then composed many commentaries on this sutra, the highest of Buddha's philosophical teachings. In these writings he explained the sutra's meaning, and in so doing developed the viewpoint that avoids all extremes - the viewpoint of the Madhyamika system he founded."

S: Nagarjuna is of course a historical teacher, he is associated with the rise and the development of the Mahayana and he is associated with the Perfection of Wisdom teachings as found in the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. And he left a number of very important writings based mainly on these Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. All this is historical fact.

According to the legend he received these sutras, or at least the most important of them, from the Nagas and there is quite a lot of discussion as to what is meant by that. Whether the Nagas really were some kind of supernormal beings or whether they were a community of disciples living hidden from the world or whether they just symbolize certain states of consciousness which Nagarjuna realized and, as it were, received the teachings from those states. I've discussed this in the Survey, by the way, under the heading of the Madhyamika school.

V: Been transcribed from the heart sutra and going into that symbolically, receiving it from the serpents.

S: Yes, right. But no doubt this whole tradition associated with Nagarjuna is of very great importance for Indian Buddhism and even down to the present day for Tibetan Buddhism too.

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V: Is this the same Nagarjuna who is something to do with the Maha-siddhas?

S: Well, according to the Tibetans it is the same one in a later stage of his career. According to modern Western scholars it is a different Nagarjuna.

V: "When he reached the age of three hundred, Nagarjuna visited the northern continent; this was the beginning of the third stage of his life. He stayed in that continent for two hundred years and then returned to south India, where he retreated into the mountains to meditate in seclusion.

Nagarjuna's death is attributed to the son of his life-long friend, King Antivahana. One day Antivahana's queen made a marvellous robe for her son, Prince Saktiman. The prince said, "I will save it to wear when I am king." His mother replied, I am afraid you will never be king, for your father and Nagarjuna are of 'one life'. They both will live the same length of time, and it is said Nagarjuna will never die." Her son began to weep bitterly, asking, "Then what is the use of being a prince?" Greatly distressed, and desiring only the happiness of her son, she told him, "Neither Nagarjuna nor your father are subject to natural death. But Nagarjuna is a Bodhisattva. If you ask for his head he will surely give it to you. Then, after Nagarjuna dies, your father will soon follow, and you will become king." The prince went to the cave where Nagarjuna was meditating and made his request. Without a moments hesitation, Nagarjuna bared his neck to the prince's sword, but as Nagarjuna could not be pierced by any weapon, his neck was not even scratched by the prince's blow. Nagarjuna then said to the prince, "Get a blade of kusa grass. When I was still a common person, I killed an insect in a clump of kusa grass, and now, by the return of karma, I can be killed by a blade of this grass and in no other way." The prince got a blade of kusa grass and began cutting off the Bodhisattva's head. While Saktiman was hacking away at his neck, Nagarjuna's voice proclaimed, "I am going from happy life to bliss, but I will use this same body again." The words filled the prince with fear. In order to keep Nagarjuna's head and body from reuniting, he placed them far apart. Even today they are said to be moving toward each other. When they meet, Nagarjuna will once more live in the world in order to help living beings."

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S: There are several little points to be commented on here. What about this curious

conception of two people being of one life, can you see what it means? Their lives are inseparably linked, if one dies the other dies.

V: Sounds a bit like a symbiotic relationship.

S: I don't think it is that which is meant, anyway. But I have been reading recently some very interesting accounts about, not only human beings who were linked in this way, but human beings and plants. This sort of theme or motif comes out in myth and legend quite a bit, a tree is planted on the day of somebody's birth and when that person dies the tree unaccountably dies, it withers as from that very day and there are quite a number of quite authenticated cases of this sort of thing. As between human beings too, but as between human beings and plants, especially trees, apparently it is quite common and quite well known and established but it isn't quite understood why and how it happens.

It's as though there is some sort of sympathy between the two for some reason. So it is this sort of thing that is being referred to here so let's take it for granted even though we don't understand very much how it all comes about.

Another interesting point is that the Prince's mother doesn't seem to care at all for her husband. She doesn't mind him dying she is only concerned that her son should get his wish fulfilled and become king. Don't you think this is rather odd or do you think it rather usual?

V: It's really weird.

V: If he's of one life with Nagarjuna maybe he's been alive a long time.

S: It's also rather odd she doesn't mind Nagarjuna dying too. She doesn't mind sacrificing even the great sage or her own husband so that her own son can fulfil his wish. It almost suggests that the attachment to the son is stronger than the attachment to the husband, not to speak of attachment to the spiritual teacher. Though it isn't said that he was her spiritual teacher. But it is as though the well being of her son or the gratification of her sons wishes is absolutely the overriding consideration here.

V: You almost expect that in a way because there is a very strong biological continuity. It's almost like part of the wife's body continuing.

V: This seems to crop up quite a bit in India. I always assumed it was because the queen wanted the power.

S: It could be that too. She could exercise more power through the son than through the husband.

V: Or maybe she's just rather bored of the close friendship between Nagarjuna and the king.

V: It has been going on for three hundred years (laughter).

V: She must have lived for that time too.

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S: It suggests so, unless she came along rather later in the day.

Anyway, you see Nagarjuna's attitude to it all. He doesn't seem to mind giving up his life.

V: It doesn't seem to be for a very noble purpose.

S: It doesn't does it. But then it doesn't matter because he can, he has the power of using the same body again, apparently. So let the Prince have his way, he won't really defeat what I am trying to do. It is like the skilled chess player, he doesn't mind the less skilled player getting

away with a few moves, just pleasing him. He knows he is going to win in the end.

V: What about the Karma that the Prince is heaping up? Presumably he's heaped up so much Karma in the intention of wanting to cut off the head, but maybe heaping up even more by actually doing it.

S: I'm sure there is another chapter to the story.

V: Also causing his fathers death as well.

S: Yes, right. It also shows the Prince's impatience, he says, "what is the use of being a Prince". In other words he is only thinking in terms of kingship, only thinking of being a Prince in terms of it being a step to the throne. Not thinking that he has a good life as a Prince, but what is the use of being a Prince if I can't become King? A rather greedy attitude.

V: Would it also mean, perhaps, something to do with the teaching, in which he was separating the head from the body?

S: Yes, you can perhaps look at it in a Jungian sort of way, that head and body are being separated and ever since they are trying to come together again. That is rather interesting. You can, as it were, read between the lines of these legends and get quite another sort of meaning out of them.

V: I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch the meaning of the head coming towards the body again?

S: Well, if you take heads to represent the intelligence. It becomes split off from the body, from the natural forces, you could say even from the emotions. The Prince has severed the two but they are trying to come together, I mean the natural instinct is towards wholeness, completeness.

V: The implication for us being that when the head and body come together you have integrated the whole psyche therefore the path of the Bodhisattva comes into being again. The Bodhicitta arises ...

S: Yes, of course that is a rather free interpretation because wholeness is a sort of psychological conception and no amount of psychic wholeness and healthiness will give rise to the Bodhicitta. But still the Bodhicitta does develop in dependence on the same sort of wholeness and integration but admittedly at a higher level.

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V: Certainly I would say the Bodhicitta couldn't arise in the absence of that, without that wholeness and integration.

S: Yes, right. So, perhaps, there is some sort of suggestion of meaning here and these meanings do crop up in the midst of these legends from time to time.

V: There is a very similar instance in the Sutra of Hui Neng, when ... is hurt and it can't be cut off.

S: Yes.

V: Even the legend of the green knight.

S: Right, yes. It bounces back.

V: I had a dream that I had my head cut off. I was saying it was OK. because I can bring it back when I want to.

S: So it seems to be quite a common psychological motif having the head cut off.

V: I suppose it can only not be cut off when you are pure, when you are perfectly pure, that there's no selfishness and no fear. And you become inviolate.

S: It connects up with what I was saying earlier, if your attitude was genuine then no harm can come to you, as it were. You will break through the ungentle situation.

Anyway, perhaps we don't have to make too much of that. Let's just go on to Nagarjuna's spiritual heir, Aryadeva.

V: "Nagarjuna's spiritual heir was Aryadeva. Aryadeva was miraculously born from a lotus on the island of Ceylon and was adopted by the king of that country. Later, Aryadeva went to study with Nagarjuna and was highly successful in all his studies.

At that time there was a great non-Buddhist teacher named Matrceta, living in western India. He was a renowned physician and had saved thousands of lives during an epidemic. He was also called the Black Conqueror, because no man born from a human womb could defeat him in combat or in debate. In just seven days of meditation, he had received the full realization of Mahesvara."

S: Mahesvara is the god Shiva, the Hindu god Shiva.

"Empowered by Mahesvara, he was able to shoot fire from his forehead and destroy anyone or anything he wished. When Matrceta debated, Mahesvara would enter his body to help him, a pandit in the form of a parrot would whisper advice in his ear, Siva would write invisible advice in the sky, and Sarasvati would come to his aid with beautiful and wise phrases.

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S: Sarasvati is the Hindu and also afterwards the Buddhist goddess of eloquence.

"After he had debated and defeated all the pandits in Western India, Matrceta travelled around looking for other scholars to challenge and eventually arrived at Nalanda. The monks of Nalanda recognized him and decided not to confront him, as they knew that no one born from a human womb could defeat him. Matrceta's followers surrounded the university and completely blockaded it. They set up a drum and began to beat it, declaring themselves victorious. Sometimes they would enter the grounds and beat the monks on the head and mock them, asking 'Shavepates, where do your bald heads come from?'"

One night an abbot of Nalanda had a dream in which Mahakala, one of the fierce defenders of the Dharma, spoke to him: "These non-Buddhists drove a stake into my head and put dirt on my body. Clean and repair my image in the temple. Perform prayers to me and invite Nagarjuna, who is meditating on Bell Mountain in the south, to come and challenge these non-Buddhists." As they were repairing the image of Mahakala the next morning, a crow emerged from it and allowed the abbot to tie a message to its leg. Then it flew to the cave where Nagarjuna was staying.

Nagarjuna wanted to go at once, but Aryadeva objected, saying that Nagarjuna was too old. He volunteered to go in his place, and Nagarjuna agreed on the condition that he first allow Nagarjuna to train him in the art of debate. To do so, Nagarjuna took the non-Buddhist viewpoint in debate and had Aryadeva argue the Buddhist side. Then they switched positions, and Nagarjuna argued the Buddhist position while Aryadeva took the non-Buddhist view on various subjects. In both cases Aryadeva won, and so received permission to depart. As he was leaving, Nagarjuna advised him, "If you are to subdue Matrceta, do not be attached to your eye." The purpose of this advice was soon realized, for, as he was travelling to Nalanda, Aryadeva met a god in the form of a blind beggar, who asked him for one of his eyes. Being a Bodhisattva, Aryadeva willingly gave it.

When Aryadeva arrived at Nalanda, he disguised himself as a water carrier in order to pass by Matrceta's followers and enter the university. But once he was inside, his disguise aroused the monks' suspicions. "How old are you?" they asked. "Five hundred years," he replied. "Are you Nagarjuna?" they asked. "No, I am his disciple Aryadeva." They were glad to hear that, and welcomed him with music, incense, and prayers, [83] for they knew Aryadeva was not born from a human womb, and thus could perhaps defeat Matrceta. Aryadeva had them beat the drum to assemble the bhiksus, and then addressed them saying: "We are beating our sandalwood drum, which is worshipped by gods, Nagas, and dakinis: in this way we will demoralize those non-Buddhists."

He then approached some of Matrceta's followers, who were performing a religious ceremony with water, and asked them, "What are you doing with that water?"

One of them replied, "I am offering it to my dead grandparents." He then asked Aryadeva, "What are you going to do with that water you are carrying?" Aryadeva replied, "I am going to water that completely dried-up garden over there."

The man laughed and asked, "What is the use of watering dead plants?"

"Well," Aryadeva returned, "What is the use of giving water to dead people?" This made the non-Buddhists angry, but they continued their religious ablutions."

S: This is, of course, a reference to the orthodox Hindu ceremony of Shradh, making offerings to the spirits of the departed, including offering of water; food is also offered.

"Aryadeva came before Matrceta's followers again this time carrying a pot filled with excrement. He sat down and began to wash the outside of the pot.

"How can you clean that chamber pot by washing the outside?" one of them asked.

"How can you purify the dirty mind by washing the body?" Aryadeva returned, and the non-Buddhists were unable to answer."

S: It was, of course, an orthodox Hindu practice to purify oneself by taking dips in sacred rivers.

"It was not long before Matrceta arranged to meet Aryadeva in a formal debate. Nine scholars were chosen to be judges and the king and his ministers attended, promising to cut out the tongue of the loser."

S: They took their debates very seriously in those days.

"It was also agreed that the loser would follow the religious doctrine of the victor. To counter the divine aid that Matrceta usually received while debating, Aryadeva first placed a dirty boot near his opponent. He then released a cat, spread vanishing ointment in the sky to erase the skywriting and finally led a naked man to the debate area.

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"Matrceta spoke first. "One-eyed man, how dare you debate me?"

"Indradeva with his thousand eyes cannot see reality. Mahesvara with his three eyes cannot see the nature of all existents. But Aryadeva with his one eye has seen it."

At that the cat jumped up and killed Matrceta's parrot.

"I thought you Buddhists disliked harming living beings," said Matrceta accusingly.

"That is true," Aryadeva replied, "but such is the nature of cats."



Then Matrceta discovered that he could not read the skywriting, that the dirty boot had caused Mahesvara to leave in disgust so that Matrceta could no longer shoot flame from his forehead, and that Sarasvati had had to turn away from the naked man. In desperation, Matrceta tried to escape by flying up into space, but Aryadeva followed close behind. As they approached the limit of existence, beyond which everything disappears, Aryadeva warned Matrceta, "Do not pass beyond this point, for that which does, never returns. If you do not believe me toss your hair beyond it." Matrceta did not believe him, but, just to be sure, shook his long hair beyond the point. It all disappeared. He was impressed by his opponent's compassion and agreed to return to Nalanda with him.

Upon their return, all Matrceta's numerous followers accepted the teachings of Buddha, but Matrceta himself remained recalcitrant. Nonetheless, he was made to study Buddhist scriptures. One day, as he was studying, pages of mantras fluttered down to where he sat. The mantras were excellent and beautiful, and Matrceta was impressed by them, but doubted that they were Buddhist. At this, a deity appeared and beat him senseless. When he came to, he looked more closely at the pages and discovered that they contained a prophecy of his own life, saying that he would become a great Buddhist teacher. He immediately realized his error and said, "I have been wrong. I will cut out my tongue according to the conditions of the debate, and, if I am correct in following Buddha's teachings, it will grow back again. Indeed it did, and Matrceta quickly obtained realization. In later years he composed many famous praises of the effectiveness of Buddha's teachings."

S: There are quite a few significant points in between. I don't want to labour them too much or to explain the whole thing away, as it were. But: Aryadeva being one-eyed. according to all traditions about him he had only one eye and he may well have had just one eye. But also there can be a sort of significance to this because you notice [85] Aryadeva says, 'Indradeva with his thousand eyes cannot see reality'. Indradeva is the king of the Gods and he has a thousand eyes all over his body, how he got them is quite a lengthy story and I am not going to tell that now. 'Mahesvara', that is the Hindu god Shiva who is Matrceta's inspirer and patron, 'with his three eyes cannot see the nature of existents but Aryadeva with his one eye has seen it.' Don't forget Matrceta had taunted him with being a one-eyed man. But what do you think is meant by this one eye?

V: Insight.

S: Insight. It can clearly have another meaning, it is the single eye, the one eye, the completely unified vision, as it were. And you do get this in Buddhist iconography there is the figure of Ekajati (?) the Nyingmapa guardian deity who has one tress, this is what Ekajati means, one tooth and one eye, indicating her complete singleness.

V: Could it refer more specifically to the Paramitta teaching?

S: Possibly, because this just deals with wisdom, with Sunyata. So, without, as I said, labouring the point there is this suggestion here of the single eye, the one eye, the completely unified vision that sees reality. Indradeva is only the king of the gods in the heaven of the thirty-three, a comparatively low level. He has got a thousand eyes but he can't see reality. Mahesvara has got three but even he can't. He is unified to some extent, he has got only three as opposed to a thousand eyes, but it is only Aryadeva who has the one eye, the single vision, the Buddha eye. One can possibly see it like that.

Why does Mahesvara leave because of the dirty boot, do you think?

V: Being a god.

S: Well, he's a god, a Hindu god and Hindus are very particular about ritual purity and impurity and shoes should not be left near a shrine or any image of a god. And here is this dirty old boot, so how can Mahesvara stay?

Similarly Sarasvati is a well bought up Hindu lady and if there is a naked man around, well she just can't stay, she just has to turn around and go.

We'll go into the flying up into space in a minute, but let's go back. This fact that Aryadeva was miraculously born from a lotus. What do you think that means, the birth from a lotus?

V: Padmasambhava.

V: That he came from the realm of the gods. (S: Yes)

V: He was already pure. (S: Yes)

V: It's the symbol of enlightenment.

S: Yes. Well, in a way it is the symbol of second birth, because the lotus grows up above the mud so always the lotus has symbolized purity. In the world but not of it. In iconography the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas sit on a lotus throne, [86] they are in the world but not of it. So the lotus represents birth but a spiritual birth. And sometimes your spiritual birth is antedated and your physical birth is described as though it is a spiritual birth. This is where history and legend, fact and fiction, get mixed up, as it were. So when Aryadeva is represented as having been born from a lotus it means that his spiritual rebirth which took place later in his life is sort of antedated to his physical birth. As though he was enlightened from the beginning, as it were. Greatly gifted from the beginning, as it were. But 'Aryadeva was not born from a human womb', in other words the spiritual enlightenment does not take place on the, as it were, natural human level - it is a higher level. So Matrceta can't be defeated by anyone born of a human womb, that is to say he can't be defeated by anyone who has not undergone that spiritual rebirth. I mean, Mahesvara is one of the forces of the natural world.

So you can say that the ethnic can only really be defeated by the spiritual. This is what it really means. So the monks of Nalanda, presumably they weren't spiritually enlightened, so they were unable to defeat Matrceta. And this comes out quite clearly in the last episode but one. 'Then Matrceta discovered that he could not read the skywriting, that the dirty boot had caused Mahesvara to leave in disgust so that Matrceta could no longer shoot flame from his forehead, and that Sarasvati had had to turn away from the naked man. - In desperation Matrceta tried to escape by flying up into space, but Aryadeva followed close behind. As they approached the limits to existence, beyond which everything disappears, Aryadeva warned Matrceta, "do not past beyond this point, for that which does never returns." So beyond the conditioned is the unconditioned. It is described in terms of space but it is a question of spiritual experienced. The ethnic can go only so far. It can only go to the limit of the conditioned, out beyond that it will be swallowed up, it will cease to exist, it will die.

So Aryadeva warns Matrceta, be careful, you can't go beyond. To go beyond is death for you, for the natural man to go beyond the natural is death. So Matrceta, in terms of the story appreciates the kindness of Aryadeva so back they come, after Matrceta has tested the truth of Aryadeva's words.

V: What kind of encounter do you imagine that was in fact?

S: It could have been in terms of debate, when all Matrceta's arguments had been defeated and he was left intellectually bankrupt. You can look at it like that. He didn't know which way to turn. Sometimes this does happen, you are brought up, absolutely up against a brick wall, you can't get any further. You can't turn this way, you can't turn that, you reach a sort of impasse. And that is what happened to Matrceta, he was completely defeated and on the brink of almost death, as it were. Annihilation, as it were.

Being defeated was a sort of spiritual experience, a spiritual shock for him. But only Aryadeva could do it. Only someone with a definite spiritual understanding and spiritual enlightenment, somebody who had been spiritually reborn. Who's birth was not just from the

womb of the conditioned but from the unconditioned, symbolized by the lotus.

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V: Perhaps they had gone to the limit of that particular existence. He had used every intellectual argument he had and he was exhausted of all possibilities.

S: Yes, right. You could also look at these figures that appear symbolically. Shiva, Mahesvara, represent all the natural forces, the forces of nature, Sarasvati the whole of worldly arts and sciences and culture He could dress up his arguments in beautiful languages and beautiful words but it wouldn't help him any longer. But in the end he was deprived of all that.

Again one can read between the lines of the legend and note these points of special significance without, as I said, labouring it all overmuch. Trying to give a detailed exegesis of it all. Probably one of Jung's followers would be able to write a whole book about that story, we don't want to try and do that.

V: There's a point here that interests me. Quite often when you get the story of someone being born from a lotus they are adopted by the king of the country. Padmasambhava was adopted like this and it happens somewhere else.

S: Probably. Well, if you are born from a lotus and you are going to have to be adopted by somebody.

V: It's always the king of the country though.

S: Well kings always play a leading part in legend, you could say. Or you could say in myth and legend the king and queen always stand for parents, as in fairy stories. It is your own parents. But you don't really belong to that level, as it were. They are not your real parents, again a very common myth, your real parents are elsewhere. You are an orphan in this world, you are only an adopted child, you don't really belong here.

But these legends are quite interesting. It is quite often difficult to discover exactly what is at the bottom of them historically speaking. You can catch the general drift but there are some interesting psychological and spiritual side-lights.

V: What about, 'Mantras fluttered down and he doubted that they were Buddhist'?

S: He doubted, he thought that they probably were Buddhist but he didn't like to think that. 'The Mantras were excellent and beautiful and Matrceta was impressed by them but doubted that they were Buddhist'. He was still not very keen on Buddhism, so he was impressed by the mantras, presumably written on ola leaves, but thinking they might be Buddhist he was a bit resistant to them. In other words he wasn't very open to the truth. He wanted to hang on to his old Hinduism. So even though he appreciated the mantras he wasn't all that happy about them because he thought they might be Buddhist mantras.

'At this a deity appeared and beat him senseless.' What do you think that means?

V: Probably he just suffered through his doubts, confusion?

S: Well he is not being really very honest is he. 'The mantras were excellent and beautiful and Matrceta was impressed [88] by them', but he didn't allow himself to accept that impression, didn't allow himself really to be impressed. He was impressed but he didn't accept that, after all they might be Buddhist mantras. So he sort of inhibited himself on purely theoretical or prejudicial grounds and then there was a reaction - the deity appeared and beat him senseless. If you deny your own true feelings, as it were, your better feelings, then there is a reaction.

I don't want again to interpret too much but there is a sort of suggestion of this sort of thing.

'And when he came to he looked more closely at the pages and discovered that they contained a prophesy of his own life, saying that he would become a great Buddhist teacher'. So there was nothing to be afraid of after all, really.

And again, he cuts his tongue out and it grows again. What do you think this means? His tongue itself is reborn. He is reborn totally and his gifts which he previously had misused he dedicates to a noble spiritual purpose. So he has got a new tongue, as it were, his tongue has been reborn and his gifts have been reconsecrated.

Anyway one can go on like this endlessly, sort of reading more and more meanings. Maybe one should just take them as suggestions and overtones and undertones of meaning and not try to interpret in too systematic a manner.

Right let's go on.

V: "Though the Mahayana arose simultaneously with the Hinayana and is said to have spread widely in the lands of gods and Nagas, it disappeared from the earth forty years after Buddha's Parinirvana. Nagarjuna founded the Madhyamika system to restore the Mahayana teaching in this world."

S: Now that is rather interesting. According to the general Indo-Tibetan belief the Buddha taught both the Mahayana and the Hinayana but the Mahayana disappeared about forty years after the Buddha's Parinirvana. And it was that Mahayana which was rediscovered and reproclaimed by Nagarjuna. So what do you think this means?

V: Compassion?

S: Not exactly.

V: The spirit of the teaching...

S: The spirit, yes, this is what it really represents. I don't think one should understand Mahayana too literally or Hinayana too literally, but it means that quite a short time after the Buddha's death the spirit of the teaching disappeared. And it was Nagarjuna's great missions simply to restore the spirit of the Buddha's teaching by giving the teaching a new expression in what afterwards became the Mahayana.

So one can simply say that Nagarjuna, five hundred years after the Buddha's Parinirvana was the great restorer of the spirit of Buddhism. This is what it amounts to.

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"Nagarjuna and his disciples spread this system far and wide, but some later philosophers, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, misinterpreted his terse and subtle writings. They began to feel that Nagarjuna though he claimed to avoid either extreme, had fallen into the extreme of nihilism in his explanations of Reality and Voidness. Bhavaviveka, who had studied with Nagarjuna toward the end of the great teacher's life, put forth another Madhyamika system, the Svatantrika-Madhyamika, which claimed to avoid the extreme of nihilism by accepting the self-nature of existence.

No one was able to refute him except Candrakirti. A great Bodhisattva who was said to have been a pandit for five hundred incarnations. Candrakirti had studied with Nagarjuna and was also under the protection of Manjusri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom."

S: You notice it said of Bhavaviveka that he had studied with Nagarjuna but it said of Candrakirti that he had studied with Nagarjuna and was also under the protection of Manjusri the Bodhisattva of wisdom. Now what do you think that sort of distinction means?

V: That he had insight.

S: Hmm, it's as though Bhavaviveka had mastered the letter of the teaching but only Candrakirti had mastered the spirit. Manjughosa or Majushri is the Bodhisattva of wisdom embodying the spirit of the teaching. So again the same thing is happening. Nagarjuna revives the spirit of Buddhism and gives expression to that spirit in that teaching but then again his own teaching is misunderstood. Some of his disciples missed the spirit and another more gifted disciple has to rediscover the spirit. This is what happens continually, there has to be a continual rediscovery of the spirit of the teaching in practically every generation. It is very easily lost, the letter very easily overlays the spirit.

"Candrakirti wrote a clear, powerful refutation of Bhavaviveka's assertion of self-nature. He then gave his own, correct interpretation of Nagarjuna's philosophy, and thus was able to establish the Prasangika-Madhyamika system of the Mahayana.

One day, while circumambulating the main temple at Nalanda, Candrakirti hit his head on a pillar. A scholar who was with him asked, "You are the believer in the self-naturelessness of both persons and phenomena. Why, then, does anything happen when your head hits this column?"

The Bodhisattva replied, "column what column?", and put his hand through the column as though it were not there.

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S: What do you think that means?

V: That their belief is the reality and ... reality and that he has seen into the nature of reality ...

S: Yes. Not only sees into it but his total experience is according to what he sees. He puts his hand through the column.

I think that's clear enough, just carry on.

V: "Another time there was an extremely heavy rainy season, and all the cows sought shelter deep in the jungle. The monks wanted milk and said to Candrakirti, 'If everything is really without an intrinsic nature of its own, why don't you get us some milk from that picture of a cow?'" Candrakirti milked the cow in the picture and presented the milk to the Sangha. In such ways he led many followers of the other Mahayana schools to the system of the Prasangika-Madhyamika."

S: So, it may be that he actually did perform, sort of miracles or it may be that he simply convinced them by argument and that was subsequently represented in symbolic form. As to these legends it is difficult to tell. But certainly Candrakirti was a most influential teacher and is regarded as the commentator on Nagarjuna's works. And it is his interpretation which is followed by the Gelugpa school in Tibet right down to the present.

"Nine hundred years after the Parinirvana of Gautama Buddha, Arya Asanga was born. In his youth he completed intensive studies in a monastery and in middle life withdrew to a cave to meditate. He determined not to give up his meditation until Maitreya, the Bodhisattva of Love and Compassion and Buddha-to-come, manifested himself openly before him. When, after three years, he had had no results, he became discouraged and left his cave. Nearby, he met a man who was making a needle from an iron spike by rubbing it with a piece of cotton. Seeing this, his patience returned and he went back to his cave and meditated unceasingly for six more years. Still Maitreya did not manifest himself. Disheartened that he had meditated for nine years without even a sign of success, Asanga again left his cave. Outside he saw how a rock had been completely worn down by single drops of water and the beating wings of passing birds. Again his patience returned and he resumed his meditation this time for another three [91] years. But finally Asanga despaired completely of realizing his aim, and set out on the journey to return to his monastery.

On the outskirts of Acinta, he saw an old she-dog whose hindquarters were raw and crawling with maggots. He felt great pity for her and wanted to relieve her suffering, but could not bear to destroy the maggots. Instead, he cut a piece of flesh from his own thigh and placed it near the dog. He then put out his tongue and prepared to transfer the larvae one by one, but the sight of the wound was so disgusting that he had to close his eyes. Suddenly there was a great ringing in his ears, and he opened his eyes. Standing before him, in a magnificent, radiant light, was Maitreya. Despite his joy, Arya Asanga exclaimed without thinking, "Why did you never come to me during the twelve years I earnestly meditated?"

Maitreya answered, "I was with you all the time, but you could not see me, because you did not yet have great Compassion. If you do not believe me, carry me through the town on your shoulder and try to show me to the people." "

S: Remember that Maitreya and the whole Yogacara Extensive Deed tradition that Asanga is associated with is connected with compassion rather than with wisdom, according to what we saw yesterday.

"Then Arya Asanga raised Maitreya on his shoulder and carried him through the town, hoping to let everyone see the wonderful Buddha. But no one in the town saw Maitreya, and only one old woman saw even the dog."

S: I think the moral of that is quite obvious.

"After this, Maitreya magically transported Arya Asanga to Tusita heaven, where he stayed for fifty earth-years studying the Dharma. When he returned to India, he brought with him The Five Teachings of Maitreya, which are the central teachings of the lineage of Compassion, and which are used in the Tibetan tradition as root texts for the study of Abhidharma and the Prajnaparamita. [1]

S: Right, any query on that story about Asanga? We spoke yesterday about Asanga's sojourn in the Tushita devaloka, what that might really mean.

All right we go on then.

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"In a prophecy made in the White Lotus Sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha himself predicted the spread of the Teaching to Tibet. Once, while the great Teacher was staying in the Bamboo Grove with his disciples, a rainbow-coloured ray of light emanated from his forehead toward the north, and he smiled. His disciples were surprised and begged him to explain. He said, "Fortunate youths, the snowy country of Tibet, long the abode of demons and devils, has never been subdued by any of the Buddhas of the past, present, or future, but it will be subdued in the future by the Bodhisattva Arya Avalokitesvara. He will lead its inhabitants to the path of enlightenment and the Holy Dharma will blaze there like a rising sun. Long ago Arya Avalokitesvara made this vow before the thousand Buddhas:

May I be able to establish in emancipation all the living beings in the barbaric Land of Snow, where beings are so hard to discipline and none of the Buddhas of the three times have stepped. May these beings be disciplined by me. May I be like father and mother to those who are now helpless. May I be their guide, leading them to freedom. May I burn the lamp to chase away the gloom of barbarism. In that country, may I extend, for as long as possible, the teachings of the Tathagatas of the three times. In hearing the name of the Three Jewels, may the many beings of the Land of Snow go for refuge and obtain rebirth as men or gods. May they have the opportunity to enjoy the Holy Dharma. May I be able to mature and emancipate them, each according to his own way. May that gloomy, barbaric country become bright, like an island of precious jewels.

After this speech, another ray of light in the form of a white lotus emanated from Buddha's heart. It illuminated all the world and radiated to Amitabha in Sukhavati, the Pure Land, the

Western Paradise - an ineffable land of light sustained by the power of the Buddhas, in which there is no material creation."

S: You notice here that though we regard Tibet as the country of Buddhism par excellence, as it were, it certainly wasn't like that from the beginning. All the Tibetan accounts describe Tibet as being originally occupied by very savage, barbaric, demoniacal people, not in the least interested in religion. And certainly it was a very tough job introducing Buddhism there at all. And according to the legend no other Buddha had ever stepped there in the remote past. But Arya Avalokiteshvara undertakes to do that, so that suggests that there is hope for all over unpromising conditions, maybe.

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I have pointed out in the lecture I gave on Tibetan Buddhism that it took fully five hundred years to establish Buddhism in Tibet. So if it takes us quite a long time to establish Buddhism in England we mustn't get impatient. It will probably take us, well - several hundred years at least. One hundred years has already gone by, one could say.

V: Taken from when?

S: One hundred years ago. (laughter)

V: But ninety three years of that would have been Hinayana.

S: Not quite, I date it from Edwin Arnold's 'Light of Asia' which I think was 1873 or thereabouts. I am not quite sure, but roughly a hundred years. [It was 1879 - checker's note]

All right let's go on then.

"That ray of light then emanated from the heart of Amitabha and dissolved into the Lotus Lake thereupon Amitabha prophesied that an incarnation of Buddha would subdue the beings in the barbaric Land of Snow.

At that time there lived in Sukhavati the Dharmaraja Sang-bo-chok."

S: Dharmaraja means religious king.

"One day he sent a group of his attendants to Lotus Lake to gather offerings of flowers for Buddha. In the middle of the lake they saw a lotus from whose great stem extended a canopy of leaves; showing through the petals of the lotus was a cushion from which radiated rays of light. The attendants immediately ran to tell the king, who, amazed, filled his royal barge with offerings and went with his attendants to see this miraculous lotus. In front of the lotus he and his attendants made offerings and prayer.

The centre of the lotus opened in four parts, revealing, miraculously born from the lotus, the incarnation who would subdue the barbaric Land of Snow. He was seated in the cross-legged position. His face was smiling and beautiful; his hair fell in five locks and was ornamented with precious jewels. He had four arms. Two of his hands were folded at his heart; his lower right hand held a white crystal rosary, and his lower left hand held the stem of a white lotus that blossomed at his ear. His body was the colour of sunlight reflected on ranges of snowy mountains and was ornamented by the special signs and marks. He was adorned by jewelled ornaments and wore garments of beautiful silks. Across his left shoulder was draped the skin of a black antelope. From his body, rays of light emanated to the ten directions.

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The king and his attendants welcomed him with many kinds of music, and invited him to the palace. The king then went to Amitabha and asked, "Who is this incarnation magically born from the centre of a lotus, who has the five flowing locks, who is ornamented with precious jewels, who is the colour of snowy mountains, whose beautiful appearance captivates the

mind, and who has the extraordinary signs and marks? Is he a prince of my lineage or is he one who will help living beings?"

Amitabha replied, "This incarnation is a Bodhisattva, the great compassionate Arya Avalokitesvara. He is not of your kingly lineage."

Then Amitabha, putting his hand on the head of Arya Avalokitesvara, spoke these words: "Noble son, those beings who abide in the barbaric Land of Snow have not been subdued by the Buddhas of the three times. Because of the power of your previous supplication, you, excellent one, will subdue them. Wondrously well done! By merely seeing your Arya body and hearing the sound of the six syllables, may the beings in the Land of Snow be delivered from the three lower states of beings and obtain rebirth as men or gods."

S: What are these six syllables?

V's: Om Mani Padme Hum

S: Yes.

V: Is this one a blessing with his hand?

S: Yes, that's a blessing surely.

"When all the demons and devils living in the Land of Snow see your body and hear the six syllables, may their harmful minds be calmed and may they develop helpfulness, compassion, and the Bodhi-mind.

"When all the carnivorous animals in that country, whose very voices are frightful, see your body and hear the six syllables, may their harmful thoughts be calmed and may they live together peacefully.

"When beings in the Land of Snow who are hungry, thirsty, and miserable see your Arya body and hear the six syllables, may they receive a rain of ambrosia. Drinking this, may they be satisfied according to their wish.

"When those who live in the Land of Snow who are unfortunate, blind, and sick, who have no protection and no refuge, see your Arya body and hear the six syllables, may they be completely freed from all sickness and disabilities.

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"When all these beings see your Arya body and hear the six syllables, may their lives be prolonged and free from illness.

"May you be the protector of those without protection, the refuge of those without refuge.

"As the beings in the Land of Snow depend on the six syllables, may all the teachings of the Buddha spread throughout the land and may all delight in the holy Dharma. Om mani padme hum. In these six syllables are found the intent of all the Buddhas, and the root of the eighty-four thousand aggregates of Dharma." "

S: What do you think is the significance of this reference many times to 'see your Arya body and hear the six syllables'?

V: Sambhogakaya.

S: Yes, in a way. It suggests the visualization and mantra recitation, doesn't it?

"It came to be that there was a monkey king who was an emanation of Arya Avalokitesvara.



This monkey king took the Upasaka, or layman's vow, and went to the mountains of the Land of Snow to meditate. In the Robo cave, he tirelessly meditated on the extensive compassion of Bodhi mind and the profound view of Voidness. One day, a demoness of the mountain noticed the Bodhisattva-monkey and immediately fell in love with him. She courted him, showing many signs of affection, while he sat undistracted in meditation. Finally, she appeared before him in the shape of a beautiful woman and begged him to marry her. He refused, telling her that he was an Upasaka, and that for him to marry her would corrupt his vow. Bursting into tears, she told him that she would die if he did not marry her. She pleaded with him in this way for a week, and finally threatened that her desire would compel her to marry a demon and conceive innumerable demon children who would devour all the living beings in the Land of Snow.

The Bodhisattva-monkey did not know what to do. To marry her would break his vow, and not to marry her would bring great misery to the living beings of that country. In dire distress, he called for the assistance of Arya Avalokitesvara.

The wise Bodhisattva and two manifestations of the goddess Tara appeared and told him to marry the demoness. Arya Avalokitesvara performed the wedding ceremony, during which he made this prophecy: "In the future, the Doctrine of Buddha will flourish in the [96] Land of Snow. Spiritual teachers will come forth ceaselessly, and there will blossom many treasures of hidden teaching."

The demoness and the Bodhisattva-monkey had six children, each born from one of samsara's six realms. The child born from hell had a dark face and was very patient and uncomplaining; the child born from the realm of hungry ghosts was very greedy for food and drink; the child born from the animal world was stupid and brutish; the child born from the world of humans was intelligent and humble; the child born from the realm of the demigods was strong and prone to quarrelling and jealousy; and the child born from the world of the gods was forbearing and virtuous.

At first the family ate wild fruit that grew in the forest, but as their numbers increased they exhausted the supply of fruit. All the children cried incessantly for food, and the Bodhisattva-monkey fell into deep despair, knowing no way to satisfy their hunger. Again he prayed to Arya Avalokitesvara and in response to his devout plea, the earth was miraculously covered with an abundance of food crops. Eating these, the monkey-demon children gradually lost their fur. Eventually their tails fell off, and they stood erect like human beings.

These were the first Tibetans. Their temperament is said to stem from their ancestors, Bodhisattva and demon. Thus, from their father they are hard-working, kind, and attracted to religious activity; from their mother they are quick-tempered, passionate, prone to jealousy, and fond of play and meat.

S: What do you think this all means?

This is clearly folklore which has been incorporated into Tibetan Buddhism.

V: Is it a bit like you were saying earlier, the assimilation of that lower energy to the ethnic energy?

S: It is partly that I think. Also it is an attempt to account for the duality that you find in human nature. That you find even in the Tibetans themselves. There is an element in the Tibetan character, as I have said many times before, which is very harsh and brutal and fierce and warlike. And before the introduction of Buddhism the Tibetans were a very war-like people and they conquered many surrounding territories. But there is also Buddhism. So you get, very often, a conflict in the Tibetan character between their original nature and their Buddhist nature. And it is as though the Tibetans themselves try to account for this by saying, well from our fathers side we are descended from the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara who became a monkey and on our mothers side we are descended from a demoness. There [97] is

the spiritual and there is the worldly, not only the worldly almost the diabolical. Maybe the Tibetans feel that sort of conflict within themselves and it is that general conflict between the ethnic and the spiritual, between the conditioned and unconditioned.

V: It is not denied or crushed in any way, it is recognized.

S: It's recognized, yes. The monkey marries the demoness and it is interesting that their six children are born from the six different realms. This suggests that the demoness herself represents these realms, represents mundane existence and the children being born from them represents the purification or sublimation of these six realms, in a way. And that is of course partly the significance of the six syllables, there is one syllable for each realm. As you repeat all six you deliver yourself from all six realms of conditioned existence.

V: It is very interesting that the child born from hell is very patient and uncomplaining.

S: Yes ... hard time, a dark face burned with all the sufferings as it were, burned with the fire of hell. Patient and uncomplaining.

V: It seems to indicate a very interesting thing talked about quite often in the Friends, that our present state is very much relative, our state of mind is relative to what we have been through before, in the past. And our whole psychic make up is very much a conglomerate, as a result.

S: Yes. We should try to see who is patient and uncomplaining, who is greedy for food and drink, who is stupid and brutish and so on.

V: Like somebody could be very very happy in what we would regard as involved in a intolerable situation. Because they have been in a much worse situation.

S: Or in a very good situation and something of it has lingered on. They are not easily depressed or discouraged.

V: Yes, that would be the world of the gods?

S: Yes.

V: Why would it have been against his vow to marry as an Upasaka?

S: Well that is what it says. Perhaps they took the Upasaka vow even more strictly than it was later on. I don't think it is anything to do with her being a demoness I think it is to do with marriage as such.

V: Is there a connection, say, between the fact that it is Avalokiteshvara and the temperament of the Tibetans? That it is the compassion aspect that is most lacking.

S: Yes, one could say that, that is quite a point. Being left to themselves without Buddhism, as it were, the Tibetans are quite cruel. Even until very recent times there were very [98] cruel punishments being inflicted in Tibet, despite Buddhism.

Sulochana: It seems that he succumbed to the blackmail of the demoness.

S: Not really, he didn't want Tibet to be populated by demons. In a way it was blackmail, but he went into it with his eyes wide open and not out of his personal weakness but out of his desire that the Dharma should spread in Tibet. I mean in ordinary circumstances one shouldn't succumb to blackmail, not unless one has the powers of a Bodhisattva. If someone says, "I'll die if you don't marry me," well you can say, "well sorry you will just have to die in that case." (laughter)

V: I think too that the part where the fruit, they exhausted the supply of their food on that

level then appealed to Avalokitesvara. Upon eating the food that came then they lost their fur and became more human.

S: It is quite strange this sort of evolutionary implication isn't it. I suppose that it is because this well known resemblance of the human being to the monkey which would strike anybody. That monkeys without their tails are practically human beings. Human beings are just, sort of, monkeys without tails. So you could quite easily have a legend where monkeys turned into human beings. All the same it is a little odd.

V: There isn't a type of monkey that lives in Tibet?

S: They do have monkeys in Tibet. I have even heard that they are supposed to have two kinds of creatures that aren't exactly monkeys but aren't exactly human either. Sort of intermediate. And one of my own pupils in Kalimpong did tell me that he had seen both of these kinds at different times.

V: Yetis?

S: Not yetis, something distinct from the yetis. Yetis are supposed to be very very large but these are not so large as the Yeti. But one kind is a little taller than the average human being and the other considerably shorter. And he did say that he had seen both kinds several times in Eastern Tibet. He said that the people in those areas used sometimes to hunt the second type and kill them. They said they were definitely not animals, they were not bears or monkeys or anything of that sort. They were not human but the Lamas said that they were to be regarded as human and treated as human and not killed like animals. He did describe them to me in detail but I am afraid I have forgotten. I think he said that the taller ones had dark hair, had very black hair whereas the shorter ones had dark brown hair.

V: Do you mean hair meaning fur?

S: No, hair on the head. And they didn't wear clothes. Though I think he said that some of them wore skins, but I can't be quite sure of that. It is quite a long time ago, I should have written it all down but I didn't.

I think on the whole, the whole episode just illustrates [99] the duality of human nature, in a way. Even a conflict in human nature, the pull of the conditioned and the pull of the unconditioned.

V: Would that sort of, in some ways account for the whole sort of thing that has developed of having deities with wrathful and peaceful forms?

S: I don't think so, I don't think it has got anything to do with it. That did start in India anyway, didn't it?

Sona: Is it common, Bhante, in sort of talking about other levels of being that they would take an Upasaka vow or the equivalent in their realm?

S: Sometimes it is said of the gods that they go for refuge and observe the precepts, this is said.

V: Not in any of the other realms?

S: Not that I recollect. In some Jataka stories they do speak about animals in this sort of way but quite clearly the animals are being just regarded as human beings, as in animal fables.

All right, let's go on.

"Before his teacher Amitabha, Arya Avalokitesvara also vowed:

May I have the opportunity to establish all living beings in happiness, beginning with those in the Land of Snow. Until I relieve all living beings, may I never, even for a moment, feel like giving up the purpose of others for my own peace and happiness. If I should ever think of my own happiness, may my head be cracked into ten pieces like the Ardzaka plant, and may my body be split into a thousand pieces, like the petals of a lotus.

Having made this promise, he travelled throughout the six realms of samsara, teaching all living beings the eighty-four-thousand Teachings of Dharma by means of the six-syllable mantra, om mani padme hum. In each realm he freed beings from their particular miseries, and taught the Dharma to those who wished to hear it.

Finally he went to Tibet, the Land of Snow. Gazing over the Tibetan nation from the peak of Red Mountain, he had a vision of countless beings burning alive in an ocean of fire. Witnessing the misery of these beings, he wept heart-felt tears. The goddesses Tara, and Bhrkuti, [1] miraculously appeared from his teardrops and encouraged the Bodhisattva, promising to help him with the great task of teaching the Tibetans.

[100] Avalokitesvara went among the Tibetans and taught them the mantra, om mani padme hum, pronouncing the words of the Dharma with infinite compassion. Then he entered the meditation of Bodhi-mind, making a long and intense effort to dispel the misery of beings and bring them to happiness. Exhausted by his efforts, he entered the meditation of restoration. For a second time, he gazed out over the land and saw that he had not helped even one one-hundredth of the beings of the Land of Snow to enter the bliss of liberation. He was seized by bitter sorrow, and for an instant the thought arose, What is the use? I can do nothing for them. It is better for me to be happy and peaceful myself."

At that very moment, his head cracked into ten pieces and his body split into a thousand parts. In agony, he cried out to Amitabha Buddha, who appeared before him in the sky. Placing his hand on Avalokitesvara's shattered head, he said:

All circumstances come from co-operative causes Conditioned at the moment of intent. Every fortune which arises to anyone Results from his own former wish. Your powerful expression of supplication Was praised by all the Buddhas. In a moment of time, The truth will certainly appear.

Then Amitabha blessed him and transfigured the ten pieces of his head into ten faces, one for each of the Ten Transcendences."

S: The ten Transcendences are usually what we call the Ten Perfections, the Ten Paramitas, they are Giving, Moral Practice, Patience, Effort, Meditation, Wisdom, Method, Prayer, Power and Sublime Wisdom.

"He also blessed the broken body, transfiguring the torn flesh into a thousand hands, each with its own wisdom-eye, so that the Bodhisattva had a thousand eyes and his vision became as that of the Thousand Buddhas of the Golden Aeon. On the crown of the ten-faced head, Amitabha placed himself, and he radiated boundless, inconceivable light."

S: Any query about that? The symbolism seems quite obvious.

Ananda: At the end of that little verse Bhante, it says, 'in a moment of time the truth will certainly appear'. Does that mean at the end of a long period of time?

S: No it means just in a minute, when he, Amitabha blesses [101] Avalokiteshvara and transforms his head into ten faces and so on. That is what he is referring to. And this is, of course, of the most popular forms of Avalokiteshvara, with the eleven heads and the one thousand arms, symbolizing the innumerable activities of compassion and the way he is looking in all directions simultaneously. And of course the eye, the wisdom eye in the palm of the hand is important. It suggests that whatever you do is informed by wisdom, you are active

but you are active skilfully, active with wisdom, not just active.

V: Does that thousand hands basically mean infinite hands?

S: Yes.

V: There is a slightly different rendition of the tradition that I have heard, about how he obtained those. That his head split as a result of his compassion and that his arms came as a result of his desire to help beings.

S: Yes, this is certainly the usual version, yes. All right let's go on. We are getting now into the more historical times, in essence.

V: "Since that time, Arya Avalokitesvara has often manifested himself in Tibet. His various forms have included laymen and Lamas. The first of the three great Tibetan Dharmarajas, King Songtsen Gampo, who ruled in the seventh century, was considered an incarnation of Avalokitesvara, and his two Buddhist queens, one a Nepali princess and the other a Chinese princess, were believed to be the two manifestations of Tara born from Avalokitesvara's tears. Historically, this king is credited with bringing Buddhism to Tibet, for he sent his counsellor Thon-mi Sambhota to India to study the Teaching and to learn the art of writing from the great Sanskrit scholars. Returning to Tibet, Thon-mi Sambhota developed the written form of Tibetan and began the great task of translating the Sutras and commentaries from Sanskrit to Tibetan."

S: This is all, of course, historically based.

V: "The second great Dharmaraja, King Tri-song-day-tsen reigned in the eighth century. He was considered an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Manjusri. King Tri-song-day-tsen invited the teacher Padmasambhava to come to Tibet and subdue the many local demons and deities, who were jealous of the spread of Buddhism. Padmasambhava's teachings flourished, and he had many followers who later came to be known as the Nying-ma-pa sect. Also, during King Tri-song-day- [102] tsen's reign, the great Indian scholar Kamalasila was invited to Tibet to challenge the Chinese Ch'an teacher, Hua-shang Mahayana. After much debate, Hua-shang Mahayana was declared the loser and was asked to leave Tibet. Since that time the Buddhism of Tibet has primarily been based on Indian rather than Chinese sources."

(End of side 1)

S: This again has a historical basis. There is an account of this great debate which has come down to us.

V: "The third great Dharmaraja was King Ralpachen, who reigned in the ninth century. He was considered an incarnation of Vajrapani. King Ralpachen began large-scale, systematized translation of the Sanskrit texts, but this work was cut short by his assassination. This marked the end of the early spread of Dharma in Tibet, for his successor, the evil King Lang-dar-ma, was able in only five years to almost completely destroy the Teaching there. King Lang-dar-ma was also assassinated, but it was many years before Buddhism became strong again in Tibet.

For almost a century there were few teachers with any real insight into the Teaching and few reliable translations of the Buddhist texts. A deep schism developed between the followers of the Sutras and followers of the Tantras. Of the many who professed to follow the Dharma, some were merely scholars who went about arguing obscure theoretical points, and some were yogis who understood the practice of magic but not that of religion. There were few who continued to put into practice the pure aims and actions of Buddha.

In the early eleventh century, a great king of western Tibet, Ye-shay-o and his son, Chang-chub-o, were able to bring Atisa, then the most renowned teacher in India, to Tibet to

restore the purity of the Teaching. At this same time, Marpa the great Translator, made several journeys to India, where he studied with the famous Siddha, Naropa. Marpa brought from India many important yoga treatises, as well as the lineage of Naropa, which he passed on to his greatest disciple, the Unsurpassed Yogi Milarepa."

S: So we are coming much more definitely into historical times. You can see the sort of perspective that the Tibetans have as they look back over the history of Buddhism. First of all they see Tibetan Buddhism and behind that there is Indian Buddhism. Behind the great Indian teachers there is the figure of the Buddha. Or rather, first of all they see the more [103] recent Indian teachers, those who came to Tibet and behind them the great Mahayana Acaryas and behind them the great early leaders of the Sangha and behind them the figure of the Buddha. And as it gets further back in time, of course, it gets more and more legendary.

All right let's go on to Atisa then.

V: "Atisa, or Dipankara Sri Jnana, was born in the late tenth century in eastern India. He was the second son of Kalyana Sri, a rich and powerful king. At a very young age Atisa entered Nalanda university. He studied there for many years and, by the time he was thirty-one, had mastered the entire Tripitaka - Sutra, Vinaya, and Abhidharma, as well as the teachings of the Mantrayana. Atisa then travelled to Suvarnadvipa present-day Sumatra - to study with Acarya Dharmakirti (Lama Ser-ling-pa), from whom he received the teaching of Bodhi-mind. Because of the greatness of this teaching, Atisa considered Acarya Dharmakirti the kindest of his many teachers."

S: We don't always realize that Sumatra, right until the Muslim invasion was a great centre of Buddhism, one of the greatest in those day. And it is there, of course, that Borobodur stands. I am not quite sure whether Borobodur is Java or Sumatra but it is part of that ... It is Java, isn't it?

All right, go on.

V: "While studying in Sumatra, Atisa became skilled in the two great lineages: the lineage of Maitreya, which is the lineage of Compassion that descended through Asanga; and the lineage of Manjusri, which is the lineage of Wisdom that descended through Nagarjuna. He then returned to India, and as he was the foremost teacher of his time, became head of the one hundred and eight temples of the university of Vikramasila.

Some years later a delegation, the first of three, arrived at the university to invite Atisa to Tibet. Atisa refused the request of the first delegation. The second delegation, headed by King Ye-shay-o, was captured en route by a barbarian king who held Ye-shay-o for ransom. The Buddhist king's son, Prince Chang-chub-o, collected the necessary gold, but the king refused to be ransomed, saying that he was old and would soon die anyway, and would rather that the money be used to bring Atisa to Tibet. The good king was then executed by his captor. The third delegation reached Vikramsila and told Atisa all of this. Atisa felt great respect for the determination of the king and his subjects and agreed to go to Tibet."

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S: Now we are definitely on very firm ground, historically. There are quite precise dates and facts.

V: "Atisa arrived in Tibet in 1042 AD. He first stayed in the land of his donor, King Chang-chub-o, where at the king's request he wrote the famous Lamp of the Bodhi-Path. In this treatise is the first formulation of the three levels of beings - lower, middle, and higher in the three stages of Renunciation, Bodhi-mind, and the View of Reality. This text contains the lineages of the Profound View and Extensive Deeds descended through Nagarjuna and Asanga. In it are brought together the teachings of the Hinayana, Mahayana and Mantrayana, in stages of practice leading to highest enlightenment. Tsongkhapa praised Atisa's teaching in a work called The Concise Meaning of the Stages of the Path, saying:

Through it one can realize that the teachings are without contradiction And understand all of the doctrines as precepts; One can easily find the intention of Buddha, And avoid the abyss of wrongdoing.

Thus this precept is relied on by many of good fortune, The wise of India and Tibet. What sensible mind would not be captivated By the path of stages of the three types of beings."

S: There is a phrase here which is quite important. 'The doctrines as precepts'. What do you think that means?

Sagaramati: Is it meant to be practised.

S: Yes. Or reducible to something quite specific and directly related to the spiritual situation and spiritual needs of the individual follower. Not just doctrines in the sense of abstract general principles. In other words, to feel that the doctrine is addressed to you directly, that it is an sort of injunction to you. A precept aimed at you, not just a doctrine of very general applicability, up in the air, as it were, that doesn't really apply to you.

Ananda: Does the three levels of beings refer in any way, or related in any way to the six realms of beings?

S: No, it means lower, middling and superior. But in each of the three main stages there are three levels of practitioners, those who are low, those who are in the middle, those who are superior. That is those who have practised the particular stage to a limited degree, those who have practised it to a middling degree and those have practised it fully.

V: What is the doctrine of Bodhi-mind that has been mentioned?

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S: It is the teaching about the Bodhicitta. The tradition of the arising of the Bodhicitta.

V: "Atisa later travelled to Lhasa and other parts of Tibet, strengthening and purifying the practice of Buddhism there. During this time he gathered many disciples, the foremost among them being the teacher Drom, the founder of the Kadampa sect, which carries the lineage of Atisa's teaching."

S: It is quite remarkable that Drom, as we shall see later on, never became a monk, he remained an ordinary Upasika, which was quite unusual in those days. And it was through him that the lineage of Atisha and Atisha's teaching comes.

Anyway let's go on to Tsongkhapa and then we come to the end of the Chapter.

V: "Tsongkhapa (1357-1419) was born in Amdo, a province of eastern Tibet, in Tsong-kha-"the region of onions". Thus he is known as a man of the onion region". His religious name is Lobsang Drakpa. When he was very young, he entered a monastery of the Kadampa sect. There he was taught the lineage of Compassion, and quickly mastered The Five Teachings of Maitreya, the books Asanga brought back from the Tusita heaven. Tsongkhapa then learned all of the Vinaya and Abhidharma.

When he began to study the Madhyamika, he found that the available collection of texts was very confused, for many scholars had attempted to interpret them in their own way. Through his teacher, Lama U-ma-pa, Manjusri told him that the writings of Candrakirti were in all ways reliable. From then on, Tsongkhapa studied the commentaries of Candrakirti and soon attained highest realization. By this realization, he was able to converse directly with Manjusri, who gave him many precepts, as well as instructions to write The Stages of the Path and The Stages of Mantra.

Tsongkhapa founded the Ganden monastery in Lhasa, where he established the Gelugpa

order. It became one of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism, the other three being the Nyingmapa, the Kargyupa, and the Sakyapa. Tsongkhapa's third Successor, Gendundrup, was recognized as an incarnation of Avalokitesvara and became the First Dalai Lama.

The present Dalai Lama, His Holiness Tenzin Gyatsho, fourteenth incarnation of that unbroken Succession, currently lives and teaches in India. His Holiness continues the compassionate deeds of Avalokitesvara, guiding the Tibetan people in exile, and extending the Teachings of Buddha to many, both Eastern and Western."

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S: So we have been given a sort of conspectus of the history of the Dharma in Indian and in Tibet in the form of episodes, mainly legendary, from the lives of various great teachers. So this is the sort of background against which the Tibetans themselves, certainly the more learned Tibetans, see Tibetan Buddhism.

Any query or comment on that chapter as a whole?

Mangala: I would like to query that last paragraph about the Dalai Lama continuing the compassionate deeds of Avalokiteshvara and guiding the Tibetan people in exile. I was just wondering if you think he is doing that, actually.

S: Well he is certainly trying to, but obviously circumstances are very difficult and there isn't really very much he can do. He doesn't have any real power, he is there very much on sufferance, he is a guest of the government of India and it seems at present that the government of India isn't all that happy to have him there. Now there are even rumours going round about negotiations with the Chinese. Not only between the government of India and the Chinese but the Dalai Lama and the Chinese, for him to go back to Tibet. We have been hearing quite a lot about these things lately. One just doesn't know. There are even suggestions that he might go to America, go to Canada.

V: There are rumours that he is coming to this country again.

S: But it does seem, broadly speaking that a feeling has gone around among the Tibetan monks at least in India, that it is not going to be possible for them to stay there much longer and many of them are looking for somewhere else to stay.

Mangala: I think maybe the point I was really querying was, what do you feel about him being put in such company as Tsongkhapa and Atisa and Nagarjuna and people like that? You know, like if this is a history of great teachers and about the spread of Buddhism.

S: I think that it must be said that so far, and he is only forty, that the Dalai Lama doesn't come up to that level if one goes by what he has actually produced or actually done. But he is only forty and no doubt there is a lot more time. One can't say that there is any sort of achievement to his credit of that kind, or of that type. But then again he has obviously been greatly preoccupied with political matters.

V: So he is really, just a political figure?

S: No, I wouldn't say that. He is certainly very deeply versed in the Tibetan tradition, he has studied quite well, but he doesn't seem to have any creative originality as regards the exposition of the doctrine as these other figures did, Nagarjuna, Tsongkhapa and so on. But no doubt nonetheless he remains very important for the Tibetans as a symbol of national unity, even national existence, as well as their religious head.

V: I would have thought that there will be a great deal to be done to unify the teachings of the many Tibetan groups all over the world.

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S: Yes, right. Because there are quite a number of Tibetan groups now in different parts of the West. But they don't seem very unified.

V: Have you been in correspondence with him at all?

S: Well, I met him many times in India and I had some correspondence some years ago, but like all the other contacts in the East that too has sort of fallen by the wayside. But I keep up contact with someone who is very much with him, who is the director of the library of Tibetan archives. He was a sort of student of mine in Kalimpong about twenty four, twenty five years ago. He is now a middle aged man, then he was a boy of nineteen or twenty. He writes to me quite regularly.

V: When did Geshe Wangyal go to America?

S: He went about fifty four, fifty five.

V: ...

S: Though he had been out of Tibet much earlier. He came to England in the thirties, was sponsored by ... and he started learning English even then. He is quite unusual in this respect. He is of course now quite an old man.

V: Could you say more about him.

S: He is getting on for eighty.

V: That's quite old for a Tibetan.

S: Well he's not Tibetan he's a Mongolian. I do not know whether they are longer lived than the Tibetans.

Well any further point about that whole chapter? Do you get a definite impression from the chapter? How the Tibetans see the history of Buddhism in terms of the lives of these teachers.

V: Again there is a strong impression of continuity and development.

S: Yes, there is definite continuity and development. There is certainly a broad historical basis to it all even though it is rather embellished with all sorts of legendary episodes. But even these legendary episodes, though we can't take them as representing historical fact always, they still often have a meaning of their own. Or are sometimes very suggestive psychologically and spiritually .

V: There is a very strong impression of the sort of interweaving of the mythological and the historical.

S: Yes, right. You are not quite sure, sometimes, which way you are to take it.

V: The Kadampa sect, Bhante, is that now under one of the other four main schools?

S: Yes it is sort of incorporated into the Gelugpas. Because [108] sometimes the Gelugpa are called the new Kadampas, where they directly continue that lineage and their general outlook is the outlook of Atisa, their general attitude is the attitude of Atisa. But it is very interesting that his chief disciple was a layman, an Upasika. And we will be coming across some of that Upasika's sayings and teachings later on in the volume.

V: Is there a reliable translation of the Bodhipathapradipa?

S: Yes, there is. I think I've got one, actually, in another volume. I think you'll find one in

'Atisa and Tibet' which is published in India. I have got a copy of that. As far as I recollect it does contain a translation.

So tomorrow we will be dealing with the legendary episodes in the life of the Buddha and then we shall be coming on to a very important section, that of the Kadampa precepts. In some ways, perhaps, the most important section in the whole ...

Any final points before we close?

V: Is Brikuti an emanation of Tara? Is there another name that she is known by?

S: Not that I recollect. No. It is a quite well known form of Tara.

V: How is she visualized?

S: She is a form of green Tara as far as I know. I don't know whether there are any particular attributes.

V: There is a poster of a six armed form of Tara I sometimes see.

S: That isn't the same.

Chapter 2.

Discourses from Sutra

S: There are a couple of pages of introduction to this chapter so let's start on those.

V: "The following stories were translated from the Damamurkha-nama-sutra, in the Tibetan Kanjur, Volume 40, Peking edition as published by the Suzuki Research Foundation."

S: Damamurkha means wise and foolish. It tells about the wise and the foolish.

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The first, "The Miraculous Deeds of Sakyamuni Buddha", tells of Buddha's victory over six Indian pandits. As great teachers of that time, they were resentful of Buddha's large following, and attempted to discredit him by a show of magical powers. Buddha's purpose in accepting their challenge was not simply to overcome the six pandits and their teaching, but, by performing great miracles and expounding the Doctrine, to lead many beings toward enlightenment. Thus, he was motivated by compassion. The fifteen days of miraculous deeds took place during the first lunar phase of the new year at the beginning of spring, and they are still remembered in the Tibetan New Year celebrations. We have prefaced the story with a poem on the same subject written by the First Panchen Lama, Lobsang Cho kyi Gyaltsen (1569-1662).

"The Story of Prince Gedun" concerns one of the former lives of Sakyamuni Buddha. Known as Prince Gedun in that life, he underwent great hardships to obtain the Wish-fulfilling Jewel and thus benefit all living beings.

The last story, "The Story of the Nun Utpaladok," illustrates the cause and effect of karma and also shows the high position that women could attain within the Sangha.

This chapter illustrates the inconceivability of a Buddha, who, through his great compassion for living beings, is able to accomplish extraordinary feats. The stories indicate the radical metamorphosis that takes place with the attainment of Buddhahood - that Buddhahood is not simply the mental realization of some inner Buddha-nature that we already have, but is a physical change of our whole being in all its relationships and interactions. They give the first hint of behaviour actuated by Bodhi-mind, what a Buddha is and what he can do. We realize

the great distance between our present state of being and the state of a Buddha. We become aware that the events of birth and death are but instants in a larger continuum, that what we are now is a product of what we have done, and what we will be is produced by what we do now. In this immensity of time, we can see the difficulty of attaining Buddhahood, but also the possibility of effecting in ourselves the changes necessary in order to attain Buddhahood."

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S: What Geshe Wangyal says about radical metamorphosis is quite important. "That Buddhahood is not simply the mental realization of some inner Buddha-nature that we already have, but is a physical change of our whole being in all its relationships and interactions." This is also illustrated by the Eight Fold Path. The perfect vision gradually percolates down to all levels, expresses itself in all aspects of our being until there is a thorough and complete transformation at all levels. And this state of thorough and complete transformation is represented by the eighth and last "step" which is of course, Perfect Samadhi. Which is not just meditation but that 'radical metamorphosis', as Geshe Wangyal calls it. Or rather the completion of that.

So why do you think these particular stories, which are, of course, legendary even miraculous stories, are able to give a hint of that sort of radical metamorphosis? That is the suggestion, clearly.

V: It can show you in a life, a person's life, which you could perhaps identify with, an example of change.

S: Although of course it isn't a literal example. In these pages we are going to encounter all sorts of miracles now. You could say that the miracles actually, literally happen and they indicate the sort of change that had taken place, but then we do have the Buddha's own words on the subject of miracles and we know that in the literal sense they are not to be taken as very important. So that leaves us with the symbolical significance. And in what way does the symbolical significance of these miraculous happenings bring out this radical metamorphosis?

V: Because the radical metamorphosis is not just, is not just a change of idea, but something that affects beyond that and so presumably it is a symbolic representation that can get at those layers which conceptual ... can't get at.

S: Right, yes.

V: It also indicates the extension or elevation of consciousness to completely other and different levels.

S: Mm. Yes. If for instance you take the account of the Buddha rising into the air and walking up and down in the air. If you take this as literally having happened - which it might have done - there are many instances in history and literature of people levitating. I was reading only a few days ago some quite well attested accounts of happenings of this sort in the west in the last century and in earlier centuries. So one could say that this power of levitation does exist, that the Buddha could no doubt have exhibited this particular miracle. But what would it have proved, it wouldn't have proved that he was a Buddha, it would only have proved that he had a certain supernormal power that quite a lot of other people also possessed who certainly weren't Buddha's. So if you take that literally it doesn't mean very much. But if you take it imaginatively then what does it represent? It represents the spontaneity and the freedom of Buddhahood. The fact that you are free then to go in any direction, as it were. You are not limited, you are not bound, you are not confined to the lower levels, you are much more free. If you take it imaginatively it conveys all that and you can feel that. You can [111] feel that Buddhahood has that sort of quality of freedom and spontaneity and absence of restrictions.

Not that that particular miracle literally took place and is to be taken in that sense. That

wouldn't fire your imagination really very much, even if it had happened.

V: You begin to appreciate the whole sort of various levels of the transmission. The word transmission obviously has its effect, but if you actually see somebody walking on the air then it's going to have an even ...

S: Because the Tibetans traditionally, are in a much easier position because they could believe that these things literally happened. At the same time they could be affected by the symbolical significance. We have to do a sort of mental gymnastic and tell ourselves, well it didn't really happen like that or very likely didn't happen like that, the real significance is symbolical and then allow ourselves to be influenced by that symbolical significance.

It is just the same, in a way, with Christian mythology. For instance we can appreciate the symbolical significance of the virgin birth, though we don't believe in it literally. But in the middle ages people believed in it literally and it also had the symbolical significance and the fact that they believed in it literally, as it were, reinforced their appreciation of the symbolical significance. Where we nowadays have to have the one without the other which means that even our appreciation of the symbolical significance, if we aren't careful, is weakened.

V: Which is presumably what happened when science and rational thought ...

S: Yes. Where as in the case of Christianity the official teaching, the official doctrine of the church always has been that it literally happened. And that you have to believe that it literally happened, otherwise you are not a Christian. But luckily in the case of Buddhism the Buddha himself deprecated miraculous happenings, the Buddha himself encouraged us to think for ourselves and experience for ourselves, and also we can see that these miraculous happenings and so on are even if not later additions, are certainly not to be taken literally, we can see that for ourselves. So in the case of Buddhism we are in a much more favourable position, in this respect.

Sagaramati: Do you mean like, say with the resurrection, there wasn't something that we try to feel, it was something that happened to somebody out there?

S: If you believe that it actually happened well then this can sort of spark off your imagination too. But if you no longer believe that it literally happened then even the symbolic significance of it, the spiritual significance of it is weakened. At least for people in the west because we have been used to identifying the historical and the miraculous in that way. And so much importance has been given to the fact that it literally did happen. Say, that the Virgin Mary was literally a virgin, that the conception of Christ took place in a miraculous manner. And then that he actually did die, was dead for three days and was then resurrected and literally went up into heaven. All this was taken completely literally. [112] So because people took it literally they were also open to the spiritual significance of it. But nowadays, of course we can no longer take it literally, many Christians can't even, not to speak of Buddhists, but we can certainly appreciate the spiritual significance of it. But even our appreciation of that spiritual significance is weakened because we no longer believe that it literally happened.

V: So it means that you have to work out all the symbolic meanings. When I read the Padmasambhava, what happens with Padmasambhava, I didn't feel that it really mattered whether it happened or not. But reading Lama Govinda's book where he points out a few of the symbolisms, I think you go into it in one of your lectures too, it seems so complicated having to work out all these symbolic things.

S: Yes. It is probably better to read it just as you'd read a poem. It is interesting, Matthew Arnold once wrote, that the only permanent element in Christianity is the poetry, and by poetry he meant all these symbolical element as I call them. So if you can read this sort of material just as literature, that is much better, rather than try to work out what the symbolism means. And luckily, in the case of Buddhism, we can read these things, as it were, as literature. We don't have to take them literally. That was the great difficulty with Christianity.

You couldn't just appreciate the poetry and be affected spiritually, you had to believe in it literally too. That didn't matter in the middle ages when these things had not been scientifically investigated, there was no problem, but there is a problem now. So much that used to be taken as historical fact now has to be taken simply as poetry. But it has its own truth, which is the truth of the imagination, it's not the truth of science, which is a different thing. So we can read what used to be taken literally just as we would read a work of imagination and allow ourselves to be affected by it, but we are not taking it literally. Therefore we shouldn't be too concerned to explain it all in a way that satisfies us intellectually. This isn't always really necessary.

We can read these sort of stories just as we read *Paradise Lost*. We enjoy the poem even though we no longer accept the theology. And we don't stop to work it all out, well God the father can be taken to mean this, God the son can be taken to mean that. It doesn't matter, we just immerse ourselves in the story, immerse ourselves in that particular work of art and allow our imagination to be affected.

Ananda: Are you saying then, Bhante, in respect of Buddhism, because we don't believe in the literal element of some of the events, therefore we are in a worse position to appreciate its symbolical value?

S: Not a worse position, a sort of weaker position. But mainly because of our historical situation in the West. You see in India, they don't bother usually whether it actually happened or not. This idea of "did it really happen", this doesn't bother the Indian, even today. And apparently didn't bother the Tibetan. Because they didn't make that hard and fast distinction between what happened in a historical sense and what happened, as it were, symbolically. They don't seem to make this distinction nearly so rigidly. Perhaps that is a weakness but then it does have its advantages too.

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V: It's as if a scientific mode of thought, a rigid mode of thought, a mode of thought that tends to reify things has taken a much firmer grip in the West.

S: It's not so much reify, but to try and find out what actually happened. Because this is also a valid enquiry, because if you say that Christ lived on earth, well the question of whether he did die and whether he was resurrected becomes a quite genuine question. Whether the traditional account is to be taken literally or not. You can't really avoid that issue once the scientific consciousness is developed. And within those limits it is quite legitimate enquiry and activity.

But unfortunately it does strengthen this distinction between what literally happened and the symbolical significance of what happened. Formerly your history was the same thing as your myth. But now we know that history is one thing and myth is another, unfortunately in a sense. But it is true that history is one thing and myth is another thing, you can't get around that. So we are in a much more difficult situation, but it is not a false situation. In a way it represents an advance but in certain other respects there are difficulties.

(End of tape 5)

V: I remember when I first read the *Lord of the Rings*, it completely took me over. I felt annoyed afterwards that according to the way I had experienced things up to now it couldn't possibly, it was only a story and it hadn't existed and I felt disappointed that it wasn't... that I knew rationally that it wasn't real. As far as I was concerned it was real but of course, according to everybody else the fact that it was just a book, it wasn't real.

S: But the Indian wouldn't have this difficulty. Many of the Indian puranas are like this, some of the Mahayana sutras are like this. It's just a question, probably we can say, of treating them more as works of imaginative literature with a spiritual meaning rather than as records of fact. Even though they do purport, as it were, to be records of fact just like *Lord of the Rings* does.

But that is just, as it were, the literary convention, just like that of the novel.

Ananda: I think we tend to make a rather unjustified correlation, rather unconsciously, it's almost assumed that what is fact is also reality, what is reality is also fact. But I think reality and fact are completely different things.

S: Well, fact is reality but reality is not confined to fact.

Ananda: Yes but we don't think of them as a different hierarchy of experiences. We think something that's factual is real, something that's myth is unreal. There's not necessarily a correlation between those two things.

V: Something can be real without being historical fact.

S: Well, certainly, but I think this is generally understood.

Ananda: Is it?

S: Yes.

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V: Poetic truth

S: Poetic truth.

V: (Unclear)

S: Yes.

Ananda: I think in the ... , if one can use the term, in the popular mind, fact and reality tend to get very mixed up together.

S: Well, strictly speaking there is no such thing as the popular mind.

Ananda: Well, the majority of most people's opinions.

S: I think if you, sort of, discussed it with even a quite ordinary person and just put it to them, I think they could appreciate the point. If you for instance cited fairy stories and for instance if you said, "well you know that the fairy story didn't actually happen but do you think therefore that it is totally meaningless? And I think probably they would say, "no it has got a sort of meaning of its own." I think that almost anybody would be able to see this.

Ananda: I think they'd also add that it's not real.

V: The difficulty surely only arises if you question the reality of the realm of ideas and thought and images. I mean those have a reality.

Ananda: That's what I'm saying, I think that reality is questioned.

S: I think also that you mustn't be misled by people's difficulty in expressing themselves. Because if an ordinary person read a fairy story he would certainly be affected by it and take it as real. But if you were to say, "is it real" and he said "no", you'd be, in a way, taking advantage of his lack of verbal and intellectual sophistication. When he said, "it wasn't real", he wouldn't have meant that he wasn't affected by it and didn't experience it, but only that he didn't confuse it with the events of ordinary everyday life.

V: This goes back to what we were saying yesterday, this sort of attitude that one is real and the other isn't, just widens the split in people's mind.

S: Mmm. It's probably not useful to discuss the question in those terms at all, of real and not real.

V: Having meaning and not having meaning.

S: Or the kind of meaning.

V: May it also be a question of convention, whether you call the realm of ideas real or not?

S: Well when I mentioned convention in connection with literature, say in connection with the novel, you relate the events in a novel as though they actually happened. As though [115] you are describing matters of fact, whereas in fact, you know that you are not. But you are certainly describing something that could have happened, unless it is a surrealistic novel or something of that kind. But the ordinary novel, the average novel describes something that could have happened even though it is known not to have happened. So, that is the convention, as it were.

So one can say that in the case of these legends, the miraculous is included because it was believed that the miraculous was in fact something that could have happened. At present our conception of what could have happened usually excludes the miraculous, certainly in an extreme form. But for the Indians and the Tibetans it didn't, the miraculous also could have happened.

V: I often get the feeling that some of us are gradually coming round to accept that miraculous deeds are much more feasible.

S: Well this has happened already, in as much as say, telepathy has been accepted. But even if one goes as far as that, it is still not the standpoint of this material. Because here the miracle, whether they are taken literally... (break in tape)

... So the difference is that the modern Westerner can accept the, for want of a better term, the symbolical significance of these miraculous happenings, but the traditional Indian Buddhist or Tibetan Buddhist, in addition to at least feeling intuitively the symbolical significance, also regards them as actually having happened. But the ultimate significance is of the spiritual order. Even if you believe in those miracles as having happened literally, that is not their real significance, the literal happening. Their real significance is to indicate symbolically something about the nature of Buddhahood. So if you take them as having happened literally but you miss that symbolical significance, then you have missed the main part of the significance.

Do you see the distinction?

V: So if say, you actually saw the Buddha levitate in the sky, but if you didn't realize the symbolical aspect of that, it would be meaningless.

S: It would be no more meaningful, from a spiritual point of view, than seeing someone go to the moon on TV. It's just another wonderful thing that people can do. But it wouldn't convey anything spiritually, yes?

V: Is it not like in the beginning looking at your dreams, they were just dreams, you didn't really pay any attention to them. But there are certain ... you can get into that...

S: Yes, one can say there's a sort of analogy there, yes. In other words, miracles taken literally, and taken literally only, don't have any sort of symbolical significance. And whether you take them literally or not, it is the symbolical significance, from this point of view, that is important. If you don't feel that you don't really gain anything by intellectually accepting that the miracles, as miracles, did actually happen.

V: I wasn't thinking about intellectually, but if you actually now levitated it would have quite an effect, [116] but if we didn't see any symbolical aspect, it would just be amazing.

S: Yes, right. Amazing, interesting, curious, you might believe it or not believe it, or doubt whether you saw it or didn't see it; but the symbolical significance would have been missed or could have been missed. And the symbolical significance is the main thing. This is why there were people in the Buddha's day, apparently, so we are told, who saw him performing miracles but weren't impressed. It was just Gotama performing miracles. They didn't get any more from it than that. (laughter)

So, we can say that there are three possibilities. The first possibility is that you believe that the miracle actually happened and you also appreciate its symbolical significance. You believe that the miracle did happen, in point of literal fact, but also you are aware of, or alive to its symbolical significance. You feel that, whether or not you can formulate it intellectually. That is one possibility which is the traditional one.

The other is that you do not accept that the miracle happened literally, as a matter of historic fact, but you are quite sensitive too its symbolical significance. That is our position, as it were, for the most part today.

And the third possibility is that you actually see the miracle being performed or you accept that the miracle did happen literally but you don't feel anything of the symbolical significance of that, you take it just as a miracle, in the ordinary sense.

V: Isn't there another possibility as well, that you see the symbolical significance and you also feel or believe that the miracle may or may not have happened.

S: Yes, there is that too. You suspend your judgement about whether the miracle actually did happen or did not happen though at the same time one does feel the symbolical significance of that miracle whether it happened or didn't happen in the literal sense. Yes, you could say that there is that possibility too.

V: So presumably the reason why the Buddha was against people performing miracles, in one way, that if you happened to perform a miracle, people would be so taken aback that something extraordinary had happened that they would quite easily fail to see the significance.

S: The point that the Buddha made of course was that miracles in this sense were no proof of the truth of the teaching. Geshe Wangyal, as we saw yesterday, tends to suggest that the Buddha's miracles, even taking literally, sort of proved the fact that he was the Buddha. But this is really not acceptable. I think he himself is adopting a more traditional attitude of not really distinguishing between the historical and the symbolical orders of existence, but we can't help doing that.

V: Also wasn't it because it excites the wrong kind of feeling towards the person who did the miracle, maybe one of wanting to gain this power...?

S: Right, there is that too. So it is only the symbolical significance of the miracle that has got any connection with the Buddha's greatness as the Buddha. So it is your appreciation [117] of the symbolical significance of the miracle which gives you some feeling for the spiritual greatness of the Buddha. You can't infer the spiritual greatness of the Buddha from the miracle taken literally, but you can feel the greatness of the Buddha, spiritually speaking, from your appreciation of the miracle understood or experienced symbolically. Do you see the distinction?

So therefore you can accept all the miracles of the Buddha but not believe in the Buddha at all!



V: Which would be rather like the brahminical viewpoint.

S: Yes. Or like the Pharisees in relation to Christ. Accepting all his miracles but saying he did them by the power of the devil.

So anyway, having made that a bit clearer at least, let's go on to this prayer by the first Panchen Lama. I think what we will do is we'll read it straight through because the various miracles described in these verses are the same miracles that are described at length in the legend that follows. The 'Prayer' seems to simply summarize the incidents in the legend. So don't let the incidents in the prayer bother you too much we will come to them in the next section.

A Prayer by the First Panchen Lama, Lobsang Cho Ki Gyaltzen

Namo Munindraya

I bow down to Prince Sakyamuni, the all-knowing one, God of gods, who drew the great ones to follow him, Subdued the four inner and outer demons, And completely accumulated merit and wisdom.

I bow down to the Protector, who, when dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, At the request of many great kings Subdued the six jealous pandits with miraculous deeds And welcomed their disciples to follow his Teaching.

I bow down to Him who left the print of the auspicious wheel On the fields of many countries, Drawing countless men and gods To increase their virtue by his miracles.

I bow down to the One who, having purified by the fire of wisdom And soothed by truthful words The differences of the king and his brother, Performed in Sravasti many miraculous actions.

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I bow down to Him who planted in the earth a toothpick, Which, growing into a wish-fulfilling tree, Satisfied all desires of men and gods When King Prasenajit made offerings on the first day of spring.

I bow down to Him who, to the right and left of his throne, Created great jewel mountains Covered with excellent food and sweet grasses, When worshipped by Udrayana on the second day.

I bow down to Him who, on the third day, Having been offered food by King Shun Tsin, Rinsed his mouth and created a lake of eight wondrous attributes On which bloomed lotuses of laughing, radiant light.

I bow down to Him who, when offered midday food by Indravarma, Manifested a pond from which eight streams Rippled in a circular path, showing by their sound The teachings of the three vehicles of the Holy Dharma.

I bow down to Him who, on the fifth day, when Brahmadata made offerings, Radiated from his smiling face a golden light Which filled the three thousand worlds. It purified those in the lower states And filled all beings with the joy of samadhi.

I bow down to Him who, when offered food by the Licchavi on the sixth day, Generated faith and belief in those assembled By enabling them to read one another's minds And see the white and black thoughts of themselves and others.

I bow down to Him who transformed Each of those assembled in the field of virtue Into a World Sovereign having seven magical jewels When the Sakyas made offerings at the end of

the first week.

I bow down to Him who performed limitless miraculous deeds: From his lion throne issued five demons and Vajrapani, Vanquishing the six pandits and freeing their ninety thousand followers, On the eighth day when Indra paid respectful homage.

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I bow down to Him before whom offerings manifested themselves On the ninth day: who extended his form until It reached to the heaven of Brahma, And showed all the virtues of samsara and Nirvana.

I bow down to Him from whose body shone a thousand rays of light; Reaching the height of samsara, they formed a brilliant cloud From which benefits and happiness rained on all beings On the tenth day, when offered food by the Four Great Kings.

I bow down to Him who sat on the lion throne Without manifesting his body And taught the Holy Dharma with the voice of Sarasvati On the eleventh day, when Anathapindika prepared a feast.

I bow down to Him who, seated in the meditation of love, Filled the three thousand worlds with golden light, Causing all beings to love each other as parents their children, On the twelfth day, when given offerings by the householder Tseta.

I bow down to Him from whose navel two rays of light rose seven armspans high, On the points of which were Buddhas, and from their navels came forth light And so on, filling all directions of the world, When worshipped by King Shun Tsin on the thirteenth day.

I bow down to Him who turned the clouds of flowers Strewn by Udrayana on the fourteenth day Into twelve hundred and fifty jewelled carriages Which adorned the three worlds with their great beauty.

I bow down to Him who, when Bimbisara made offerings on the fifteenth day, Satisfied all with the ambrosia of the gods And sent forth purifying golden rays from his fingertips That brought happiness to beings even in the lowest hells.

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I bow down to Him who, conquering all darkness By immeasurable, wonderful miracles, Led countless living beings to the high state of man or god, To emancipation and the path of perfect Buddhahood.

I dedicate the merit I accumulate from having expressed A mere atom of the miraculous deeds From the jewel mountain of the Teacher's knowledge, That I might obtain omniscience for the benefit of all.

The Tathagata's body, Attendants, life span, and sphere, And his extraordinary marks - Just these attributes may I and others obtain.

As the Teacher visited this world, His Teaching illumines like rays of the sun. By brotherly accord between followers of the Teaching, May there be the good fortune that the Teaching stays long.

S: So in this prayer or hymn, the various miraculous incidents or episodes described in the succeeding text are used as occasions for paying homage to the Buddha.

So let's go into the Chapter itself now.

The Miraculous Deeds of Sakyamuni Buddha

At one time, Buddha was staying with hundreds of bhiksus in a bamboo grove outside of Rajagaha, the capital of Magadha. The ruler of that country, King Bimbisara, was one of Buddha's greatest patrons. In loyalty and respect for Buddha and his bhiksus he had led many of his subjects to the practice of the Teaching. Six pandits were also staying in Magadha at that time, and their deceptive teachings were the cause of many sinful actions. King Bimbisara's younger brother followed these six teachers and made great offerings to them, thinking that they taught the path to liberation. As a consequence he became defiled by error, so that even though Buddha's radiance was in the land, showing the glories of enlightenment, he did not see it. King Bimbisara tried to persuade his brother to give up his erroneous ideas and to respect and listen to Buddha, but his brother replied, "I have my own teachers. Why should I listen to Buddha?"

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S: Any query on that opening paragraph? It just sets the scene, as it were.

V: Would a pandit be equivalent to a guru?

S: Literally pandit just means a wise man. Later on it means a scholar, but there were in fact six well known teachers in the Buddha's day and we know about them and about their teaching from the Pali Canon and other sources. They had different teachings. Here they appear just as a sort of group, they are not really differentiated but actually we do know quite a bit about them and what they taught. But this legend seems to have come into existence somewhat after the time of the Buddha and the individualities, as it were, of the six teachers have become lost. They have just become a group of six pandits, six wrong teachers, as it were.

V: Would the original, historical six be among some of the ones that the Buddha went to before he entered Nirvana.

S: No. Those are a quite different six.

"Nevertheless, feeling that he should at least respect King Bimbisara's feelings, the brother decided to give a feast. Offering food and gifts to all who came. The six pandits came at once and sat in the highest seats, but when Buddha and his disciples did not arrive, King Bimbisara went to his brother and asked, "Why have you not invited Gautama?" His brother replied, "I have done everything possible. I have even prepared the feast at noontime as Gautama does not eat after midday. If he does not come, what more can I do?"

" Send someone to invite him," the king insisted, and finally a servant was sent to invite Buddha and his disciples.

They came at once and walked toward the few remaining seats, but before they could reach them the six pandits found themselves getting up from the highest seats and taking the lower. The six pandits tried three times to take the higher seats, but each time they found themselves in the lower. Finally, feeling shamed, they remained there. Before the food was served, water was brought to the guests so that they could wash their hands. As Buddha was in the highest seat, his host offered the water to him first, but he said, "Offer it first to your teachers." The water was then offered to the six pandits, but when the vessel was tipped nothing flowed into their hands. The host tried again and again, but still the water would not pour. He then offered it again to Buddha. The water flowed freely to Buddha, and after that to everyone.

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S: So what do you think this paragraph means, what is it trying to say, in its own way?

V: The Buddha was his teacher.

S: Whose teacher?

V: He says offer it first to your teacher.

S: No, it's the brother. The brother who is the follower of those six pandits. The Buddha says to him, "offer it to your own teachers, offer it to the six pandits." But they couldn't receive it.

V: Trying to show respect.

S: No, no.

V: They couldn't receive it.

S: Well, it's like them not being able to stay on those higher seats, what is the episode trying to say?

V: It's just saying the Buddha is supreme.

S: The Buddha is supreme but not only that, I mean everybody knows that to begin with, presumably. It is trying to suggest what happens when you go against the natural order of things, the real order of things. It is a bit like Upagupta bowing down with real devotion to the false image of the Buddha, what happens, the image disintegrates. So this sort of episode represents what should be the real situation, in which things take their natural place, in their natural order. Actually of course it doesn't usually happen like this. Not literally. But the paragraph shows a sort of ideal situation, where nothing and nobody could take a position which does not belong to it or belong to him. It is a sort of ideal world, where everything has its true value and is seen to have its true value. In which its true value is recognized.

V: In a way that does seem to happen, I think. But maybe not as quickly; (S: Yes, right) So that people do take the position that they are qualified for.

S: One could say it happened with Mr Nixon. But, he did climb up to that high seat but he had to climb down in the end.

V: It seems to indicate that a rather interesting correlation between the spiritual realm and the mundane realm.

S: Yes, the episode is really saying that the outer should reflect the inner.

V: Well, it is saying that it does reflect the inner, because, it's saying more that it does reflect the inner because the actual...

S: Well, taking the story literally, yes, it actually does, you can't go against it. As Aryamitra says, in the long run you can't. But certainly in the short term it does seem as though you certainly can.

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V: It reminds me a bit of the incident with the five ascetics.

S: Right, yes. That's true, to resolve not to show any respect to the Buddha when he approached but who did so even against their will, as it were.

Also it suggests the difference that sometimes occurs between what we may call the ecclesiastical and the spiritual. Really the ecclesiastical hierarchy should correspond with the spiritual hierarchy but sometimes it doesn't and then things get out of joint.

So it is quite important, in fact, that the outer should correspond to the inner, should express the inner.

V: Is it impossible that the outer doesn't express the inner? Or that the outer, for some reason

or other, doesn't come in line with the inner, or is that...?

S: Well, I have certainly seen many examples of this. Perhaps it can't be sustained indefinitely but it can be sustained for quite a long time.

Chintamani: I mean, in a positive sense, one can obviously say that somebody in a situation where the inner isn't particularly positive, the outer could be bluff for a while. Can this work the other way around? That there is also a kind of bluff or a mode of behaviour but rather than coming up with something negative it's coming up with something positive that can't come out for some reason or other.

V: Well wouldn't that be like the transformation hadn't gone its full distance.

S: It could be but I think what Chintamani is thinking of is something like the Bodhisattva's skilful means. Presumably a Bodhisattva could behave like that, he could take the lowest seat, for instance, even though he knew he was entitled to the highest and he knew that it would be appropriate for him to occupy the highest. He could take the lowest seat for purposes of his own, connected with his skilful means, that can't be excluded.

Chintamani: That wasn't actually what I was thinking of. Just that on a far less sublime level, really, you sometimes meet people who have something very special, I suppose, due to something or other, even upbringing or something like that. The outer has had to conform to certain regulations or rules or whatever due to something or other but maybe the inner didn't have the strength to stand up for itself and...

S: But that's a different sort of situation, the inner and the outer in respect of one particular person. Here it is the inner and the outer as regards objective manifestation. It is the individual inner and outer correlated with the social outer. It is a different sort of situation.

Sagaramati: So what you are trying to say is somebody might be spiritually advanced inside but on the outside they might be quite crude?

Chintamani: Well I hadn't even thought of it even spiritually, but yes

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S: But if there was that discrepancy it would suggest some lack in them spiritually. Because eventually what was within would work its way out and fully express itself in every aspect of their life.

V: But this may take time.

S: Yes. So if what you are within has not worked its way into what you are without, if your own outer has not recognized it and accepted it, you can't be surprised that the outer of society hasn't recognized it and accepted it.

But the basic point that is being made is that the individual should occupy in society the place to which he is naturally entitled. And of course here they are thinking in terms of spiritual hierarchy, as it were. But here the situation is very simple, in actual life it is much more complex, much more complicated even. But we can understand how far away we have got from this sort of idea.

I was listening to certain things on the radio last night, certain statements made by certain politicians and in a way it was quite shocking, it is so dishonest. One doesn't want to over generalize about dishonesty in politics and all that but the blatant dishonesty is really absolutely amazing.

V: It's almost accepted isn't it.

S: It's almost accepted. I must say that I begin to feel that it is a little bit characteristic of this country and this country's political life. It is not completely universal. You don't seem to have it in Scandinavia for instance. Double talk, double think also. But we have got used to it.

So we have to treat as honest men people who are not honest men. We have to treat as truthful people, people who are out and out liars. You are not allowed to say that they are liars. They don't take in society the position of liars, but the position of people who speak the truth, but they never do. And this is one small example from one field of activity.

But here an ideal society is represented where everybody has his natural place, everybody finds his natural level and the inner is as the outer, there is no difference between the two. And it is really a very bad situation when the inner is not as the outer. When for instance you are supposed to be a very strong person and have the position in society or whatever appropriate to a strong person but actually you are a weak person. Then everything goes wrong.

V: What makes it worse is that people put on the act of being strong.

S: Yes. I mean there are hundreds of ways in which this sort of thing happens. Or you are technically in a man's position but you are not really a man, this often happens too. The inner again is not as the outer.

Anyway we won't pursue all these examples but you can see the ideal state of affairs which is envisaged by this particular episode, by this particular paragraph. Where everybody and everything takes its natural place and even when there is any attempt on anybody's part to claim a position which doesn't rightfully belong to them the order of existence itself, as it were, corrects them. In the long term of course it is the law of Karma.

All right let's go on. So when the Buddha tells the king's brother to offer water to his teachers first, to those [125] six, the Buddha is just rubbing in the lesson. He knows quite well that they are not going to be able to receive it but he wants the king's younger brother really to get the point; that it has to be offered to the Buddha first otherwise nobody can accept it. He wants to really rub it in.

All right carry on.

"Before they ate, the host asked Buddha to bless the food. He deferred again to the six pandits, saying, "Request the blessing from your own teachers." But when the six pandits tried to pray, they were unable to speak a word and gestured that Buddha should say the blessing. Buddha then prayed with a clear, beautiful voice, and the food was offered. It, too, was brought first to Buddha, but he said once more, ""Offer it first to your teachers." The food was then offered to the pandits, but everything they tried to take flew up into the air. After food was taken by Buddha, everything came down into their hands."

S: Again the same moral is being emphasized. Let's go on.

"After the meal, the host made the customary request for teaching. He asked Buddha to speak, but Buddha again deferred to the six pandits saying, "Have your teachers speak of their doctrines." Again the six pandits, unable to speak a word, could only motion for Buddha to speak. He spoke out in a beautiful voice and each listener heard what fitted his own needs. Everyone's understanding was greatly increased. Even King Bimbisara's knowledge grew from high to higher. Many attained the first to third stage of liberation, others expanded their Bodhi-mind, and some attained the supreme Bodhi-mind. A great number of people attained the stage of non-returning, and others, attaining the effects they prayed for, developed great faith in the doctrine of the Three Jewels. From that time on, the people of Rajagrha followed the Buddha.

The six pandits went away angry at having lost their followers. They asked some of Mara's

devils to help them curtail the Buddha's activities. Complying with their request, these devils manifested themselves in the bodies of the six pandits. They went to the market place and performed various miraculous deeds - shooting water, flames, and burning lights of many colours from their bodies. Many people marvelled at these things and became their followers. To them the devils proclaimed, [126] "Through the wickedness of Gautama we have fallen into misfortune. All the kings, Brahmins, and great patrons who used to worship us and bring us offerings now no longer respect us. They used to give us all the necessities of food, dress, and medicine - everything we wanted. Now these same people are running after Gautama, giving him everything they used to give us. We therefore challenge Gautama, this great guru of everyone for every one of his miracles we will do two if he does sixteen, we will do thirty-two. People shall see for themselves who is more powerful." "

S: What do you think this particular development represents?

V: It seems as if Mara was doubled during this.

V: Spiritual attainment is equivalent to worldly power and ability to show things.

S: Also the Mara's entering into the six pandits, they were so angry and so upset that they, as it were, exposed themselves to quite evil influences which took possession of them, took control of them and no doubt those evil influences did give them a lot of power, as it were, a lot of energy, even psychic powers. But that wasn't a very good thing.

V: You see this in, well to go back to politicians, you see a certain need for respect, people to look up to them and it gives them a certain eloquence and conviction and actually does give them ...

S: Well this is what, the sort of thing that Yeats was referring to when he said "the best lack all conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity". And it is rather like that, they are possessed.

V: Are you suggesting that the passionate intensity, referring back to this episode can bring about, or can develop, psychic powers?

S: I think it can, yes, of a lower order.

V: What do you mean by lower order?

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S: Well producing effects that at a distance, certainly hypnotism.

V: Because I understood that psychic powers could only be developed in the four higher Dhyanas. This is true if by psychic powers one means the more beneficial manifestations and not just things which occasionally happen but definite faculties which one is in conscious possession of. But on a lower level, sometimes the mind can be intensely concentrated by anger, hatred, ambition and so on. And a sort of low grade psychic power can sometimes be developed. But it can also be lost very quickly.

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V: A classic example of that lower manifestation of power is Alistair Crowley who produced so many validated effects on people, everybody agreed he had ...

S: Yes. For instance you can meet people who are very negative, not to say evil, but you can feel that they have a certain power, a certain energy. So quite a lot of the power and the energy and the drive that one sees around in the world is more of this nature. Just to put it in milder psychological terms it is just neurotic energy, neurotic drive. And it can do quite a lot, it can achieve quite a lot in terms of external achievement. Perhaps not to the extent of

psychic powers but certainly quite a lot non the less.

So this sort of psychic power is of this order and the product of this energy. But if one is, oneself, in a very positive state, one can very easily repel any such energy if it happened to be directed against one.

V: Would you say someone like Hitler was ... quite strong... he did sort of ...

S: One could say that but also there is the question, with regard to the leader, the leader of the group, of him being the mouthpiece of the energy especially of the negative energy of the whole group. And certainly this happened in his case. It wasn't just Hitler.

V: He just had more power, yes.

V: It was the whole of Germany.

S: Practically the whole of Germany, yes.

V: He was acting as a channel ...

S: This is the difference, yes. This is the difference between a leader and, for want of a better term, a teacher. A leader has got no real power of his own. He exercises the delegated power of the group, in himself he can be quite insignificant but he is quite powerful and dangerous because he wields the delegated power of the group. And that power can be delegated, as it were, rationally or irrationally. It can be delegated, as it were legally or sort of psychologically and even psychically.

V: It seems as though that the so called evil powers really depend on others whereas the positive or spiritual powers depend on oneself.

S: Yes. This is why, you can say, the so called evil powers are very often 'vampire like'. They are parasitic, they have to draw energy from somewhere else and therefore they can very easily be deflated. You withdraw power from them and they are nothing. This is what used to be said of Hitler, that if you met him in an ordinary social way he was just an insignificant little man. But if you saw him giving a speech in some vast auditorium with tens of thousands of enthusiastic people present then he seemed, sort of inspired.

V: Or possessed.

S: Yes. And you can see this with many speakers, especially [128] political speakers, they draw their energy from the audience and they beam it back at the audience. And the audience think that it is coming from him. But it is coming from themselves, really.

But a teacher differs from a leader in being an individual and addressing other individuals or potential individuals. And his power comes from himself, it is his own, interacting with theirs. But he is not drawing upon theirs and then beaming it back to them. Nor is he wielding their collective power or their collective influence. So therefore, in this sense, in a spiritual movement, you can't have a leader. You can have a teacher but you can't have a leader.

V: Presumably then, if the leader, speaker or whatever, physically looks rather impressive and the audience takes a sort of adulatory attitude, this will inflate the person and the whole thing will just build up.

S: Oh, yes. The person may think that this is his power, that it belongs to him. Not realizing that it only comes from - not just his position, it can be that too - but in this sort of case it is not even the position, it is the 'psychic energy', for want of a better term, which he is literally drawing from the people he is supposed to be leading and are depending upon him. He depends on them just as much as they depend upon him.



V: This needn't happen at such a vast scale, it can happen on quite a small scale.

S: Oh yes, it can happen in ordinary social life when you get a rather dominating personality.

V: In study group.

S: Mmm. But it is quite important to understand what a leader really is. You could say that you can have a genuine leader, someone who is more, say, courageous and more enterprising than the rest and who inspires them by his example. There is this sort of possibility too, which is relatively healthy.

But you can't help having this sort of situation where there is any kind of representative government, which means that you hand over your power to your elected representative. And if you don't retain very close control, you get out of control, he starts appropriating, which usually means misappropriating your power. And in the end becomes not responsible to you any longer.

V: (Unclear)

V: (Unclear)

S: Mmm. I see definite analogies between the Divine Light movement and Nazism, yes.

V: Could you explain them a little bit?

S: Well, I think it's obvious, isn't it?

V: I'm not very familiar with Divine Light, actually.

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S: I cite it just as an example, I think for some people it is a well known example. Probably one can think of other examples too. But I don't want to go into it too much because it will be a digression. But I mean, especially this sort of attitude of surrendering your power to somebody else who then exercises it and you worship him, thinking, "oh isn't he powerful, he's more powerful than me, more powerful than us". But it is your own power that he is exercising, really. You can have the same sort of attitude towards the king or the president or whatnot, they have no power, they are exercising your collective power. As individuals they are comparatively small people.

So sometime it happens that you get someone in that position, and exercising your power, who is in himself an individual and who knows it is your power that he is exercising and does it wisely and responsibly. But this doesn't very often happen. That sort of person can be described as a statesman, rather than as a politician.

V: In terms of the Puja, somebody who takes the Puja and sort of controls the energy which is ...

S: You could say that, yes. He is doing it in a responsible way.

V: In a way, if you see that someone is directing some sort of influence to you, do you feel that it is possible to, in a way, absorb that energy and utilize it for your own...

S: You can do that too.

You can imagine a sort of situation in which you meet somebody, well you can see people doing this. Let me give an example, you are introduced to somebody and you shake hands and say hello and it is obvious to him that you're not impressed. So what does he say, he says "I don't know whether you know it but I happen to be the chairman of such and such, or the

president of so and so and I've come on such and such a mission and we want to undertake such and such project spending about twenty million pounds". He knows that this is going to impress you because you at once see him as wielding the power of that great group behind him.

So when people feel, as individuals they are not making much of an impression they invoke their position if they have one. And then you react to that and you are very impressed. You see him quite differently, you don't see him as Mr Smith you see him as the chairman of this great corporation wielding all that power. He sort of grows in stature in your eyes. But this is just you getting out of touch with the situation and forgetting that it is just Mr Smith that you are having to deal with. Even supposing that you are not going to have any dealings with his corporation, meeting him in a purely private capacity, if you are not careful you will be impressed.

V: It also seems to work in that situation, if you are not impressed by him you can then impress him and then sort of use his power ...

S: Yes. Because if you are not impressed, what does it mean? You're more of an individual than he is. And if you are not impressed then he will know that too and then he is reduced, back again to where he was, he's just individual, [130] he's just Mr Smith. The fact that he is chairman of that corporation doesn't cut any ice with you. But the fact that it hasn't cut any ice with you means that you are more of an individual than he is, he feels that and then you establish a sort of ascendancy, a sort of dominance on a person to person level.

Anyway, all this is a bit digressive, though interesting. Let's carry on.

"Then the six pandits went to King Bimbisara and asked him to deliver their challenge to Buddha. The king laughed at their arrogance. "You are foolish. Your miraculous deeds cannot begin to equal those of Buddha. Your challenge is like the light of a firefly compared with sunlight, like the water standing in an ox's hoof print compared with the ocean. It is like the fox challenging the lion." But the six pandits persisted and said, "You will see. What happened before is no indication of what will happen now. When we compete, it will be clear who is the greater." King Bimbisara visited Buddha and told him of the challenge. "These six pandits want to compare their miraculous deeds with those of the Tathagata. I told them they were foolish but they would not listen. Will you please show them your miraculous powers to reverse their wrong views and lead them to do virtuous work? When you do this, may I be there?"

Buddha replied, "The time will be known. Please prepare a suitable place."

So King Bimbisara ordered his ministers to clean and prepare a broad field."

S: Sounds like a tournament!

"There they put a lion throne and victory banners and the standard of the Conqueror, Buddha. All the people eagerly awaited the sight of Buddha and the six pandits performing their miracles. However, to everyone's surprise, Buddha left Rajagrha and went to the neighbouring country of Vaisali."

S: All right, carry on. See what happens. Everyone's getting rather interested now. What's going to happen? (laughter)

"All the people of Vaisali, the Licchavi, welcomed the Tathagata. When the six pandits heard that Buddha had gone to Vaisali, they proudly proclaimed, "Gautama is afraid of us. He has run away to Vaisali," and they followed after him. King Bimbisara with five hundred carriages, elephants, horses, provisions, and thousands of attendants and ministers also went to Vaisali. The [131] six pandits took their challenge to the King of the Licchavi, and he came to Buddha, saying, "Please show your miraculous powers and subdue these men."

Again Buddha answered, "All in good time," and told them to prepare a place.

But again he went to another country, Kausambi, followed by a great multitude and the six pandits.

King Udrayana and the people of Kausambi welcomed Buddha. Through King Urayana, the six pandits again issued their challenge to Buddha, who again replied, "The time is known. Prepare a place." King Udrayana made great preparations, but Buddha went on to War, the land of King Shun-Tsin. From War he went to Ti-gi-tsa-shi-ri, the country of King Indravarma and from Ti-gi-tsa-shi-ri to Varanasi, which was ruled by King Brahmadatta. From there he went to Kapila, the country of his own people, the Sakyas, and finally he went to Sravasti, the land of King Prasenajit."

S: I rather suspect that in the original this is all told in great detail and at length, and that Geshe Wangyal has just condensed it.

"He was followed there by the kings of all the countries he had passed through, along with many thousands of their attendants, and by the six pandits with their ninety thousand followers.

The six pandits went to King Prasenajit, saying, "We have prepared our miraculous deeds. Much time has passed since we challenged Gautama, and he is still running away. It is time for us to compare our miraculous powers."

King Prasenajit replied, laughing, "You know nothing, yet you want to challenge the great King of Dharma. Such people as yourselves cannot be compared with him." But to quiet them, King Prasenajit visited Buddha and said, "Those six pandits are always wanting to challenge you. Please show your miraculous powers and subdue them."

Again Buddha replied, "The time is known. Prepare a suitable place."

King Prasenajit had his ministers clean and prepare a wide field, burning incense and placing there a lion throne and the standard and banners of the Conqueror.

On the first day of spring, Buddha went to this field that had been prepared for him and sat upon the lion throne before the great multitude that had assembled there."

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S: Do you think there is any significance in this? 'On the first day of Spring'. There seems to be a correlation with the natural order, this is when the sun comes into its strength and the Buddha now is going to exhibit his miraculous powers.

V: The Buddha is sometimes compared with the sun.

S: Right, yes.

V: Just as you were saying, the outer should mirror the inner, this is ...

S: Yes. That's why, in a way, it's a great pity that history isn't be identical with myth.

V: It is interesting that the king in each case has said, well you can't see anything and you are stupid, in a way and yet they have gone along with their wishes and requested that the Buddha does show them his miraculous powers and prove the point, as it were.

S: Well they presumably want the six pandits to be converted. This is in fact what king Bimbisara said, originally. Both Bimbisara and Prasenajit, historically were supporters of the Buddha. His two greatest supporters among the different kings.

"After King Prasenajit had made great offerings to him, the Tathagata took a toothpick in his hand and placed it in the ground. It grew at once into a marvellous tree. On its branches, which extended for miles, grew beautiful leaves, flowers, fruit, and jewels of every kind. The many-coloured light emanating from the jewels was as brilliant as the light of the sun and moon combined. When the branches of the tree rustled in the wind, one heard the sounds of the Teaching. Then Buddha himself spoke to the multitude assembled there. Many of the people listening progressed greatly - some attained Arhantship and millions ripened the seeds for rebirth in the high states of men or gods."

S: I don't know whether there is any significance here but the Buddha puts his toothpick in the ground and it grows into a tree, so the tree, clearly, is a symbol of growth and development; and also, of course, it is spring. So the symbolism all seems rather associated, one may say.

V: It reminds me of the Joseph of Aramathia legend.

S: Yes, quite.

"On the second day of spring King Udrayana made great offerings to Buddha. The Tathagata then turned his head right and left, and on either side of the lion throne a jewel mountain emerged. Each of the mountains abounded in grass and flowers and fruit trees filled with beautiful birds, and on each mountain flowed a [133] magical spring whose water had eight different tastes. One mountain was covered with lush grass to feed and satisfy animals, while the other was covered with special food to satisfy men. Buddha then spoke the Teachings according to each person's ability, and many freed their minds by listening. Some of those present generated the supreme Bodhi-mind, and many established the inclination for rebirth as men or gods.

On the third day of spring King Shun-Tsin of War made offerings to the Tathagata. After eating, Buddha rinsed his mouth with water. On the ground where the water fell, a great lake formed which extended for two hundred miles. The water had eight tastes, and the bottom of the lake was covered with seven kinds of jewels. Great quantities of lotus flowers of every colour grew on its surface, and their fragrance filled the air; by the rays of light extending from them in all directions, the people could see everywhere. When they saw this, the people were very happy, and when Buddha spoke the Teachings, some attained Arhantship, some increased their Bodhi-mind, and many others attained the seeds of rebirth in the worlds of men or gods.

The next day King Indravarma prepared the offerings for Buddha. Buddha created a pool from which eight streams flowed outward in circular paths, and to which they returned. In the sound of the streams people heard the teachings of the Five Powers, the Five Strengths, the Seven Aspects of Bodhi-mind, the Eightfold Path, the Three Principles of the Path to Liberation, the Six Kinds of Omniscience, the Six Transcendences, the teachings of Love and Compassion, and the Four Immeasurables. From this statement of the Dharma, many attained understanding of the effects of reaching Buddhahood and many attained the inclination to rebirth in the high states of men or gods. Hundreds of thousands increased their virtuous work."

S: Do you know these different lists? The Five Powers - These are the Five Spiritual Faculties. The Five Strengths are the Five Spiritual Faculties in their more developed form. The Seven Aspects of Bodhi mind are the Seven Bodhyangas. The Three Principles of the Path, sometimes either given as sila, samadhi, Prajna, sometimes as withdrawal, the Bodhi mind and wisdom.

The Six Kinds of Omniscience, I'm not sure what they are, but The Six Transcendences are the Six Perfections, the Six Paramitas. The four immeasurables are the Four Brahma Viharas.

V: There is a note in the back about the Six Omnisciences - Six clairvoyances; divine eye, divine ear, knowledge of others minds, remembrance of former lives, miraculous power,

knowledge of the removal of defilements.

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S: Aah. Omniscience then is not a good translation, these are the six Vinayas, the Six Super Knowledges they are usually translated. The first five are mundane and the sixth is Transcendental.

V: They've translated the Four Brahma Viharas as the Four Immeasurables.

S: They are called immeasurables in Sanskrit and Pali because one develops them all immeasurably, because eventually they are directed to all living beings without any limit. And in this sense they are called the four immeasurables.

V: What was the three one?

S: The three? Sometimes sila, samadhi and Prajna are mentioned but in the Tibetan, especially Gelugpa tradition, they often speak of the Three Principles of the Path as withdrawal or renunciation, development of the Bodhicitta and thirdly wisdom in the sense of realization of Sunyata. There is a work by Tsongkhapa later in the volume dealing with these three.

V: They were mentioned earlier on in the book, aren't they?

S: Mmm yes. In other words the Buddha is getting, as it were, really into his stride, by the fourth day.

"On the fifth day, King Brahmadata of Varanasi prepared various offerings for Buddha. From the smiling face of the Tathagata shone a golden light that filled the entire world. This light reached all living beings and purified the defilements of the three poisons: desire, hatred, and ignorance. All beings became peaceful in body and mind, and those assembled rejoiced greatly. When Buddha spoke many increased their Bodhi-mind, many planted the seeds of rebirth as men or gods, and a countless number increased their virtuous work.

On the sixth day the Licchavi people made offerings to the Buddha. Buddha let all who were there see into each other's minds, and each understood the others' good and bad thoughts. All experienced great faith and praised the knowledge of Buddha. When the Tathagata then taught the Holy Dharma, many people attained great understanding - some attained Bodhi-mind, some Arhantship, and an immeasurable number attained rebirth as men or gods.

The next day Buddha's own clan, the Sakyas, made offerings to him. He blessed all the listeners, so that they became great Cakravartin, each possessing seven magic jewels. Each ruled his own small country and had many respectful ministers. All were very happy with this, and when Buddha spoke they had great faith. Having increased their Bodhi-mind, many attained Arhantship and others sowed seeds of rebirth as men or gods."

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On the eighth day of spring Indra invited Buddha and prepared a great lion throne.

S: Indra, of course, is the king of the Gods. So this is the beginning of the second week.

"When the Tathagata was seated upon it, Indra himself made offerings on Buddha's left while Brahma made offerings on his right. They both bowed down before him, while the people sat quietly. Buddha placed his right hand on the lion throne in the earth-touching mudra, and there was a great sound of trumpeting elephants. Five fierce demons came roaring forth and the thrones of the six pandits were destroyed. After the demons came Vajrapani, with flames shooting from the point of his vajra. The six pandits were terrified, and jumped into the water and disappeared. Their teachers having deserted them, the ninety thousand attendants took refuge in Buddha and asked to become bhiksus. Buddha welcomed them at once, and the

matted locks and beards that had marked them as disciples of the six pandits miraculously disappeared. Buddha taught all of them according to their ability to understand. Freeing themselves from the fetters of desire, hatred, and ignorance, each attained Arhantship.

S: There is another example of the accordance of the inner with the outer, after they became bhiksus their matted locks and beards which they had worn as Hindu ascetics, disappeared and they became just like bhiksus in appearance. The text doesn't say so but this is what we are to understand.

We often find this sort of thing happening even in the Pali scriptures, where, when someone gains Arhantship at once all the external signs of the monk appear upon him. The monks way of life being considered the most appropriate to the realization of the Arhant. In other words, as the inner so the outer should be.

"Then the Tathagata radiated eighty-four thousand rays of light from the pores of his body, so that the light filled the entire sky. On the point of each ray was a beautiful lotus, and on top of each lotus appeared a Buddha along with his attendants. Each Buddha was teaching his doctrines. All the people felt joy at this sight and greatly increased their faith. Then Buddha spoke the Holy Dharma and many increased their Bodhi-mind, some attaining Arhantship, and a countless number producing the inclination to rebirth as men or gods."

V: You get Japanese statues of a Buddha with rays of light ...

S: Yes. This is, strictly speaking a Hinayana work but you [136] can see in this work the sort of imagination that afterwards found a much fuller and even more richly symbolical expression in the Mahayana sutra.

"On the ninth day Brahmaraja made offerings to Buddha. The Tathagata extended his body until it reached to the highest heaven of Brahma. From this body rays of light shone in all directions and from this great height he spoke the Teaching.

On the tenth day, the Four Great Kings, Protectors of the Dharma, invited Buddha to speak. Again he extended his body, until it reached to the height of samsara. Rays of light streamed from him, showing the Teaching.

The next day, the great patron Anathapindika made offerings to Buddha who was seated upon the lion throne in meditation. Though the assembly could not see his form, his body radiated golden light, while in a great voice he expounded the Teaching.

On the twelfth day the householder Tse-ta invited Buddha to speak. The Tathagata entered into the meditation of great love, and golden light radiated from his body, extending throughout the worlds. These rays of light cleared the three poisons from the minds of everyone they passed through. All living beings increased their compassion. They loved each other as father and mother love their children, as a brother loves his sister.

The next day King Shun-Tsin made offerings to Buddha. The Tathagata sat on the lion throne, and two rays of light, rising fifty feet, radiated from his navel. On the point of each ray of light was a lotus, and on each lotus a Buddha. From the navel of each Buddha extended two rays of light upon each of which was a lotus, and so on, filling the worlds. All the Buddhas were expounding the Teachings.

On the fourteenth day, King Udrayana made offerings to Buddha. He strewed flowers in front of Buddha and they changed into twelve hundred and fifty carriages made of precious jewels. Buddha taught the Dharma to beings throughout the worlds as a doctor heals the sick.

On the fifteenth and final day of the spring celebration, King Bimbisara brought gifts to Buddha. Buddha then told King Bimbisara to bring vessels for food. The vessels, which the king himself brought forth, filled miraculously with foods of a hundred different tastes. When

the assemblage ate this food, their bodies and minds were completely satisfied. Buddha asked them, "Why is there such immeasurable misery in the world?" By [137] his blessing, even the eighteen kinds of demons realized that their misery was caused by deeds they had done themselves. They felt great faith in Buddha. As on all the previous days, those assembled attained great advancement: some increased their Bodhi-mind, some attained Arhantship, some attained the stage of non returning, many attained the seeds of rebirth as men or gods, and countless others increased their virtue.

Then King Bimbisara, bowing down with great respect before Buddha, asked him, 'You have thirty-two extra-ordinary marks upon your body. Among them is the mark of a wheel on the soles of your feet. Please show us these wheels,' When Buddha showed them the wheel on the sole of one of his feet, those assembled asked him in great wonder, "What did you do in previous lives to be born with such an auspicious sign?"

"I have these signs because in former lives I practised the ten virtuous actions and exhorted others to do the same." "

S: Let's pause there for coffee.

V: Can you tell me where there's a record in the Pall Scriptures of the thirty two marks because I have been asked before what they are?

S: I think it is the Mahalakkhana Suttanta.

V: And which bit of it?

S: I think it's near the beginning. It's a very curious list.

V: Is it pre-Buddhistic?

S: Yes it's pre-Buddhistic. It seems to be connected with the ancient Indian idea that a person was born with different marks on his body, by reading which one could get some idea about his future life and future destiny. It seems to embody, to some extent also, almost aesthetic ideas. There was also a suggestion with some scholars, I forget the details, that these thirty two marks and there are eighty four minor marks as well, are connected with the cult of Agni, but in what sort of way isn't clear. It is a very curious list indeed.

Voices & S: Blue black hair, a curl, very long arms.

V: They seem to have significance in, say, ear lobes. Apparently in some form of medicine your earlobes are a sign of your health, in a way. I think that all these body marks probably different signs of well-being.

S: I'm not sure about that because there is reference to a certain number of concave surfaces on the body and so on.

V: Yes, I think that's too, in Yoga you get similar things to do with energy flows that you get concave [138] patches coming up.

S: But what about all those teeth? There's one of the Lakkhanas is that the Buddha has an abnormal number of teeth.

V: When the Buddha did the earth touching mudra, and the demons made the pandits disappear, what is the significance of that?

S: Well didn't the demons rush forth there from beneath the lion throne? It suggests the sort of calling up of powers, a calling up of energies and these seem to be clearly associated with the earth. The earth no doubt not being the literal earth. Or one could say the energies, the forces

of the unconscious. The Buddha taps the earth, according to the ... before his enlightenment and he called the earth goddess to witness. It seems to be reminiscent of that.

V: And there were earthquakes weren't there?

V: Only it was followed by Vajrapani who had flames shooting out of his vajra but it doesn't say he actually did anything.

(confused voices)

... and presumably a higher level of that sort of energy ...

S: Or you could say that Vajrapani embodied all those five. The Vajra also is five pointed; or there would have to be six corresponding to the six pandits, you could say that. But it seems to be that Vajrapani is specifically mentioned.

V: Do you think that is just because this is Tibetan?

S: No, Vajrapani is an Indian deity. He appears in the Pali canon too; so does Indra and Brahma.

(Confused voices)

V: Do you know any other of the thirty two marks?

S: The long arms reaching below the knees. The hairs of the body growing upwards not downwards. No ankles, the backs of the heel going quite straight. It is a quite curious list, if you take them literally you get a very odd sort of figure indeed.

V: What's the significance of the Buddha moving from one village to another before he starts?

S: Well he was collecting the whole assembly. First of all he was having the six pandits on, quite clearly, they thought that he was running away but he knew that he wasn't. He just went from kingdom to kingdom, collecting all the kings and all the people and ending up with all of them at the last place so that there was a bigger assembly than ever to see what happened.

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It's rather strange, but I got a sort of feeling when I read the beginning of the holy grail. There is the description of king Arthur and his court at Whitsun; there's going to be a tournament, this is Spring. And the holy grail comes in or is brought in and in many accounts it is in the form of a food providing vessel. And there is a mention here of the vessel providing food. This motif appears in Indian mythology, it's quite a common one.

V: What is the Holy Grail?

S: Oh dear! I'll have to lend you a few books. It is a very complex subject and there are many aspects to the symbolism. Besides there are the usual Christian accounts, but this is a much later addition to the story. It's a sort of miraculous, in some accounts vessel, in some accounts it is a plate, dish, cup, stone, jewel. It appears in all these forms.

V: I heard it about four different kinds of vessels.

S: Wasn't it the four kings, presenting vessels?

V: There was one that had poison and one with holes in.

S: Oh yes, the hearers, the listeners who were like vessels. One listener like the upturned pot,



another like the leaky pot and the third like the pot filled with poison. Actually there is another kind of pot. That account only mentions three but in the original source there are four, there is the pot that has not been properly baked, so that the water is poured into it it just sort of dissolves away.

V: And in the account, we did play it at the festival ... and I found an account of how the Buddha was given a golden vessel by a girl called (Sidjhatta?)

S: This is a later, elaborate account of the Buddha's being given a meal just before the Enlightenment. Originally all that is said is that he was given some food by a girl from a neighbouring village but this is elaborated in later accounts, it becomes a great golden vessel.

V: And that he threw it into the river and ...

Tea Break over,

S: So the Buddha is going to tell Bimbisara about one of his previous lives.

"Please tell us of those deeds," Bimbisara asked.

Buddha said, Listen carefully and I will tell you. Many kalpas ago there was a great king in Jambudvīpa named Sing-rta-ni-mi. He ruled over eighty-four thousand small countries and one hundred thousand cities. He had ten thousand ministers and twenty thousand queens, but he had no son. He was quite unhappy, as [140] there was no one to continue his lineage, and he prayed to many gods to help him. Finally his favourite, Queen Sulipala, a very clever, honest, and virtuous woman, conceived a child. When her child was born, he was beautifully formed and light radiated from his body. The king showed this wonderful child to the great seers, who, after examining the signs predicted that he would be a great World Sovereign, ruling over the four continents, and that he would be very honest and would influence his people to do virtuous deeds. They named him Prajnaprabha and he grew up to be a prince of unequalled intelligence.

"When the great king died, all the ministers asked the prince to become king. At first he refused, but the ministers pleaded with him to reconsider. The prince said to them, 'These days people commit only sinful deeds. Killing and destroying each other, they do not respect virtue. Only if all the countries follow the ten virtuous actions will I become king.' "

S: They are the Ten Precepts, the Ten Kusala Dharmas.

"The ministers agreed, saying, 'We want you to be king, so we ourselves will follow your advice and practice the ten virtuous actions. You, however, must instruct the people in how to live according to these virtues.' So Prince Prajnaprabha became king, and peace and harmony prevailed throughout the land.

"Mara, king of the demons, became jealous of King Prajnaprabha and wished to destroy his kingdom. He forged a proclamation in the king's name: 'Formerly I ordered you to live according to the ten virtuous actions. This was not correct, as they have only made me miserable and will not be helpful to you. From this time on all should follow the ten non virtuous actions.' The people of all the kingdoms to which this letter was sent were very surprised and did not understand why their king should exhort them to do sinful deeds. They went to him, asking, 'Why did you send us this strange proclamation?'

"King Prajnaprabha went out into his country to see what had caused the confusion. While travelling, he came upon Mara, who had manifested himself in the middle of a huge bonfire and was crying out miserably. King Prajnaprabha asked him, 'Who are you? Why are you burning in such a hell?'

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"Mara answered, 'In the past I told people to practise the ten virtuous actions and therefore I am now experiencing great misery.'

"The king said, 'You say your misery is the effect of telling people to do good? That is ridiculous. Do you also say that by telling people to perform non-virtuous acts, you get happiness?'

"Mara answered, 'Yes indeed. By telling people to do non-virtuous acts you obtain happiness, but by telling people to do virtuous acts you obtain only misery.'

"On hearing these words, the king was delighted, and said, 'I do not grieve at your present misery if it is the result of virtuous deeds, for only good comes from doing virtue.'

"When he heard the king's words, Mara disappeared. The king continued on his journey, visiting his people and exhorting them to practise the ten virtuous actions. All praised his knowledge and there was happiness and peace throughout the land. As World Sovereign, King Prajnaprabha travelled to the four continents and led all the people to virtue."

Buddha continued: "My father in this life was the great King Shing-rta-ni-mi. My mother Mayadevi was the Queen Sulipali. I myself was King Prajnaprabha who practised the ten virtues and exhorted so many others to do so. Thus I have a wheel on the sole of each foot." "

S: The Chakravatiraja, by the way, is called a Wheel turning king, 'chakra' is wheel, hence the Buddha had a wheel on the sole of each foot. That is the connection here.

"Again King Bimbisara asked the Tathagata, "Why did those six pandits challenge you to a contest they could not win? And when they could not do anything to compare with your miraculous deeds, why did they run away and drown themselves? Please explain this."

Buddha answered, "Not only in this lifetime, but also in previous lifetimes these six have challenged me in order to obtain great name and wealth."

Then King Bimbisara, bowing down with great respect, asked him, "How did these six challenge you in previous lifetimes?"

Buddha replied, "At one time there was a great king, Maha-sha-ku-li. Although the king ruled over many [142] small kingdoms, had many subjects, and was very rich, he was unhappy because he had no children to carry on his lineage. Indra, manifesting himself as a doctor, came to the king and said, 'Do not worry. I will help you.' The doctor went to the Himalayas and gathered many herbs, which he brought back and made into a medicine. He gave the potion to the king's favourite queen and told her it would help her conceive.

"The queen, however, did not believe that the medicine would work and so gave it to the four hundred and ninety-nine lesser queens. They drank it and all of them became pregnant. Realizing her mistake, she had the bottle of medicine, which was now empty, brought to her, and, rinsing it with water, drank the washings. All the other queens had very beautiful sons, and the king was tremendously pleased. But when the son of Queen Tshe-na-ma was born, though his mind and body were sound, his face was so ugly that his parents named him Dong-dum - which means 'burned tree trunk'. When the princes came of age, wives were found for all of them except Dong-dum."

S: You notice in this case the inner and the outer are not as they should be, not in correspondence. The Prince is intelligent but he is very ugly to look at.

"It came to pass that another kingdom besieged the land of King Maha-sha-ku-li, and the four hundred and ninety-nine princes went forth to defend their country. However, they were totally overcome and forced to retreat to the palace. Prince Dong-dum came out of the palace and asked them, 'What has happened? Why are you running away?' to which they replied, 'We

cannot stop our enemies.'

"Prince Dong-dum remembered the bow and war horn that had been passed down in his family from his ancestors, the World Sovereigns. These weapons had long lain unused in the palace, for no one had the strength to draw the bow or blow the horn. Armed with them, he went out alone to fight the enemy. When he drew the bow, it made a sound like a roaring dragon that could be heard for forty miles. When he blew the war horn it made a sound like a thunderbolt crashing to earth. His opponents were so terrified that they turned and ran. Prince Dong-dum returned to the palace victorious.

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"Now, because of Prince Dong-dum's newly acquired fame as a warrior, the king was able to arrange for him to marry a beautiful princess, Ru-shi-ba-za, daughter of King Lus-shi-pa-tsi. The marriage was performed at night so that she could not see his face, and it was arranged that she should never see him in the light of day. One day, however, when she was talking with the other four hundred and ninety-nine princesses, she praised her husband greatly, saying that he was very beautiful and unusually clever. The other princesses laughed at her and said, 'Your husband is so ugly that he looks like a burned tree trunk. If you were to see him in the daylight you would be surprised and afraid.' That night, while Prince Dong-dum was asleep, the princess lit a candle and looked at him. Seeing his ugliness she was very frightened and ran back to her own country.

"Prince Dong-dum was very unhappy when he discovered she had gone, and, taking his bow and war horn, he went to bring her back. When he got to the palace of King Lus-shi-pa-tsi, he found that the princes of six small surrounding countries were already competing for the princess. King Lus-shi-pa-tsi was afraid that if he gave the princess to one of these princes the other five would destroy his country. Finally, one of his ministers suggested that the six princes should fight each other and the winner would get the princess. When Prince Dong-dum heard this proclamation, he went to the camp of the princes, and, with his bow and war horn, he conquered them. The six princes and all their attendant soldiers surrendered to him. King Lus-shi-pa-tsi was very pleased and returned the princess to Prince Dong-dum.

"Taking the princess, he returned to his country with the ninety thousand soldiers of the other six princes. When they had reached the palace, he asked the princess why she had run away. She replied, 'When I saw that you were so ugly, I was afraid.' Prince Dong-dum had never known that he was ugly; on hearing her words he found a polished stone and was horrified to discover how ugly he was. He ran off into the jungle, determined to die there.

"Indra, the powerful king of the gods of the desire realm, appeared before him and asked why he had decided to die. Prince Dong-dum said to him, 'My face is so ugly I cannot bear it myself. How can I impose it upon my beautiful wife?' On hearing this, Indra gave the prince a magic jewel. When he wore it, his face became as beautiful as Indra's.

"The prince returned to the palace. As he was putting up his bow and war horn his wife saw him and, not recognizing him, said, 'Please don't touch these things. When my husband returns, there will be great trouble.'

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"I am your husband,' Prince Dong-dum said. She did not believe him, so he took off the magic jewel for a moment and was as ugly as before. He never took it off again, and he became known as Su-la-shen - Most Beautiful of All.

"He decided to build a great palace for his princess. The king of the Nagas came to him and opened well-springs of jewels, gold, silver, and crystal. From each one of the well-springs Prince Dong-dum built one wall of the palace: the east wall of the blue vaidurya jewel, the south wall of yellow gold, the west of white silver, and the north of crystal. His fame and fortune were such that he became World Sovereign of the four continents.

Buddha continued: "In a past life, my father King Suddhodana was the great King Maha-sha-ku-li. My mother Mayadevi was his queen. Prajapati, my step-mother, was the princess Ru-shi-ba-za. Kasyapa was the father of the princess, King Lus-shi-pa-tsi. I myself was the ugly prince. The six pandits were the six princes. In that life they fought against me to get the princess, and in this life they have challenged me to a contest of miraculous deeds. From then until now they have wanted only fame and profit, and they would still rather die than correct themselves and bear their shame."

King Bimbisara asked the Tathagata, "What had Prince Dong-dum done in the past to be so powerful and yet so ugly?"

Buddha replied, "This is the cause and effect of karma. Innumerable aeons ago there lived near Varanasi a rishi who was a Pratyekabuddha. He was highly developed in meditation but he had a certain nervous disorder caused by his environment and the only thing that would soothe it was clarified butter. He went into Varanasi and stopped at the house of a butter-maker to ask for some ghee. The man said to him angrily, 'You have a head and face like the trunk of a tree and hands and feet like its bark. People like you have nothing to give and live only by begging. Of what use are you?' Yet he gave him a little butter.

"As the rishi was going out the door, he met the owner's young wife. She had immediate faith in him, and asked, 'From where do you come and what will you do with this small bit of butter?' When he told her, the young wife asked him to come back in, and completely filled his begging bowl with clarified butter. She said to her husband, 'You offered this holy man such a small portion and spoke such harsh words to him. Please ask his forgiveness.' Hearing this, her husband was immediately very sad and told the Pratyekabuddha to come any time and take as much ghee as he needed.

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"From then on the Pratyekabuddha came often to get ghee to cure his sickness. To return their kindness, he showed them the miracles of flying in the sky and shooting water and fire from his body. Seeing these miracles, the faith of the butter-maker and his wife was greatly increased. The butter-maker said to his wife, 'Let us dedicate together whatever virtuous work we have done, so that in the future we may always be born as husband and wife.'

"His wife replied, 'Alas, even though we pray together and dedicate our merit, because you spoke so harshly to this holy man, your face will be ugly as a burned tree trunk and when we are married, I will run away from you during the night.'

"Her husband answered, 'I will follow you and get you back.'

"Then the husband and wife offered all their deeds of body, speech, and mind to the Pratyekabuddha and confessed all their wrong deeds. The Pratyekabuddha said to them, 'You have been very helpful to me. Tell me what you desire and I will help you to obtain it.'

"The husband and wife knelt down together and requested, 'May we have the opportunity to be husband and wife in the future and to have good fortune.'

"The butter-maker became Prince Dong-dum. His wife became the Princess Ru-shi-ba-za. Because he had spoken such harsh words to the Pratyekabuddha he was born with an ugly face, but because he repented and confessed, his appearance changed. By offering butter freely to the rishi, he became very strong and able: a World Sovereign who extended his power over the four continents and enjoyed, according to his wish, the five kinds of desire objects. The effect of any action, virtuous or sinful, is never destroyed. Therefore always act properly in body, speech and mind."

Hearing this speech of the Tathagata, King Bimbisara and all the other kings, ministers, attendants, gods, and Nagas were very pleased. They increased their Bodhi-mind and attained the states of stream-winner, once-returner, non-returner, and Arhant."

S: So what is the general impression about this whole story about the Buddha's miraculous deeds?

V: Karma.

S: General impression, karma? Karma comes in more towards the end though doesn't it. I was referring to the whole fifteen days. What is the general impression you get from it?

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V: A celebration of the Enlightenment.

S: Yes, it's like a celebration, a celebration of spring, a celebration of Enlightenment, a celebration of the triumph of the light over the darkness. So it is very happy and joyful, and light. Do you get that sort of impression? I must say that there are quite a number of the early Buddhist scriptures which give this sort of impression. Especially the Mahavastu. Scriptures of this sort give us a rather different impression from what we get from some of the others. From some of the others we get the impression of Buddhism being just a teaching, and a bit dry and rather analytical and a bit intellectual. But in these scriptures and others like them you get a different sort of impression.

You get an impression more of what Buddhism meant, for want of a better term, to the layman. He wasn't so interested in the philosophy and the analysis but was looking more for a source of inspiration and happiness.

V: What was meant at the end there, Bhante, by the five kinds of desire objects that he could enjoy according to his wish?

S: That of the five senses, the objects of the five senses. This is a quite common sort of expression, 'that someone lived in the full enjoyment of the objects of the five senses'. In other words having a very happy, successful material existence. Having all the senses fully gratified, plenty of food, drink, clothing, music, entertainment, perfumes, comfort, luxury; this is what it suggests.

V: The Tibetans seem, on the whole, to believe very assiduously in the effect of even very very small actions and thoughts. That if you have, in your whole life, one selfish thought that will have a very specific effect on you in the next life.

S: Yes, this is not quite according to the Buddhist teachings, actually. Sometimes it is said, I have pointed this out before, that the law of karma is an iron law, and that you will have to pay for even the tiniest unskilful thought even after millions of years and millions of lives, but this is not the actual teaching.

According, for instance, to the Abhidharma, there are some unskilful actions which are so weak that if you don't reap the karmic consequence of them within your next lifetime then you won't have to reap it at all. So this is certainly not to say that each and every tiniest action has to be paid for even after the lapse of millions of years.

V: And karmas cancel each other out...

S: Karmas cancel each other out, yes. There are some which may be quite weak and the force of which exhausts itself even in the absence of any counter-balancing karma. This is according to the Abhidharma. So one can't look at the law of karma in too rigid or mechanical a way.

V: They tend, I think, to put a little bit of a moralistic interpretation on it, don't they?

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S: Yes, that you will be hunted down, that you have got to pay for it in the end; but actually

there are some things you can get away with. (laughter)

V: Could you tell me what they are? (laughter)

S: Not anything very serious, but there is a certain margin there. A not very broad margin but still a margin, which is permitted.

V: Using somebody else's towel in the bathroom.

S: I think you could get away with the towel, it's the soap! (laughter) ... saying that you didn't do it.

V: Also the idea that is put forward ... that you get; because he said he looked like a tree trunk he was himself born looking like that. It is a direct correlation ...

S: Well not in that sort of allegorical fashion. There is often quite surprising cases on record, which have been investigated where there's almost a point by point correspondence between things that happen in the past and results in the present. I remember there was one instance, one case, of a Burmese boy who started remembering previous lives, or his previous life, rather. And this was investigated some years ago. One of the investigators was a friend of mine and a report was published. And the boy had some very strange birth marks on his, I think if I remember rightly it was on his wrists and his ankles, and he remembered his previous life and he remembered having been, I think his house had been attacked by bandits and he had been tied up and left to die. And he remembered all this quite clearly and it was all investigated and they did manage to trace someone who had this sort of experience at a time that corresponded. And it did seem that the marks with which he was born corresponded to the marks of the ropes with which he had been tied up in his previous life.

So there was that sort of thing but even though it is quite, as it were literal, not having an ugly face because you had got ugly thoughts, sort of thing.

V: I think even in this country I've heard the expression, like, "don't laugh at a cripple or something like that because it will happen to you" ...

S: Hmm. Sort of instinctively, as if that would be only appropriate, that if you laughed at him, well then you would have to suffer the same kind of thing.

V: That is very strong, I find, maybe it's a Western ... event. The idea of retribution, you get that in a lot of Western fairy tales.

V: I think the emphasis usually is that it may happen to you. I think it's usually out of compassion and ... Not from the karma point of view, people say that may happen to you, not that if you laugh at him it is going to happen to you, I don't think people say that. [148] But rather that you shouldn't laugh because it may happen to you.

S: Or it could have happened to you.

But there is a whole series of these things in Blake. 'He who harms the, little wren, ne'er shall be beloved of men', and so on. Auguries of Innocence.

V: I think the physical does show the mental state, although maybe, I suppose it's something different when it is physically deformed, deformed at birth ...

V: The incidence that you quoted is different from this though isn't it?

S: Yes, that's what I said.

V: It's the victim rather than the persecutor that ...

S: That's true, yes.

In a way, in this particular section, in this particular account of the miracles of the Buddha, you get a very joyful impression. As Sulochana said it is like a sort of celebration. And this is very characteristic of much of early Buddhism. But it is a quality that we tend to lose sight of very often when we study Buddhism, it appears very dry and intellectual and we miss this sort of quality of joyful celebration and rejoicing at the fact that the Buddha has gained Enlightenment and that the Dharma has been taught. Even in our actual festivals sometimes this quality isn't very prominent, whereas it should be.

V: I ran into that at Wesak this year. I was asked to give a talk.

S: Where was this?

V: Up in Glasgow. And the more I tried to find some material the more I seemed to get into things like suffering. (laughter) Everywhere, I ran into these and I thought it just wasn't appropriate, and I gave a talk off the top of my head in the end. It was all that sort of attitude, running to that sort of side rather than celebration.

S: But also it is difficult to celebrate. I was thinking about this recently. It is difficult to celebrate when the people at large aren't involved, as it were. A celebration suggests that almost by its very nature it is a large scale sort of thing. You can hardly have a celebration, certainly not a sort of religious celebration with just a small number of people. You can certainly have something meaningful, you can sit and meditate or you can have a puja or you can listen to a lecture but it doesn't seem to be a celebration unless lots of people are involved in a rather, sort of, popular way. Do you see what I mean? It is as though the ethnic element has to enter into a celebration although in a positive way.

V: I don't know whether it is just a question of the numbers of peoples involved; somehow its a question [149] of capturing a certain energy which is part of the life of the environment and the cultural ...

S: Exactly. It is not quite a spiritual energy, but it is a healthy, joyful, happy sort of celebrating energy. Similar to that you get when you celebrate spring. It is rather interesting that the spring festival is synchronised here.

V: There again the thing arises that if people are happy, celebratory, then whatever they do will be. If they aren't and if the occasion isn't like that, you can't artificially force it yourself into that sort of mood.

S: You certainly get that impression reading the old Buddhist scriptures. The, so called, early legendary texts which are a bit after the time of the Buddha. That in India at that time there was quite a lot of this happy, joyous, celebrating attitude. People used to really love circumambulating great stupas and going round them in procession with flowers and flags and things of that sort. It was a very popular thing to do and people really enjoyed doing it. But it is rather difficult for us to create that sort of atmosphere because that attitude isn't there, sometimes that positivity isn't there.

V: And the folk lore has been crushed.

S: Yes.

V: It comes back to what you were saying yesterday about using the energies of the demons.

S: Although here it is more like using the energies of the fairies.

V: We were talking about this informally yesterday. I thought that you can't be positive, you are positive.

S: But you can train yourself to be positive. You can avoid those situations in which you know you are likely to be negative until such time as you are no longer dependent on such circumstances. You can certainly train yourself to be positive but you can't very easily be positive at a moments notice when you are not positive. You can't be positive to order, as it were. Even though you can develop positivity in the long run.

V: Would you say something about, I find that quite interesting, that topic of on the one hand being true to your own experience, your own nature, your own feeling and on the other hand acting it out, in a way, in order to bring about and lay the conditions down for better states of mind. It seems an opposition that I can't quite integrate. Do you know what I mean?

S: Not quite.

V: Well, on the one hand one is exhorted to be true to oneself and to validate ones own experience, and be...

S: Exhorted by whom?

V: Well I feel this is the general...

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S: Well the Buddha doesn't exhort you like that. We don't find anything resembling this in the Pali scriptures or in the Mahayana sutras, do we, really.

V: No. Maybe more in, I don't know.

V: It's more in more modern, psychological ... group things.

V: Yes, there is a large element of it in group therapy, Gestalt and things like that. But at least the principle of being true to ones actual experience, not denying how you feel...

S: But what does one mean by being true to ones actual experience. For instance, supposing you have got an unskilful thought, surely one doesn't mean that because you have got an unskilful thought you should express it so that you are true to your own experience. If you feel like committing a murder, well, should you commit the murder so as to be true to your own experience?

V: I think the thing is denying that you feel that. I mean, if you are angry it is pointless someone saying, well I am not really angry.

S: Well surely this is a form of mindfulness, to recognize that the unskilful thought is there but the philosophy here seems to be, or the theory, that you should act it out and that unless you give it external expression and act upon it you are not being true to oneself. But probably one should think more in terms of being, not so much true to oneself in that sort of sense but being true to the ideal, to ones own ideal. The ideal that you have set up for yourself as representing the fulfilment of your total nature at its best, at its highest level. It is that that you must be true to.

In that sense, in being true to the ideal you are being true to yourself, you are not being true to yourself if you just give expression to some part of yourself which in the long run you are hoping to get rid of or to transcend. So you must be true to yourself, which means your total self and not just to some passing mood.

V: It seems to me to be quite a ... denying, invalidating one's experience and changing for a better experience.

S: Well some of one's experiences surely one should invalidate. I mean, you recognize that it is there but you are not very happy about it and you are going to get rid of it.



V: I think also one needs to, maybe express those things in order to experience them. If you are not aware, say, of anger, would you say this? That sometimes one needs to express it in order to realize it; to see oneself on purely psychological level?

S: But surely if one is a little bit mindful one knows what one's mental state is. One knows that one is angry when one is angry.

V: I don't think one always does. Maybe one [151] should, with a bit of mindfulness, but I quite often experience that I don't.

V: But people who express their anger don't always know that they are angry.

V: That's true.

S: I think the only legitimate expression that there can be is when you, as it were 'confess'. And you can confess to somebody, which is not just unloading it or indulging it but just admitting, to increase your own realization of what your mental state actually is, when you confess to somebody else and say, "well look, I am sorry to say this is how I am feeling, please help me to get over it", kind of thing. But not expressing it in the sense of giving free reign to it.

V: You are not expressing it, it is expressing itself through you.

S: I think there is quite a lot of false philosophy around in connection with this 'being yourself', and 'letting it all hang out', and 'you mustn't sit on it and if you feel negative you must act negative so as to be honest', etc.

V: Maybe one hasn't got the ideal in perspective.

S: Or that one hasn't got any ideal in some cases.

V: The contradiction seems to be that people can't accept themselves as that. When they are angry it does not fit into their ego image and how they want other people to see them, I think that's what it is. They impose the, say, the higher evolution on themselves and say that's me when they are not really, they haven't even completed the lower evolution.

S: Yes. It is much more a question of recognizing and acknowledging than expressing.

It seems to me that there is quite a lot of confusion which is created by this sort of ideology of having to express whatever you feel, or it being good to express whatever you feel. I think if one recognizes and acknowledges that is all that is necessary, apart from the actual attempt to get rid of the unskilful mental state by one means or another.

V: I've often found that if somebody doesn't express their anger, and they just sort of hold it in them and the atmosphere around them is completely black and you can feel it...

S: But surely when you say express you mean recognize and acknowledge, not just let off steam?

V: Well they are expressing it if the atmosphere around them is black. In the most insidious possible way.

V: I think all this just sort of shows the degree to which people are still hung up on this level. And I don't think we should bother, it is like the early days of awareness in the movement. People, I think people not really aware of what they are experiencing, in fact. They are really in it for their own experience, they are kind of confused. They can't experience it and sometimes can't really [152] rationalize it.

This sort of conversation has come up time and time again.

V: It seems to be also a question of recognizing what one needs for oneself to get out of it. Simply recognizing, I sometimes feel irritable or angry about things and I am beginning to learn that if I do certain things it lifts it, I rise above it.

S: Right.

V: ... said sometimes that you have to say what you feel, be open and just say what you think or say what you feel and ...

S: Well, saying is ambiguous. Do you mean expressing it literally or just recognizing and acknowledging?

V: ...

S: The former. But this is a mistake.

V: ... towards a certain ...

S: Then your whole sort of discussion and relationship is revolving around this particular thing which is perhaps only one particular aspect of the total situation. So that you become, not only problem oriented but very negatively oriented. I think it is best to stop thinking of things in these terms at all. It seems to have no positive effect. It doesn't work, put it that way. If it worked and people did get rid of things by expressing them then fair enough but it doesn't seem to work like that at all. They go on expressing it day after day, week after week, year after year in some cases. They are exactly where they were years and years before.

It is not just a limited quantity of energy that they have got to get rid of and they are through it, no, it is just some particular function that they go through time and time again. Just going round and round in the same circle.

V: You are talking now about off loading? It is useful to have things, if you have got a communication difficulty with someone to have it out with that person.

S: Yes but you don't just unload on to them. You say first of all, "well look, I really would like to communicate with you but I feel that there are certain difficulties". You just don't go and get angry with them, you say, "well look I have been feeling very angry", but that is just recognizing and acknowledging. You don't actually direct the anger to them or get angry with them.

V: I think there is quite a lot of misunderstanding in this area, and there has been a lot of discussion about it in Order meetings, and I think that the greatest misunderstanding is that sometimes when you are trying to speak your mind and be direct you get, somehow, your own negative feelings come up a bit and it comes out a bit forceful. But rather than not say what needs to be said and avoid that bad situation, as it were, it is much better to say what needs to be said and work with the negative feeling as best as you can, maybe you can't control it completely, but it is there. Otherwise that is when things [153] go under, that's when things get stifled. I think when we had that Order day a couple of months ago and I said what I had to say then, I think I was misunderstood. I wasn't saying that we should all give expression to negative feelings but that we should just be straight and direct, and there was a lot of indirect communication going on there. It was dreadful, the tension was building throughout the day, and something needed to burst it. Because we just weren't really making any attempt to communicate.

S: Yes but the point is that the bursting wasn't just letting off steam but saying what one actually thought, even though a little bit of negativity incidentally came out with that. Yes.

V: That is what does seem to happen, if you go to someone you have got a problem with and maybe you are not in a real angry state with them but when you start to talk to them about it these things do ...

S: Yes, well that's fair enough if you are keeping a real communication as the main objective. If you are just trying to be honest and truthful, but feelings come up nonetheless. But what you must do is not just be thinking and behaving in terms of letting out those feelings but of addressing yourself to the total situation. So you should not, as Devamitra says, shirk addressing yourself to the total situation, and tackling that in an aware and straightforward way because you are afraid of any little, incidental negativity that may come up when you are doing that.

V's: Yes.

S: But if the whole question is approached in terms of letting your emotions out, and making that the central thing, well one can see quite clearly whether it works or not. Because when people have been doing this for a time, like in a meeting, just what does the atmosphere become like? And that is your answer. It doesn't help in the least, it in fact seems to become much worse.

V: It's almost like becoming aware of Samsara and Samsara continues to express itself.

S: So you can say that any letting out of anything negative directly must be incidental. And you shouldn't be thinking about that, you should just be thinking in terms of being honest and saying what you really think and communicating in a straightforward way. If you just get a little heated in the course of doing that, well that is quite a different thing from deliberately letting out your anger.

V: I think that also may be misunderstood, actually. I mean, I know I have a personal difficulty that I do get heated when I speak but I don't feel that that is an off-loading of negative emotion, it is just the amount of energy that I put into what I have to say.

S: Well, it's as if the old engine rattles a bit. (laughter)

V: Well you could put it that way.

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S: Well it's just like a steam engine, in the old days, I don't know if you've ever seen a steam engine.

V: Of course I'm not that young.

S: You get steam coming out of all the little, I don't know what they are called but out of the little apertures here and there. Out of the ... and the safety valve. But you shouldn't take too much notice of the steam, just see where the engine is going.

Anyway let's go on to the story of Prince Gedun.

"The Story of Prince Gedun

"One day when Buddha was staying with his disciples on Vulture Peak, Ananda asked him, "Although Devadatta has attempted to harm you in many ways, you treat him as you treat your son Rahula. Why do you show him such loving kindness?"

Buddha replied, "Devadatta's harmfulness extends far beyond this life."

"Once there was in Jambudvipa a great king, Rimpoche Gocha. Though he ruled over five hundred small kingdoms, he was unhappy, for none of his five hundred queens had borne a

child, and he feared that if he died without a successor there would be war among the kingdoms. For many years he prayed to the worldly gods for a son, but without success. One day, however, one of the gods noticed him musing on his misfortune and took pity on him.

"He appeared before King Rimpoche Gocha and said, 'Outside the city gates are two rishis. If you pray to the one with the golden face named Kanakavarna, a son will be born to you.' The king at once sought out the two rishis and prayed to Kanakavarna for an heir. The rishi agreed to help him, promising to be reborn as a child of the royal family.

"When the rishi died, he fulfilled his promise by entering the womb of the foremost queen. When the king and queen realized she had conceived, they performed many ceremonies for a safe birth, and after nine months a boy was born, golden in colour and with many special marks upon his body. At the great banquet that was held to celebrate the birth, the special seer of the kingdom marvelled at the child's markings and named him Gedun (dge-don) - he of virtuous purpose.

"Soon after this another queen became pregnant, for the second rishi had died and entered her womb. When the second son was born the special seer was again summoned, and to this child he gave the name Dikdun (sdig-don) - he of sinful purpose.

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'The king built four palaces for his two cherished sons, one for each season. He educated his sons with great care, and Prince Gedun became a great scholar in all eighteen branches of learning.

"For this reason, when Prince Gedun came of age, King Rimpoche Gocha made him heir to his kingdom. The prince then requested permission to see the kingdom he would rule, and so his parents made preparation for a great journey. Banners and ornaments were cleaned and polished, incense and flowers were strewn everywhere. Elephants decorated with seven kinds of jewels led the great procession of the prince and his one hundred thousand attendants forth from the city amidst the music of drums and bells. Amazed at Prince Gedun's beauty, the people proclaimed him as glorious as Brahma.

"The procession soon came upon a group of beggars dressed in rags and clutching broken bowls. When they came to him asking for food, Prince Gedun asked them, "How did you come to be in such a wretched condition?"

"One old beggar replied, 'I became like this because I have no parents, no family and no relatives.'

'Another answered, 'I became like this from months and years of sickness.'

"Still another replied, 'I have no other way to sustain my life, as the property of my family was stolen.'

"On hearing their words Prince Gedun became very sad.

"Farther on, his procession came upon a group of butchers slaughtering animals. The beasts were wailing and bellowing as miserably as if they were in hell. The prince asked the butchers, 'What are you doing? How can such misery exist in this country?'

"They replied, 'Slaughtering animals is our inherited trade. We have no other way to sustain our lives.' Prince Gedun wept to see them in this condition.

A little farther on he saw villagers ploughing their land, driving their oxen by beating them. The ploughshares were turning up insects which the birds were busily eating. Prince Gedun, amazed at the sight of animals devouring other animals, asked the villagers what they were doing. 'This is our inheritance,' they answered, 'planting seeds to grow food in order to

maintain our lives and offer tribute to the kingdom.'

"Along the way Prince Gedun also saw hunters setting nets and snares, capturing birds and animals, who made pitiful sounds when caught. Feeling great compassion, he asked the hunters what they were doing. They told him, 'By hunting we maintain our lives.'

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"Sorrowfully travelling on, he saw fishermen catching fish, which were flopping pitifully on the ground all around them. When questioned they replied, 'We sustain our lives by catching fish.'

"When Prince Gedun returned home from his journey, he contemplated all that he had seen. 'Because they are poor, people must do sinful work to procure food and clothing. Sustaining their lives in such a way, they will easily fall to lower states of being and, going from darkness to still greater darkness, they will have no opportunity to free themselves from misery.' Thinking this, he was constantly unhappy, until finally he approached his father to make a request. His father said that he would grant him anything he wished, and so Prince Gedun said, 'I feel sad to see the bad karma people accumulate by the things they must do to maintain their lives. May I give gifts to the poor from the wealth of the kingdom?'

"His father was startled by his request, but said, 'I cannot refuse you, as you are my own dear son. Give as much as you please.'

"Prince Gedun issued a proclamation that all who came to him would be given what they wished. People came from thousands of miles around, gathering like an assemblage of clouds, to receive the prince's gifts. He gave to each whatever he requested. Some asked for clothes, some for food, some for jewels, some gold, some horses, and some even asked for pleasure gardens; each got whatever he desired. After this had been going on for some time, and the treasury of the kingdom was one-third gone, the treasurer went to the king to ask what should be done. The king told him that he would not reverse his promise, but that the treasurer could himself speak to Prince Gedun if he wished. When the treasury was two-thirds gone, the treasurer finally went to the prince and told him the treasury would soon be emptied. Filled with remorse, Prince Gedun said, 'I should honour my father. It is wrong to give away all that he has,' and he ordered the doors of the treasury closed.

"Realizing that the desires of the common person are endless, the prince consulted many sages, asking, 'Is there any way that I can give gifts endlessly?' One sage told him to start a good business. Another told him to cultivate land, another to raise animals. Still another said he should travel across the ocean and find the Wish-fulfilling Jewel. Having heard all the advice, Prince Gedun realized, 'Business, farming, or raising animals [157] will not bring me enough to give gifts endlessly. I have no choice but to go in search of the Wish-fulfilling Jewel.'

"Accordingly, the prince went to the king and queen for permission to seek the Wish-fulfilling Jewel. Fearful, they replied, 'Empty the treasury completely if you will, but please do not go on such a dangerous journey. You could be killed by crocodiles, or poisonous dragons, or great raksas. Any number of terrible things could happen to you. It is better for us to become poor than for you to lose your life. Please stay at home with us.'

"Prince Gedun would not make the journey without his parents' blessing, so he said to them, 'My dear father and mother, I will lie here before you, and not get up until you give me your blessings to go in search of the Wish-fulfilling Jewel.'

"They begged him for many days to change his mind but finally they saw that they would have to give in to him, and so they said, 'Since we cannot prevent you from going, we will give you good advice and many attendants and pray to the gods and Nagas for your safe return. Get up now. Though you will undergo great difficulties, we are sure that you will be able to withstand them and that you will return to see your old parents again.'

"Prince Gedun was very happy and thanked his parents. They prepared a great fleet and arranged for many people to accompany him: five hundred traders and numerous experienced captains. At that time there lived in the city an old captain who was famed for his knowledge of the ocean Prince Gedun went to him and asked for his help, but the captain replied that he was too old and blind to travel. Finally the king went to the captain and asked him to accompany his son. The old man then replied, 'I am very old and blind, but as my lord himself requests this of me, I cannot refuse.'

"When preparations for the journey were nearly completed, the king announced to his court, 'My son needs an able companion. Is there anyone here who will go with him?'

"At once, Dikdun, the prince's younger brother, said, 'I would like to go with my brother. Let me go.'

Feeling that a brother would be a better friend than anyone else the king agreed, and the two brothers started out together. The king and queen accompanied them as far as their ship, which, according to custom, was moored with seven ropes. Each day, with the offering of prayers for a safe return, one rope was cut. In his farewell speech to the travellers, the king advised them, 'Even though you might feel that the quest is impossible, [158] do not be attached to your friends or relatives, or value your own life. Earnestly seek the Wish-fulfilling Jewel.' When at last they cut the seventh rope, the ship flew before the wind like an arrow shot from a bow.

"After many months at sea, they finally reached the continent of the Wish-fulfilling Jewel. Leaving the others to wait for them, Prince Gedun and the blind old sea captain went on alone up a river, with the prince rowing their small boat.

"When they had travelled a short distance, the captain asked, 'Can you see a white mountain from here?'

"'Yes', the prince replied.

"'That is the mountain of silver,' the captain said. 'We must go on.'

"After they had travelled for several more hours he asked, 'Can you see a blue mountain?'

"'Yes,' replied the prince.

"'That is the jewel mountain. Still we must go on.'

"The prince continued to row until the captain asked, 'Have we come to the golden mountain?'

"When the prince answered, 'Yes,' the captain told him to stop.

"After they had landed, the blind old captain said, 'I am too old to go on, you must go alone. On the other side of the mountain you will see a palace made of seven kinds of jewels. Its door will be closed and locked, but in front of it on a jewelled stand you will find a vajra. Knock with that and the door will open by itself. Once inside, you will be in a great jade courtyard with five hundred goddesses. Each will offer you the jewel she holds in her hand. Accept the jewels, but go on to a golden room behind them. There you will see another goddess holding with an ivory handle a jewel, which she will offer to you. This is the Wish-fulfilling Jewel. Take it and hold it very carefully. Keep your eyes on it at all times, and do not speak. Go now, I am a poor old man and I will die here.' With these words, the old captain died.

"Following his instructions, Prince Gedun found the palace of the seven jewels and knocked on the door with the vajra. When it opened, he went inside, and found the five hundred

goddesses in the jade courtyard, each of whom offered him the jewel she held in her hand. He accepted them and went on to the golden room, where another goddess offered him the Wish-fulfilling Jewel. As soon as he took it, it flew out of his hand, but finally he was able to seize it and hold it tightly. Once he had it, he flew swiftly to the place where his companions were waiting. He gave them the five hundred jewels, but said nothing about having obtained the Wish-fulfilling Jewel.

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"They began the journey home, but in the middle of the ocean they were caught in a huge typhoon. The ship quickly sank, and all the crew with their jewels were swept away. As he was falling into the ocean, Prince Dikdun called out to his brother, 'Take me under your refuge, deliver me.' Prince Gedun was under the protection of the Wish-fulfilling Jewel, and when he put out his hand to his brother, Dikdun too came under its protection and was saved. As none of the others had had a chance to ask for refuge they all drowned, but by the power of the Wish-fulfilling Jewel, Prince Gedun and Prince Dikdun eventually reached shore.

"After they recovered, they set out on foot in the direction of their own country. Prince Dikdun suspected that his brother had the Wish-fulfilling Jewel. Hoping to find out, he said, 'All our companions and all the jewels have been lost. We are the only survivors and we have nothing. It is shameful to return home like this.'

Prince Gedun replied, 'We have not failed in our quest. At least we have the Wish-fulfilling Jewel.'

"When he heard this, Dikdun thought, 'When my parents see that he has found the Wish-fulfilling Jewel he will gain great fame, and they will honour him even more. I must get rid of the Wish-fulfilling Jewel.' But he said to his brother, 'We must be very careful now to guard the stone. At night only one of us should sleep and the other should keep watch.' Prince Gedun, who was very good to his brother, usually stood watch. One night however, he let his brother watch and fell into a sound asleep.

"Dikdun quietly removed the Wish-fulfilling Jewel from around Prince Gedun's neck, and then, suddenly afraid that Gedun would realize he had stolen it, put thorns in his eyes and ran away. With the thorns in his eyes, Prince Gedun cried out to his brother for help, thinking that thieves were attacking him; when Dikdun did not respond, he was afraid that something had happened to his brother. Finally one of the gods of the earth, feeling pity for Gedun, came to him and told him that the evil-doer was none other than Dikdun.

"Though Prince Gedun was sightless and in great pain, he continued on his way. After many days of walking he came to the country of Lekshiwa. There, along the road, he came upon a herd of five hundred cows. The leading cow, seeing the thorns in his eyes, came to Prince Gedun and licked his eyes with her tongue, while all the other cows gathered around him. [160] Observing his cows acting so strangely, the cowherd discovered Prince Gedun, and seeing the thorns in his eyes, carefully pulled them out and led Prince Gedun to his home. There he put butter and milk on Prince Gedun's eyes to soothe them, and cared for him for many days until he was better.

"As soon as his pain lessened a little, Prince Gedun wanted to continue his journey, but the cowherd would not let him go until the wounds were completely healed. When the cowherd finally said he was well enough to go, Prince Gedun asked him to find a musical instrument that he could play along the way. The cowherd gave Prince Gedun a lute and led him toward the city. When they had almost reached the city, the cowherd turned back and Prince Gedun went on alone, playing the lute and singing. Many people came to hear his beautiful voice and songs, and wherever he stopped they brought him food and drink. What he did not need he gave to others, and so was able to help five hundred beggars on his way.

"One day when he was near the pleasure garden of the kingdom of Lekshiwa some villagers heard his singing and asked him to play for the king. He went into the pleasure garden, and

the king, hearing his songs, said to him, 'Your voice is very beautiful. Please stay on as keeper of the garden.'

"Prince Gedun humbly replied, 'I cannot even see. How can I possibly protect your garden from the birds and animals?'

"The king replied, 'You don't need to see. Just stay and sing. Put bells here and there, and when you pull the ropes, the birds and animals will run away.' And so Prince Gedun decided to stay there for a while.

"Meanwhile, Dikdun had arrived home. The king and queen asked him what had happened to Prince Gedun and the others. Dikdun told his parents that, having obtained the Wish-fulfilling Jewel, they were returning home when they were shipwrecked and every-one had perished. When they heard this, the king and queen and all the people of the land went into great mourning. The king, however, asked Dikdun if he had actually seen Prince Gedun perish and when Dikdun said he had not, his father decided to secretly send a certain goose to search for him. This goose had been Prince Gedun's special pet when he lived in the palace. Around the neck of the goose the king put a letter which told what Prince Dikdun had reported and asked for word of Prince Gedun. The bird flew far and wide, searching everywhere. Finally, one day, it recognized the voice of its master singing in the pleasure garden in [161] "Lekshiwa and immediately flew down to him. Since the prince could not see, the goose removed the letter with its beak and read it to him. Prince Gedun took a feather from the goose, and with it he wrote that he was well, but could not return home as Prince Dikdun had put thorns in his eyes and he was blind. He then sent the bird back to the king.

"One day soon after, the daughter of the king of the Lekshiwa, a princess of great beauty, visited the pleasure garden and saw Prince Gedun sitting under a tree singing. Although the prince's face was disfigured and unshaven and his clothes filthy, she was very much attracted to him and stayed near him all day long, talking to him. When it was time to eat, she asked that food be brought for both of them. Prince Gedun protested, 'I am a beggar and very ugly. How can I sit and eat with you?' The princess replied, 'I will eat no food at all unless you eat with me.' Finally Prince Gedun agreed to share her food.

When it was nearly sunset and she still had not returned home, the king sent a message to the princess ordering her to return to the palace at once. But she sent a message back saying that she would not leave the keeper of the pleasure garden. The king again ordered her to come home, but still she refused and said that she would not return except as the wife of the blind singer. The king, though very surprised, did not refuse his daughter, for he felt there must be some valid reason for her attraction. He decided to invite them back to the palace as husband and wife, and so the two returned together.

"After they had lived together for some time, the princess began to go out early every morning and not return until late in the evening. Finally Prince Gedun asked her if she had a lover. 'When you first asked me to become your husband,' he said, 'I refused to do so as I was only a blind beggar. But you insisted, and so we were married. Why do you act in this way now? It is not right.'

"The princess answered, 'I have no one else.' As he did not seem to believe her, she then continued, 'If what I say is true, may sight return to one of your eyes.' When she had spoken these words, Prince Gedun immediately regained the sight in one eye.

"With great joy she asked him, 'Who are you really?' He replied, 'Have you heard of King Rimpoche Gocha? He is my father. I am Prince Gedun.'

"I have heard of you,' she answered. 'But how did you come to such a miserable condition?'

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"When he told her the story of his misfortune, she asked him, 'What will you do now if you



meet with your brother Dikdun?'

"Prince Gedun replied, 'Though my brother Dikdun put out my eyes, I do not feel the least enmity toward him.'

"The princess said, 'How can I believe that you feel no dislike for one who harmed you so? It is not possible.'

"At this, Prince Gedun repeated, 'I have not the slightest feeling of enmity toward my brother. If this is true, may sight return to my other eye.' At once he regained the sight of his other eye. Upon the restoration of his sight, the propitious signs on his body returned also and he appeared once again a prince among men.

"The princess ran happily to her father. 'Do you know King Rimpoche Gocha?' she asked him.

"'Yes,' he replied, 'I know him very well. Why do you ask?'

"The princess answered, 'The beggar that I married is his son, Prince Gedun.'

"The king laughed. 'What has happened to you? Are you crazy, or just ill? Prince Gedun perished on his journey, yet you tell me now that the beggar you married is the prince.'

"'If you do not believe me,' she said, 'please come and see for yourself.'

"The king went with his daughter and when he saw the transformation that had taken place, he knew that it really was Prince Gedun who stood before him. He was very sorry that he had not recognized the prince before. Then the king took him to another palace and established him there. He proclaimed that Prince Gedun had not perished on his voyage, but had returned and was alive and well. Thereupon, all the ministers of state called on Gedun and invited him to come in a great procession to the palace of the king. Prince Gedun was received at the palace, and it was proclaimed that he had married the princess.

"Meanwhile the goose had returned to King Rimpoche Gocha with Prince Gedun's letter. When the king learned that Dikdun had brought such disaster on his brother, he had him imprisoned. Then he sent a procession of five hundred attendants to the kingdom of Lekshiwa to ask the prince to return home. When Prince Gedun received his father's message, he and the princess started out, accompanied by his father's five hundred attendants and by five hundred of the princess's attendants. As they approached, the king and queen rode out to welcome them, and when they met, Prince Gedun dismounted and bowed down at the feet of his father. With great rejoicing the whole procession returned to the palace.

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"Prince Gedun at once asked where his brother was. When he heard that Prince Dikdun had been imprisoned, he asked that he be immediately released. The king at first refused, but granted his son's request when Prince Gedun declared that he would not stay in the palace unless his brother were set free. Upon his release Prince Dikdun bowed down at the feet of his older brother, who welcomed him with great affection.

"Prince Gedun very gently asked Dikdun what he had done with the Wish-fulfilling Jewel. Dikdun told him, 'I buried it on the way, as I realized I could not use it myself.' Then he gave directions as to where the Wish-fulfilling Jewel could be found, and servants were sent for it. They could not find it and returned empty-handed. Finally Prince Gedun and Prince Dikdun went together and recovered the Wish-fulfilling Jewel.

"With the Wish-fulfilling Jewel in his possession, Prince Gedun prayed that the treasury he had depleted would again be filled and would remain full from that time on, though gifts be given from it day and night. By his prayers and the power of the Wish-fulfilling Jewel his

wish was granted, and everything that anyone desired fell like rain. When their desires had been satisfied by the gifts of Prince Gedun, the people of the kingdom gave up all wrong actions of body, speech, and mind. By practising the ten virtues taught them by Prince Gedun, all were reborn in the happy states of men or gods."

Having finished this story, Buddha said to Ananda, "My father in this life, King Suddhodana, was King Rimpoche Gocha in the past. My mother was his queen. My disciple Kasyapa was King Lekshiwa, and my stepmother Prajapati was the princess of Lekshiwa. Devadatta was Prince Dikdun and I myself was Prince Gedun. You should help those who harm you, as did Prince Gedun. That is the way to attain Buddhahood," "

S: In a way it is a quite typical fairy tale. With many familiar fairy tale motifs. What do you think is the significance of the wish fulfilling jewel?

V: Bodhicitta?

S: Bodhicitta, yes, or even Enlightenment. It says earlier on, 'realizing that the desires of the common person are endless, the Prince consulted many sages asking, "is there any way that I can give gifts endlessly?"". So it is really the gift of the Dharma that he ends up by giving. But you can't give the gift of the Dharma unless you have the Dharma, unless you have the Enlightenment from which the Dharma springs. That in the general way is the significance of the wish-fulfilling jewel, which truly satisfies your wishes.

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V: Also it can't be used by someone who hasn't worked for it.

S: Right, can't be stolen.

V: Also, there's the stages; certain parts ... stages of meditation he was going through.

S: Yes, you could say that. When he is blind he is not seeing external things, you could say that. Perhaps one shouldn't press that too much.

And of course the symbolism of the mountains and the palace and the goddesses.

V: What about all the other jewels that he was given by the princesses?

S: Perhaps these are lesser gifts, lesser spiritual attainments. You just accept them and then you pass on to the golden room, you don't linger just admiring those lesser jewels.

V: And they were given to the all the other members of the crew on his ship.

S: Again perhaps one shouldn't press that too literally or try to interpret it or explain it point by point. There is a sort of general significance in it all.

V: That it could be lost.

S: That it could be lost, yes.

V: Like they were all different colours and the...

V: It seems strange that the wish-fulfilling jewel was stolen.

S: Well it is a story. (laughter)

V: A good story.

S: It's like, Devadatta tried, as it were, to steal the Buddha's Enlightenment. He tried to be, act

the Buddha without being the Buddha. He wanted to be the Buddha, or wanted to act as the Buddha without actually being the Buddha. The whole point of the Devadatta story, he wanted the position of the Buddha, or what appeared to him as the position of the Buddha with regard to the Sangha, without actually being Buddha himself.

V: And this is similar, because Prince Dikdun stole the jewel so that he could have the fame ...

S: Right, yes.

V: There is the connection to death ... the man died who told him where ...

V: There is quite a parallel between the Buddha's historical life isn't there. The early section of [165] that story.

S: The going out.

V: Yes, the going out, the procession, the four sights.

S: There are quite a lot of themes interwoven here.

V: The fact that the servants couldn't find it when they were sent to get it. And finally Prince Gedun and Prince Dikdun went to get it.

V: He's told not to speak about it when he found it and then he does speak about it, he tells his brother that he has got the wish-fulfilling jewel.

S: That's true, yes.

V: And that's when he loses it.

S: Of course this theme of the two brothers, one good and one bad runs throughout mythology, right from the time of Osiris and Set, the good brother and the evil brother. And it is significant perhaps that in the end they go back together to get the jewel back, to find it, to dig it up.

V: Integration.

S: Integration, as it were.

V: They would make good ...

S: They would. Well they make good stories, don't they. Now we finish this chapter with the very dramatic story of the nun Utpaladok. This is the Pali, 'Utpalavarna', of the colour of the blue lotus, in other words dark complexioned.

"The Nun Utpaladok

"At one time Buddha was staying in the grove of the patron Anathapindika, located in Sravasti, the land of King Prasenajit. In that country lived many high-born women of unusual virtue who had become nuns. These nuns were given all the necessities of life, yet they were dissatisfied, as they felt they were not fulfilling their vow to free themselves and others from samsara. They went to the great Arhant, the nun Utpaladok (she who is beautiful as a blue lotus), to seek the teaching of emancipation. Bowing down at her feet, they prayed, "Please help us by showing us the Holy Dharma, so that we may free ourselves from the influence of the passions."

The nun Utpaladok asked in return, "Do you wish to hear the teaching of the Buddhas of the three times - past, present and future?"

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The five hundred nuns replied, "Please give us the teaching of the present and speak of the past and future some other time, for we wish to free ourselves from present doubts."

And so Utpaladok began. "Attachment is like fire; it burns all that exists, even the mountains. By the power of attachment, we harm each other greatly, causing hatred and rebirth in lower states of being, from which it is very difficult to find emancipation. Those who live a worldly life, attached to attractive things, only increase the miseries of old age, sickness, and death, and being born and reborn, they suffer great mental and physical misery. By married life they tie themselves completely to worldly things.

"I myself was born a Kun-dus-rgyu-ba, and my parents were respected people of high position. When I was old enough, my marriage was arranged with another of my caste, a clever person who was well known in our country. I had one son by him, and when a second child was soon to be born, I told him I wished to go to my parents' home to have the child, according to the custom of my country. He agreed and we started out with our small son.

"One night when we were halfway there, I suddenly began to give birth. I called to my husband, who was sleeping a short distance away, but he did not come to me as he had been bitten during the night by a poisonous snake and was already dead. The child was born, another son. In the morning I looked for my husband, but his body had disappeared, having been dragged off by wild animals. Realizing what disaster had befallen me, I fell senseless to the ground.

"Later I was reawakened by the weeping of my elder son, who had been sleeping beside his father. Moaning with pain and in great sorrow, I began to travel, carrying the baby and leading the small child by the hand. There was no one to help me, for we were in very isolated country. After a time we came to a great river. I was too weak to take both children across at one time, and so I took the baby first and laid him on the far bank. I returned for my other child. As I came close to him he became excited and jumped toward me, but I was too weak to reach him before the current swept him away. I crossed back to get my small baby, but where I had left him there was only blood. He had been eaten by wolves. Once again I fell senseless to the ground. When I revived I continued my journey to my parents' home.

"On the way I met a distant relative, who saw my miserable condition and asked what had happened. I told him and he wept at my words. Then I asked him about my parents - alas, my parents house had burned [167] in a great fire and all my family was dead. Again I fainted, and my relative revived me and took me to his own house, where he and his family cared for me like their own daughter.

"After a time, I married again and soon became pregnant. One night when the time of birth was near, my husband was invited to the house of a friend. He didn't return until very late, as they had been drinking and enjoying themselves. Suddenly the child was born. I had closed the door and locked it from the inside, and when my husband returned and pounded on it I was too weak to get up and open it. He knocked many times and then, in a drunken rage, broke down the door. Seeing me lying there he began to beat me. I cried out, 'I have a baby. I can't walk. I'm going to die,' but still he beat me. Then he killed the child and threw it on the fire and, insane with drink, he forced me to eat the flesh of my own child.

"After that disaster I could not stay with him and I ran away toward Varanasi. Sitting under a tree near the city, I heard a young man weeping with great sorrow. He had just buried his wife. After we talked together about our misfortunes the young man led me to his home and asked me to marry him. Shortly after our marriage, however, my young husband became sick and died, and according to custom I was buried, alive, with him. That night thieves came and broke open the grave, searching for gold. They found instead a young and beautiful woman.

The leader of the band of thieves married me, but right after our marriage the thieves were captured and put to death. Again according to custom I was buried alive with my husband, but after three days wolves dug up the grave and I came out.

"At this point I began to wonder: what kind of person must I be, that such disasters should befall me? How many times had I been all but dead, and yet had had to start my life all over again? I had heard of a Sakya Prince who had become a Buddha - one who knows everything of the past, present, and future - so I decided to go to him for refuge. With this purpose, naked though I was from the grave, I walked to the grove of Anathapindika, the place where Buddha was staying. There I saw the Tathagata, who is like a beautiful flowering tree, moving among the people like a moon among the stars. With his immeasurable wisdom, Buddha understood that this was the time when I would be able to subdue myself, and from his seat he called me to come toward him. Feeling very ashamed of my nakedness, I covered myself with my arms, and fell to the ground. [168] Buddha then told his disciple Ananda to give me some clothes. Having covered myself, I bowed down at the feet of the Tathagata, and said to him, 'By your mercy and compassion, please let me renounce the world and become a nun.' The Tathagata agreed and Ananda led me to Gyigandakmo, who ordained me and taught me the Four Noble Truths. After great effort I attained Arhantship, and understanding of all acts, past, present and future."

The nuns were amazed at this story and asked, "What could you have done in your previous lifetimes to earn such misery?"

The nun Utpaladok told them, "Long ago there was a very wealthy man who took a second wife after his first had produced no children. By this wife he had a son. The parents loved the child very much and the older wife feared for her position, feeling that the child would inherit all and that she would get no share. Therefore she killed the child, but in such a way as to leave no mark. However, the child's mother realized what the older wife had done and accused her of murder. To defend herself, the older wife swore that she had not killed the child, saying, 'if I killed your son, may my husband be killed by snakes. May any son I may have be carried off by water or eaten by wolves. May my parents burn to death and my relatives with them. May I myself have the misfortune to eat my own child's flesh and to be buried alive.' The one who swore this was myself. For this reason I underwent such misfortune in this life."

Then the other nuns asked her, "Having incurred such terrible karma, what virtuous act did you do that you should have had the great good fortune to meet and be welcomed by the Buddha, and to reach the final goal of emancipation?"

"Long ago in Varanasi there lived many great rishis - Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and also many non-Buddhists who had great skill in religious practice. One day as one of the Pratyekabuddhas was begging his daily food, he stopped in front of the house of a merchant. The merchant's wife was very pleased to see him and came forth to worship him and make offerings. To increase her faith, the Pratyekabuddha rose up in the sky and performed many miracles. The merchant's wife prayed to him that by her virtuous work she might obtain such a life herself. I was the merchant's wife, and by this dedication of virtuous work in the past I had the opportunity to meet the Tathagata and to attain [169] Arhantship. And indeed, though I have undergone immeasurable misery for things I did in previous lifetimes, I will have to suffer still more retribution, for I have not yet completely purified myself from the effects of wrong deeds."

Upon hearing this, the five hundred nuns realized that all desires of body and mind are indeed like burning fire, and that a householder is more miserable than a prisoner. By eliminating all defilements and attachments of mind, the five hundred nuns attained Arhantship in one session of meditation.

Buddha said to the nun Utpaladok, "You have done very well. Because of this teaching, these five hundred nuns will attain the final goal. You have accomplished the deed of a

Bodhisattva." "

S: So what do you think the sort of model of this is apart from the lesson of karma.

(end of tape 7)

... with them. No sooner has she lost one husband than she marries another.

But also the suddenness with which the realization comes to her, just out of her sheer experience of life. 'At this point I began to wonder, what kind of a person must I be that such disaster should befall me?'

V: Lack of awareness.

S: Well up to that point, yes. It wasn't altogether lack of awareness in this life, according to the story itself, it was the result of karma created in the past.

V: It seems to me that one of those lessons is that the greater ones extreme of suffering, the more is one impelled to make an effort. When you do have a realization you make a tremendous effort not to get back into that state because the memory of that suffering is very strong.

V: Her remarks at the end, Bhante, about - 'I will have to suffer still more retributions'. What would the nature of this suffering be for an Arhant?

S: Well and Arhant can still suffer as a result of bad actions committed in the previous life. But the Arhant's mind is beyond it all and it is only the body that suffers and when the Arhant dies there won't be any body any more. So with the death of the physical body there is no further possibility of any karmic retribution even though there is something in the account unsettled. It's just unsettled, another example of the results of karma not having to be experienced.

It has been said, I forget by whom, that we have to pay for our misdeeds even though in the mean time we have repented them. So you may become an Arhant but if there is some karma outstanding even though you are an Arhant you will have to suffer the result of that karma as long as the physical body lasts. But you will know that, you will understand it and you will accept it in a way, almost joyfully. You will realize [170] that this is just the old karma working itself out and now I am an Arhant, when I die there won't be any future birth and therefore no more suffering.

V: Why do you think it is, Bhante, that although most people do have these bad experiences that they just don't seem to learn anything?

S: It's that incredible optimism, as I've said. Well not optimism, it's like blindness. But after a while they do wake up from it and Utpaladok had to have quite a number of really awful experiences before she started thinking, but she did start thinking in the end.

V: It's really so astounding when you look at it from a slightly different viewpoint, isn't it, that we need to go through so much, just to have the knowledge that's reflective.

S: Well, in some cases some people who are of a more reflective nature may see it quite early, without going through, without having to go through very painful and traumatic experiences.

V: It brings into my mind the relationship between suffering and liberation and how big a part it does play and can some people go ... for instance get a very high understanding and wisdom without having to go through the corresponding...

S: Well it does seem so, certainly, yes.

This is one of the points of the Buddha's teaching, one doesn't have to suffer in order to have one's eyes opened. In the Pali scriptures somewhere there is a classification which says there are four kinds of followers who gain Enlightenment. The first kind, it's easy all the way - in a sense of pleasant and happy all the way. The second kind is painful all the way. The third kind is very difficult and painful at first but becomes happy and pleasant towards the end. The last kind is very happy and pleasant at the beginning but becomes painful towards the end.

V: That covers everybody does it?

S: Apparently yes. So apparently Utpaladok had it very painful nearly all the way. But once she started to think about it she seems to have gained Enlightenment quite quickly.

There are some people who do start thinking or become more aware not as a result of hearing any teaching or studying philosophy or religion but simply by their experience of life, especially when it's painful in this sort of way, that makes them think. Though apparently she had heard of the Buddha, 'I had heard of a Sakya prince who had become a Buddha.' At least she had heard about it during the course of her travels.

V: So that helps doesn't it, if you know that there is an alternative.

S: Yes, you know that there is, yes. 'So I decided to go to him for refuge.' So she makes up her mind very quickly, as soon as she remembers that there is a Buddha around she at once decides, not even to go and ask him about his teaching but to go for refuge, she says, immediately.

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V: Perhaps one can apply that in terms of our own... some people. Maybe it's explained why some people spend half their lives dithering about wondering whether to commit themselves.

S: Well she doesn't even do that, just goes through her usual life experience.

V: Yes, yes. On the other hand some people, as soon as they hear about ... rush round immediately to be ordained, to do as much as they can.

S: That's true, yes.

V: I think what it shows in her is that even though, when she hasn't considered entering the religious life she is still doing things, very definitely, all the time. There is a sort of spirit of doing things.

S: Yes, she never gives up. She pops up again.

V: Then when she becomes a nun she really does that.

V: It reminds me of Milarepa to some extent. The evil deeds he did and yet when he repented he did make a very great effort.

S: It's also interesting sociologically, you seem to have baby bashing and wife bashing even in ancient India. It doesn't seem to be just a modern problem.

V: Was it quite general that women were buried with their husbands?

S: This is probably some local tribal custom. It certainly wasn't general.

V: It would cause rather an upheaval today, wouldn't it.

V: I suppose the women in those days, their lives would ... and if they had no one to support them ...

V: Is she; in the Udana there is a naked woman who comes to the Buddha, that's a different one, a mad woman.

S: No, you are thinking of the story of Kisa Gotami, probably. But the story of Utpaladok is found in the Pali, I think it is in the commentary on the Therigatha. There are some verses of hers that are in the Therigatha.

It is also that when she is asked about the Dharma by the other nuns, she simply gives her own experience of life. She tells the story of her life and she doesn't give an abstract teaching. Except in a few words at the end.

V: You were saying the other day that the faith follower requires very little explanation.

S: Yes, she seems to be very much the faith follower.

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V: Well after all that she couldn't be anything else.

S: Anyway tomorrow we're coming on to some rather different material. No doubt even more important, the precept collected from here and there, the precepts of the Kadampa lineage. So we are getting into quite a different aspect of Tibetan Buddhism.

### "3. KADAMPA PRECEPTS

"The following chapter is a collection of precepts of the Kadampa (Preceptors) lineage founded in the eleventh century by "Teacher" Drom. Atisa's chief disciple. The title of the collection is Kadamthorbu, "Precepts Collected from Here and There." These precepts, which concern subjects relative to the understanding and practice of Buddhism, begin with dialogues between Atisa and his closest disciples and are followed by teachings of Drom and his later successors. The precepts were assembled and written down by Tsun-ba-je-gom.

The book was written primarily for monks. However, for the most part the teachings in this book are applicable to laymen as well.

"Precepts Collected from Here and There

"When Atisa arrived in Tibet, his three disciples, Ku, Noke, and Drom asked him, "For attaining the high state of liberation and omniscience, which is more important, to follow the precept of the Lama or to follow the scriptures and commentaries?"

Atisa replied, "The precept of the Lama is more important than scriptures and commentaries."

"Why is that?" they asked.

"Even if you know that the primary characteristic of all phenomena is Voidness, and can recite the Tripitaka as well, you and the Teaching will be completely separate if you do not apply the precept of the Lama at the time of practice."

Again the disciples asked, "Please define the practice of the precept of the Lama. Is it simply striving to do virtuous deeds in body, speech, and mind, and acting in accordance with the three vows: the vow of individual [173] liberation, the Bodhisattva vow, and the Tantric vow?"

"Both of these are insufficient," Atisa answered.

"But why?"

"Although you keep the three vows, if you do not renounce the three realms of samsara, your



activities will only increase your worldliness. Although you strive to perform virtuous deeds in body, speech, and mind, both day and night, if you do not dedicate this work to the enlightenment of all, you will end up with numerous wrong concepts. Though you meditate, and are considered a holy and wise teacher, if you do not abandon your interest in the eight worldly concerns, whatever you do will be only for the purposes of this life, and in the future you will not find the right path." "

S: All right, why do you think Atisa is emphasizing the Precept of the Lama? What do you think is meant, exactly, by the Precept of the Lama?

V: Presumably the Lama is more in contact with the spirit of the teaching.

S: Yes, right.

V: And also knows the individual.

S: Also knows the individual, yes. So in the precept of the Lama you get something much more directly related to your individual requirements. You get the distillation.

There is something of this sort mentioned in the colophon that often comes at the end of the Bhagavad Gita. I expect some of you have read the Bhagavad Gita, but the colophon at the end says something to this effect. 'That the Vedas are like a cow'. Just a minute let me make sure I have got it correctly. 'The Vedas are like the cow, the Upanishads (which of course are the essence of the Vedas) are like the milk and the Bhagavad Gita itself is like the butter which is made from the milk.' In other words at each stage you get something more concentrated and more directly related to the needs of the disciple.

Mangala: The idea of the Lama, this seems to be particularly emphasized in Tibetan Buddhism, doesn't it. There doesn't seem to be the same emphasis on it in the other schools.

S: Well the emphasis is on the Lama, at least partly because the emphasis is on practice. Many people have had the experience that sometimes you want to know what to do, say in connection with meditation, what should you actually do. How should you proceed at a certain point. And you may go through the books about meditation and the sutras, though they give you very general good advice, they won't tell you the very thing that you want to know. That is too specific, too personal, as it were. So if you want an answer to that sort of question, what should I do in this specific situation, at this point in my meditation, then you can only get it from some other individual more enlightened than yourself. So the need for the contact with the individual more experienced than yourself will tend to arise more if you practice.

So long as you are concerned with matters of general theory [174] and philosophy, unless there are certain knotty points that you want explained, you won't feel the need so much for contact with another individual more experienced than yourself, in other words with a Lama. So the emphasis on the Lama is very much connected with the emphasis on practice. And of course the Tantric tradition did emphasize practice. In a way it is the whole practical wing of the Mahayana.

V: Sorry, did you say that of the Vajrayana, that that is the wing more...?

S: I said that the Tantric tradition is the more practical wing of the Mahayana.

V: Wouldn't this be the same for Ch'an or Zen.

S: You could say that, yes. In fact you do find that to the extent that Zen is a matter of practice you do find the exchange, especially, with the more experienced person as very important.

Mangala: What is the Tantric form of the three vows? It says here the three vows.

S: It's difficult to say anything very general. There is a list of fourteen vows of the Mahamudra but these relate to this one aspect of the Tantras. Usually the Tantric vows relate to keeping up the practice of the particular tradition or sadhana into which you've been initiated. Rather than a vow it's more like a sort of oath, "if I don't keep it up may such and such befall me". It usually takes that particular form.

Mangala: Did you say it was an oath to keep up the tradition or ones practice?

S: An oath to. Not simply an oath that you should, that would be a vow, but if you do not may such and such befall you, may you go to hell. In other words you put those two alternatives before yourself, either I will keep up my practice or I shall go to hell.

Mangala: It's keeping up ones practice, that's really what it is about is it?

S: Well the oath is to provide you with an additional incentive for keeping up the practice. So an oath is more than a vow.

So you notice that Atisa says, 'even if you know that the primary characteristic of all phenomena is Voidness and can recite the Tripitika as well, you and the Teaching will be completely separate if you do not apply the precept of the Lama at the time of practice.'

In other words the purely general knowledge that you have about Voidness and the Tripitika, this isn't enough when it comes to the time of practice. There you need something much more specific, much more direct, something much more related to your actual situation.

V: What exactly is meant by the time of practice?

S: When you are practising.

V: Ah, the actual sitting, formal practice.

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S: Well if it is in the context of meditation. Atisa doesn't say it is meditation, he just says practice, which can be any practice. I mentioned meditation just as an illustration.

V: It could be much more general, about what to do next in your life.

S: 'Yes, right. I mean you can get very good general advice from the scriptures but very rarely do you get any specific guidance.

V: Also the scriptures are written at a particular time in a particular cultural setting. Then the question which arises here, today, could be very different.

S: Yes that is true. Even supposing it was possible to go through all the scriptures and eventually deduce something that was applicable to your own situation, that is going to take time. There are so many scriptures. So very few individual Buddhists are in the position to do that for themselves, very few have got the actual equipment. So therefore you need contact with someone who can give you the essence of the matter in a few words as it applies to your actual individual situation.

Obviously the importance of the Lama will increase as Buddhist tradition becomes older and more complex. This is perhaps another reason why the importance of the Lama is stressed in the Vajrayana which is the latest phase of the development. In the Buddha's day everything that the Buddha said was a precept. There was no general teaching, so you can say that what are scriptures today were precepts yesterday. It is just the same with this 'Precepts collected from here and there'. They were precepts in those days but now they have become, sort of scriptures. But they are relatively close to us. We can probably still get quite a bit from them as precepts.

So the Buddhist scriptures are, on the whole, the Buddha's own precepts to his personal disciples. So in a sense in Buddhism there is no such thing as scriptures, there is only precepts.

V: In the sense that anything that is said is always for a specific purpose, for the purpose of extraction.

S: Yes, right.

V: And always to a specific individual.

S: Not necessarily, it can be to a number of individuals. But it is rather interesting that in works like the Udana, much of what is said is of the nature of a precept for an individual. But as time goes on a number of precepts are collected together and then generalizations are made from those precepts. In that way you work out a sort of philosophy of the precepts, a general religious philosophy, as it were. Which is useful as far as it goes. It certainly helps to clarify things. In fact it may, in the hands of a gifted teacher, itself become a precept. Tsongkhapa's writings are of this nature.

V: There seems to be two levels of learning go[ing] on. One can study and one can familiarize oneself with the teaching as a whole and all the various precepts that have gone ... and all the scriptures and so on and one can have a great accumulation of that kind of knowledge. And then there [176] is the sort of teaching that is the spirit that underlies it, that manifests itself in the various precepts and teachings. That the Lama being in touch with that, rather than using his great accumulation of knowledge of various precepts and scriptures, like a giant computer.

S: Yes, right. It's not that he produces the right quotation, it's more than that. I mean a quotation may be produced too but it is more than just that.

V: What he sees.

S: Or you can say the Lama himself is a living precept and the precept need not be connected with words, the precept can even be an action, as it is in Zen, sometimes.

V: The word distillation seems very apt.

S: Distillation, yes. Or a precept can be a whole way of life, in a way.

V: Can you say, in a general way, what the Lama is doing is pointing the most direct way to Enlightenment.

S: Yes, right. The shortest way, the most direct way, that's the only short cut there is.

V: Which may be apparently quite contradictory to somebody else.

S: Yes of course. There's the well known example of the master who told one disciple to go slow because he was too quick and told another to go more quickly because he was too slow. The two teachings are diametrically opposite. He is telling one disciple to go more slowly and the other to go more quickly but actually it is the same teaching because he is bringing them both to the same point but with different methods, even opposite, apparently.

V: So we come back to what we were saying on the first day here, that all, all this is about is getting in touch with a certain spirit which underlies everything. Well presumably the precept of the Lama, here, is, in a way, an expression of that. As long as one isn't in touch with that no amount of knowledge would do you any good.

S: Atisa was of course was a great scholar. He had studied extensively. Also he had practised

very extensively, he had quite a deep, spiritual experience. He was a man of very exemplary life, almost a sort of model Buddhist, model scholar, model monk and model teacher, model yogi. He had all these endowments. So when he spoke, when he quoted the scriptures he wasn't really selecting a saying from the thesaurus of the scriptures but what he said also represented a distillation of his own experience. So that's what the real precept is.

V: There's a piece in the Itivuttaka about ... saying that a disciple or teacher should light up the Dharma. So in a way that is what a precept is.

S: Right, yes.

Any specific points? I think there are several actually. [177] The three realms of samsara, I take it you know what they are. The three planes. the three spheres.

Asvajit: The realm of desire, the realm of form and the formless.

S: Yes. What does Atisa mean by saying, 'Although you keep the three vows if you do not renounce the three realms of samsara your activities will only increase your worldliness'. What sort of keeping of the three vows do you think he has in mind?

V: Lip service.

S: A relative lip service, an external keeping. Yes you are keeping them, you can't be technically faulted, no one can say that you aren't keeping them. But the situation is that you haven't really given up your worldly desires, your hankering after the conditioned.

Mangala: ... the third fetter, isn't it?

S: One could look at it like that, yes.

V: A bit like the scrubbing of the outside of the pot.

S: Right yes. The outside of the pot is really clean and even sparkling, but the inside is another matter. 'Although you keep the three vows, if you do not renounce the three realms of samsara your activities will only increase your worldliness.'

V: You'd get more caught up in them.

S: You will get more caught up and also you may start priding yourself on the keeping of the three vows and so on.

V: Are the three realms not in any way connected to the three poisons, hatred, craving and ignorance. Is there a correlation.

S: No.

V: It's like the analogy of spinning a web even more around yourself instead of ... of it.

S: Yes, right. So Atisa is saying there is not much point in observing vows externally if there is no real spirit of renunciation of conditioned things. Possibly he has in mind a sort of worldly ecclesiastic. Who is keeping up all the monastic vows quite faithfully but whose inner spirit is of a very worldly kind. More concerned with, say, ecclesiastical position and promotion and authority and so on. He is a good monk, he is a good abbot or whatnot, he very faithfully observes all the vows, he's quite scrupulous, but there is no real spirit of renunciation, there is no real spiritual life in the midst of it all. And therefore Atisa says, 'Although you keep the three vows, if you do not renounce the three realms of samsara your activities will only increase your worldliness.'

V: So it would be better if the spirit was there but maybe you weren't quite so good at keeping up your vows.

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S: You might say that that was preferable, though here again it becomes a bit dangerous. You can say that, you can say, "I am keeping up the spirit, I'm not bothering about the letter", but sometimes it isn't so.

V: I meant more the sort of attempt falling short, but the energy is going into it ...

S: Yes.

V: It is very difficult if the spirit is missing, the spirit of renunciation, really to know what you can do about it. I mean, I suppose you have just got to keep plodding on with the observances. Is there much more you can do than just religiously follow your practice, as it were, and just hope that the spirit will develop as well.

S: I think actually you are in a very difficult position. I've seen something of this in the East, you are in a very difficult position if you have got a sort of ecclesiastical position but no spirit of renunciation. I have certainly seen monks like this. They definitely get stuck, it does seem as though they can't do anything about it. The best thing would be that they gave up the monastic life, in the formal sense, completely, that would seem in some cases to be their only way out. But they can't take it usually. Because they are successful monks in a sense. They are successful ecclesiastical dignitaries and they would have to give all that up. And they are after all observing the precepts, observing their vows, but there is nothing really inside it. And it is as though they could only get in touch with something genuine by giving up their so called religious life. But they see no reason to do this.

So if you got into that sort of position in any level it is rather unfortunate. You would be almost better off going and committing a few sins. Because at least it would break down your, 'rightness', as it were.

V's: (Unclear)

V: It seems to be the situation at the beginning with the nun Utpaladok where all the nuns were in a very good position, they were doing all their work properly but they were dissatisfied. Maybe they are even in a better position because they are dissatisfied.

S: Because they had the possibility of contact with her. And as I've pointed out, it's significant she didn't give a sort of discourse, she related the experiences of her own life

(end side one)

which were very real and very painful and very shocking. It is almost as if she shocked them into a higher level of awareness. She told them this very painful account of what had actually happened to her. She didn't say, "look here girls you had better tighten up your observance of the precepts and you had better meditate a bit more on the Four Noble Truths", no. She just gave this very shocking and painful account of her own life, which perhaps, this is a bit of speculation, it is possible perhaps this put them more in touch with their own inner feelings and gave them a better sense of what the spiritual life really meant. That it was something very [179] real, it was something connected with experience. So sometimes this can happen.

V: Maybe with some people there just is no substitute for personal, for ... experience. No matter how much they hear the teaching it won't affect them really very much.

S: This is not just a question of people not being affected by hearing, but not being affected by practising. Because the practice is still relatively external and there is no feeling in it, there is no spirit of renunciation. There is no real feeling for the spiritual life even though they are

doing all the right things, so what are they to do, that is the question. That is why I say, the situation is sometimes so serious that you feel tempted to say that the best thing they can do is to break a few vows. At least that will bring them in contact with some actual feeling, something real.

V: Why do you think it happens? If somebody is keeping up their practice, why won't just doing the practice transform them?

S: Ah but when we say practice, the concept of the discussion is external observances, vows that you don't do this and you don't do that. It suggests, also, a scrupulous respect for the more negative side of the religious life. I think it tends to happen when religion is big and successful and organized, and you've got many positions and you can have a sort of career within the religious structure; just by conforming to the external requirements but not being really in to what the religious structure is all about, the purpose which it exists to serve. Obviously this doesn't happen in the early days of a movement, it didn't happen in the early days of Buddhism because there isn't that sort of structure and the possibility of that sort of career.

V: Do you think one can safeguard against that sort of tendency within an ecclesiastical structure?

S: No. One just has to remain constantly aware of that sort of danger and the possibility of that sort of danger. I don't think there is any sort of inbuilt safeguard apart from the teaching itself that you must be on your guard against that sort of thing. You can't have any organizational device, I think.

V: It's sort of contradictory.

V: Is it people think that they can jump certain steps in the spiritual path by strictly observing precepts and so on?

S: But don't forget it is also to some extent a social matter. They are brought up, perhaps, in a society, in a community where this kind of life is highly respected and they think of it more in terms of an ecclesiastical career.

V: It's part of the establishment.

S: One could say that. This happens very much for instance in Thailand.

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V: And Japan.

S: And Japan. It certainly happened to some extent in Tibet. It happened, perhaps most notoriously of all with the Christian Church in Europe throughout the middle ages.

V: Don't you think that seems to reflect, the whole sort of set up, like that could reflect one person. You think of a situation, a religious state where you get all the monasteries doing the right thing and then in the cities and towns there is absolute horror going on. And it's like that inside one person, everything is sort of nice and sweet and he is trailing behind him all these bits that aren't being touched, that he doesn't want to look at. And presumably that brings it back to, this is where the precepts of the Lama are so important because he has the vision to be able to see all the rest and maybe to turn him round and say, 'look back at it, look at all that'.

S: Yes, right. I had several quite interesting conversations in Calcutta with Buddhist monks who were doing, more or less, this sort of thing. Some of them were highly intelligent and they would discuss the situation quite frankly and openly and some of them said, "well look we were put into this by our parents, it is too late to do anything else, we are just making the best

of it and we are just taking it as a sort of career." And they said this quite frankly and cheerfully. Which might be fine, even from the cultural point of view, but from a purely spiritual point of view was quite disastrous.

Some of them used to ask me my opinion about various things and one evening there was quite a discussion about breaking the precepts. Whether it was all right to break the precepts secretly. There was quite a frank discussion amongst some of the monks one evening. It related mainly to eating in the evening and the monks who were talking about it were Sinhalese. They asked me whether I thought it would be wrong if they took something to eat in the evening secretly. So I said in my opinion they shouldn't do it secretly, but they should do it privately, and they were quite intrigued by this. So they asked me what was the basis of the distinction and I said, "if you eat at night in your room, and you lock the door, that is a secret, but if you just close the door, that is private." They were quite amused by this.

V: It suggests the fact that you are in fact open to, if someone asks you about it you have an honest attitude, if it is not locked. If it is locked you are closed, is that what you mean?

S: Yes, if you break it as it were privately you are not going out of your way to offend people by your non-observance of the precept but if it does so happen that they come to know then you are prepared to be honest with them.

Ideally now, in terms of our own movement there is not even a question of breaking anything privately. I said that in the context of the situation there, that private would be better than secret, as it were, but completely open of course is better still than private. In fact one shouldn't be breaking them at all, one should be observing them. But also the interesting point here is that the precept was a very minor one. One that from a spiritual point of view one might say wasn't very important at all, but which the Sinhalese lay people considered very, very important. So if they found one of their monks eating in the evening they would be absolutely [181] horror struck and they would not think very much of him at all. But the monks themselves have a much more tolerant attitude, and they realized, they knew it wasn't a very important matter but also they didn't want to offend the lay people who thought it was a very important matter. But the attitude of the lay people is, in many parts of the Buddhist East, if a monk breaks one precept, even the least important, the chances are he is going to break them all. This is their attitude but actually it doesn't work out like that and the monks know this very well.

V: It seems to be a very strange situation that. If one assumed that the monks in the monastic community are more spiritually advanced in any degree one would expect that the lay people, their attitude might be that the monks should teach the lay people.

S: Well that is what I used to say, I used to say, "who are the teachers, are you their teachers or are they yours?" And they would say, "Oh it is all right for you to talk like that but we know how difficult the situation is and what pressure these lay people can bring and how unreasonable they are."

V: Because that's their source of income.

S: Yes, right. Anyway that's a bit diversive [?], let's get back to Atisa.

Then he says, 'although you strive to perform virtuous deeds in body speech and mind both day and night if you do not dedicate this work to the Enlightenment of all, you will end up with numerous wrong concepts.' What do you think that means?

V: You build yourself up.

S: You build yourself up, hmm.

V: Basically you've been practising from a wrong view.

S: But not perhaps wrong but certainly limited and insufficient from a Mahayana point of view.

V: I suppose really virtuous deeds are only those which are dedicated for the Enlightenment ...

S: Then again from the Mahayana point of view. But here it suggests that the only right motivation ultimately is that which aspires to Enlightenment for all. If you are performing virtuous deeds in body speech and mind simply in order that you can get to heaven or you can gain Nirvana, well this is not the highest motivation, though it is a good motivation as far as it goes. But the highest from the Mahayana point of view is that you should perform your virtuous deeds, follow the spiritual path not just for the sake of your own liberation but in order that everybody may benefit. In other words the Bodhisattva ideal.

V: But 'numerous wrong concepts' , it says, almost as if by doing it you will gain in wrong concepts rather than not go to the highest state.

S: Yes, well it is more that you will limit yourself, you [182] will confine yourself to what Atisa would regard as the Hinayana point of view, liberation for self alone. So wrong view in that sense. It is a limited, rather than a wrong concept.

V: It reminds me the section in Crossing the Stream where you explained the Bodhisattva's "renunciation" of Nirvana and you explain it and if I remember it correctly it is not a question of...

S: It is not a question of renouncing an existent Nirvana but of renouncing the attitude that Nirvana is something that can be individually possessed.

V: Right, which is in itself a false view so presumably that's what...

S: Is a false view from the standpoint of the Mahayana. But here we come to false view in a very subtle sense indeed, it is not a false view in a gross, ordinary sense, but it is a false view within the context of the Mahayana and the Bodhisattva ideal. 'But although you strive to perform virtuous deeds in body speech and mind, both day and night, if you do not dedicate this work to the Enlightenment of all you will end up with numerous wrong concepts.' This is why at the end of the puja, for instance, there is the dedication of merits. The sharing of whatever merit you may have acquired with all living beings. And this is ordinarily done at the end of any virtuous action, meritorious performance, within the context of the Mahayana.

V: But it is also done in the context of the Theravada as well.

S: That is true, they also do it quite often.

V: Why are the mantras chanted after the dedication.

S: The mantras suggest the Tantric path, the Vajrayana, which is, as it were the next stage on. The seven fold puja is really Mahayanic.

V: Is it a correct way of practising when you are doing a mantra ... to just allow that energy to pass through rather than, like if you are in visualization, just to allow it to come into the heart and through you, but to purposely, as it were, radiate that.

S: One can certainly do that. Usually when one just recites the mantras in that way, you as it were invoke the Bodhisattvas to 'bless' you and all the others who are performing the puja and if you like to extend this to everybody.

V: This question of merits, Bhante, in a way it has troubled me for quite a long time. The idea first of all of building the idea of accumulating merit and then transferring it, it seems to



somehow build up a false view of ones value of what you are doing.

S: In what way a false view?

V: Well that one can actually acquire merit by doing something.

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S: Well this is actually the Buddhist view.

V: What, that one can actually acquire merit by doing something?

S: This is actually the Buddhist view, that you can acquire merit, though it is equally important from the Mahayana point of view to give it away.

V: But this merit seems completely fallacious to me. That there is such a thing that one can acquire. It doesn't seem that by doing anything one can acquire merit.

S: Well why not?

V: By doing good acts, supposing you do something quite simple now and you are then in a state of, maybe happiness, joy, and then that happiness and joy can be shared. You can be doing more. You can just go out much more, and just give that.

V: Or it could be seen just in terms of ones own progress. That is a merit, the fact that you have progressed.

V: But that itself is illusory.

V: It's not illusory, it's very real.

(V's: confused)

V: ... the false feeling that ...

V: It seems to me that this is building up an illusion which ultimately we are trying to break up and get rid of, that we are progressing, that we are acquiring something and that we are getting better, all this sort of thing.

V: (unclear)

V: But that's what we are trying to get rid of.

S: They are true but the question is how do you get rid of it? You get rid of it to begin with by building up merit. That is what you have to do now.

V: Presumably you experience it on a practical level, the more you do practice of some kind or another and the more energy you get and unless you do something with that you feel terrible. I don't think it's a question of, almost deciding to do it, it's almost a necessity.

V: Maybe it's just the associations I have on that word. It's an association, that one is actually becoming better ...

V: (Unclear)

S: Well perhaps you find it difficult to believe that you are becoming better.

V: Well, yes.

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S: Apparently other people don't find it difficult to believe that.

V: I think it's a kind of false humility, "I can't be good at all, everything I do is hopeless", it's a kind of false pride in a way.

V: Well that may be true on one level but (V: it is true) but what concerns me is that we are trying to - we are not trying to become something that we are not originally, are we?

S: Yes of course we are.

V: Are you not trying to become like a vessel for the sake of all beings...?

V: Sure yes, but why do you need merit?

S: Well you are trying to become something that you aren't at present. It's quite clear.

V: The books say that we are a Buddha already, but I don't and I am not going to say I am Buddha already don't bother ... do you see what I mean?

V: Yes, that's not quite the point though. It's the idea of a personal building up which I associate with the word merit that one is getting in a more egoistic sense.

V: I don't think it is meant to be taken ...

V: I know it isn't ...

V: ... well then what merit means is like trying to develop a positive feeling of metta, if you like, towards oneself, that's the meritorious good feeling. It isn't some false, conceited, ego-sense, it's more positive, wholesome sort of feeling. (S: Mmm) I mean, why shouldn't you take a certain pride in your actions if you do something that's beneficial, but it doesn't have to be conceit.

S: In other words it is based on the assumption or the feeling that 'goodness is a gain'. To be good is to gain, which seems to be quite a healthy sort of feeling.

V: The Buddha, often when he taught lay people, taught them that if they did good actions they would become more prosperous, and spoke to them on their own, material level.

S: Yes, because to be good is not something vague and wishy washy but something very solid and practical with very definite, tangible, concrete results. Not just a matter of sort of vague thinking of just very abstruse ideas.

V: Maybe it is also, sort of thinking of Nirvana as the cessation of things, rather than as something that you can grow into ... and continually growing after that even.

V: I think the whole difficulty is, probably it [185] is a personal one, my own association in the concept of merit, in a sort of Christian...

S: Well would you have the same sort of association with say the word virtue?

V: Probably not.

S: Punya is sometimes translated as virtue, well then better just stick to the word punya, think in terms of acquiring punya and accumulating punya.

V: That would be a bit easier although still... you know.

V: I know what you mean actually, sometimes you feel as though you are getting rewards, sweeties.

V: Yes, that whole idea.

S: But why shouldn't you be rewarded?

V: Because one is trying to get beyond the idea of doing something for reward. One is not doing it for that purpose.

S: But what is the difference between a reward and a result? I mean, you cook a meal so that you can eat it when you cook it. It is not a reward it is just a result.

V: Yes, sure. But when you use the word merit it gives a different feeling to me.

V: And also take pride in being a good cook so that other people can enjoy the food as well.

V: Sure. Anyway it's just the subject, I've always been unhappy about the idea of 'merit'.

S: I'm still not quite sure what you are unhappy with though. It seems there is nothing wrong with the idea of merit but there is some sort of association that you have.

V: Well the association is that one is becoming better than other people ...

S: Well I should hope so (laughter).

V: I don't see it like that. I see it as getting merit, OK...

S: You do share your merit with them?

V: Yes, well this is it you see. It's fine but I think the danger is of it becoming, you are building up ...

S: I think the danger is that we think of dangers all the time.

V: Yes but you are building up a concept and then you have got to try and get rid of it by ...

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S: Yes, well do the building up now and leave the getting rid of it until that is appropriate.

V: Get rid of it when you've got it. You can't get rid of it when you haven't got it in the first place. So get it in the first place and then you can get rid of it.

V: And see what it feels like.

V: Presumably if you've really got it you will see that it is illusory anyway. (laughter)

S: Yes, you have to become a millionaire first before you can know what it feels like to give away a million dollars.

V: And presumably that also it does necessitate getting better than other people because that is the whole idea, in a sense, of a spiritual hierarchy. And against that that you ...

V: Sure that's fine but then the idea comes that I am getting better and it takes ego-sense.

S: Yes but you can also say I am just the same or I am worse, the ego is always there. But if you are actually better than others then there is the possibility of getting a little bit further beyond the ego. In fact part of the betterness consists in that. But not to try and become better

than others so that you won't feel egoistic is quite useless, because you can feel egoistic about being equal or inferior even.

V: (unclear)

S: Yes, though that is at a very much higher level indeed. It's more like a heroic attitude, it's more like that is what it is.

V: I can certainly see all the positive aspects of it.

S: Oh good (laughter)

All right lets go on to the third point that Atisa makes.

'Though you meditate and are considered a holy and wise teacher if you do not abandon your interests in the eight worldly concerns, whatever you do will be only for the purpose of this life, and in the future you will not find the right path.' I think there is a suggestion here of meditating on the Voidness. Because Atisa speaks first of renunciation, then of the Bodhicitta, and these are usually a sequence; Renunciation, Bodhicitta and the Voidness, as we shall see later on.

Do you know what the eight worldly concerns are? It's pleasure and pain, fame and infamy, gain and loss, praise and blame. There are two sets which are quite similar but you get the general idea. These are sometimes called, well the technical terms for them is the eight Lokadhammas.

V: There's something called the eight worldly vicissitudes.

S: Yes, or the eight winds the Tibetans often call them, because they buffet you and blow you hither and thither.

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V: This is one of the things in the four Brahma Viharas, this is one aspect. Indifference

S: Well equanimity.

V: The going and seeing things from the Mahayana point of view, is this like the Bodhicitta seeing the Stream entrant from a Mahayana point of view, or is there a definite distinction between those two?

S: So far as actual expression is concerned, or formulation is concerned, in the case of the Bodhicitta the idea of compassion is brought forward very prominently. But nothing is said about that in connection with stream entry. You could say that it was implied but it certainly isn't brought out explicitly.

V: The process is similar, as it were?

S: In a way, in a way, yes.

V: Are these eight worldly concerns supposed to cover all... ?

S: All the vicissitudes of life as Asvajit said. Especially in terms of the pairs of opposites, that you move about in the midst of the vicissitudes of life but your mind is not affected. You are not elated by praise, you are not depressed by blame, you are not elated by good fortune or depressed by misfortune, you are the same in the midst of all these changes, in the midst of all this turmoil.

V: So that all unskillful actions would be for one of these reasons, presumably.

S: I don't think this particular passage is thinking so much in terms of actions but in the way of which your mind can be disturbed.

V: Reactions.

S: That it is not enough to meditate, to meditate on the void perhaps, to be considered a holy or wise teacher if your mind is still being affected by all these pairs of opposites. You must have a 'genuine', as it were, realization of the Voidness, you must be genuinely unmoved. Have real equanimity.

So throughout this passage Atisa is emphasizing the importance of the spirit of the thing. Or not simply emphasizing the spirit of the thing in a theoretical way but emphasizing the importance of practice. Which gives us the connection with the precept of the Lama, why the precept of the Lama is important, because it is necessary once we really do want to practise ourselves.

V: Would you say that going against the precept of the Lama, if the Lama gives a specific piece of advice, that is in a sense denying your refuge? Because you are denying the spirit of the Dharma?

S: It would amount to that, one might say. Especially if it is a quite serious and central matter, yes one could say that. Which is what Rechung did in the life of Milarepa, Milarepa gave him certain advice but he disregarded it and went off and got [188] into various difficulties and had to come back after a while rather shame-facedly. And the same thing happened, we notice, in the Udana, with the attendant who went off on his own despite the Buddha's advice that he should remain with him for a while.

Precept is very much more like advice. Because precept suggests a sort of rule which is inculcated. A rule is something general whereas a precept really is something more specific. A precept is more like personal advice, it being understood that the personal advice relates directly to spiritual matters, especially to the question of your personal development and what you should do or not do in the interests of your personal development.

V: Would the precept be as effective in a situation where there had been no initiation ever... the initiation make the advice valid?

S: Well not in a sort of mechanical way. But if there was initiation in the background then that would provide a context for the more effective speaking of the precept, as it were.

V: In some way a sort of binding...

S: One could say that.

V: Perhaps the precept is an initiation.

S: One could say that too. And it suggests a certain amount of intensity because it is between one person and another and in that situation any communication is naturally more intense because it is more specific. This is why I sometimes say that the larger the number of people to whom you are speaking the more difficult it becomes to speak the truth. The more what you say becomes an approximation to the truth.

So you could refine upon that and say that the truth can only be spoken to one person. In other words truth is something specific, not something abstract and general. We usually tend to think of truth as something abstract and general. The more abstract it is the truer it is but from a spiritual point of view we can say that the opposite is the case. And very often it becomes so general it is just a matter of words not even of ideas.

V: So if you do not accept the advice of your Lama in that particular instance does that mean

that you are not accepting the Lama as your teacher in that instance?

S: To that extent, though one must be careful not to necessarily equate ones whole relationship with the Lama with ones reaction to that particular piece of advice. It might be something relatively peripheral, but if it was something that involved your whole life, your whole relationship then your rejection of the advice would be, in fact, a rejection of the relationship itself. But obviously one might sometimes reject the advice of the Lama, but if it was something relatively peripheral and if there was a strong commitment in other areas then the general nature of the relationship or commitment might not be affected.

V: And perhaps that reaction is what was intended anyway.

S: Possibly, yes.

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And also one can say that the precept itself, ideally, should pertain to quite a deep level. It shouldn't necessarily be couched in terms of 'you should do this or you should do that' it is much more a sort of clarification of the situation. Because also there is the question of freedom in that relationship, as in any other. So it is more like a clarification and a throwing light on rather than telling someone just to go off and do this and do that. The precept isn't an order.

For instance, there is a little example occurs to me from one of the Zen stories I was looking at. There was a certain teacher who used to teach, originally (now what was it?) it probably doesn't matter very much if I alter it a bit. He used to teach something like (I've got to think of an equivalent) it's only the mind, let's say 'mind is Buddha'. So one of his disciples got enlightened meditating on this mind is Buddha.

After a while the teacher changed his teaching, 'neither mind nor Buddha'. So a new disciple learned that and finally became Enlightened and then the new disciple one day met the old disciple. And the old disciple asked, "how's the teacher getting on, is he still teaching mind is Buddha?". So the new disciple says, "no he now teaches neither mind nor Buddha", so the old disciple said, "the old chap is just trying to fool everybody, I shall stick to mind is Buddha." So the new disciple went back to the master and told him that no he's not accepting your teaching of neither mind nor Buddha he is sticking to your teaching of mind is Buddha. So the teacher commented, the disciple's name by the way was Plum, so he commented "Plum is really ripe now". So looking at it externally he rejected the teachers new teaching but he didn't really reject it because he realized that the teachers change so that he shouldn't perhaps be identified with a particular conceptual formulation of his realization. So he wasn't fooled by the change. So he didn't really reject the teachers new teaching he knew very well what the teacher was doing - he understood and the teacher understood that he understood.

So he didn't reject the new teaching, he didn't reject the new precept, as it were, because he knew that though it seemed to be different than the first one it meant exactly the same thing. One has to again take the spirit of the precept. And an advanced disciple can really be accepting when he seems to be rejecting and the teacher understands that. But obviously one shouldn't play around with this sort of thing and not kid oneself that one is accepting even though one appears to be rejecting when one is rejecting by way of rejecting.

V: (Unclear)

S: Anyway let's go on to the next episode.

"At another time Atisa was asked by Ku, Noke and Drom, "What is the highest teaching of the path?" Atisa replied, "The highest Skill is in the realization of egolessness. The highest Nobility is in subduing your own mind. The highest Excellence is in having a mind which seeks to help others. The highest Precept is continual mindfulness. The highest Remedy is in understanding the naturelessness of everything. The highest Activity is not to conform with

worldly concerns. The highest siddhi is the lessening and transmutation of the [190] passions. The highest Giving is found in non attachment. The highest Moral Practice is a peaceful mind. The highest Patience is humility. The highest Effort is to abandon attachment to activities. The highest Meditation is the mind without pretension. The highest Wisdom is not to grasp anything as it appears."

"And what is the final goal of the Teaching?" the three disciples asked.

Atisa replied, "The final goal of the Teaching is possession of the essence of Voidness and Compassion. Just as, in the world, there is a panacea for all sickness called the Solitary Heroic Medicine, there is the realization of Voidness which remedies all the fettering passions." "

S: There is just one comment here. 'The essence of Voidness and compassion', this represents a statement or a description of the goal, the final goal of the teaching, which subsequently became very important for Tibetan Buddhism. It is in these terms that Tibetan Buddhists always, in one way or another, think of the final goal. 'the realization of the essence of Voidness and Compassion. With Sunyata on the one hand and Karuna on the other. Or one can say, the final goal as the union, on the highest level, of Wisdom and Compassion. Or Wisdom and Skilful means, sometimes it is said. And this is, of course, the significance of the, so called sexual symbolism in which you get a male and a female Buddha figure in sexual union. It is the essence of Voidness united with the essence of Compassion. This is the final goal, this is the highest goal.

V: What does this mean when it says, 'a mind without pretension'?

S: Pretension seems to be a very general term, I am not sure whether it translates any technical term. It is almost like conceit. What is conveyed to you by pretension?

V: Just a sense of 'I'.

V: Pretending.

S: It's not just that, it's pretending, it's ... too. Pretension is the opposite of genuineness. Pretension is deliberately appearing as what you are not.

So why do you think it is said, 'the highest meditation is the mind without pretension'? It suggests the completely unified mind, the completely integrated mind. When you don't pretend even to yourself. Some people are not even themselves with their own selves. Do you know what I mean? That they act even in the inner recesses of their own mind, they even act to themselves. So one could say that this is what is meant by pretension. So, 'the highest meditation is the mind without pretension.'

V: Can you paraphrase that by the word acceptance, of accepting whatever you are, without avoiding it.

End of tape

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S: I'd say that is on a comparatively lower level. Why should you accept, say, what's unskilful in you? Recognize it, acknowledge it and then do something about it, but acceptance is rather too positive an attitude to have towards one's own unskilful states.

I think this whole question of acting is very important. I don't think I have ever discussed it systematically. Not only acting in relation to others but even acting in relation to oneself. Of thinking of oneself, even to oneself as other than one actually is. I think it's very difficult sometimes for people not to act, in their relations with other people.

V: Is it not that you have to act because you haven't got..., you feel you want more than you are so you put on an act in order to make out that you are something more than you are, though you haven't really accepted it ...

S: You don't recognize what you really are.

V: It's lack of confidence.

S: It's different from trying to change yourself and trying to actually be different.

V: You don't really accept your naturelessness.

S: Well you don't even accept your present conditioned nature, which is at least a bit real compared with the act you put on at least.

V: It's a block towards changing yourself, if you are pretending to be something else.

S: Oh yes, I must say I often get that impression with people, that they are in fact just acting, even though they don't really know it themselves. They know it to a very slight extent but not really, so that what they are saying, what they are doing represents just a big act.

V: So how can you deal with that?

S: It is very difficult again.

V: It's a bit like what came up the other day about the other side of the coin is the thing about doing whatever you feel. Being yourself in the psychological sense, it's like the other side.

S: Though sometimes even that becomes a sort of act.

V: In a way, I brought that up, I wasn't thinking about it that way, I was thinking about sincerity towards ... not just expressing yourself ...

S: Of course the opposite of acting is completely genuine behaviour.

V: That's what I meant by accepting, genuineness, not putting on an act.

S: Yes, but I think this word accepting is a bit open to misconstruction because acceptance is too positive a word to [192] use in connection with unskilful mental states. You shouldn't accept them. To recognize them is quite enough.

V: Even the whole idea of acceptance and non-acceptance is a bit suggestive of a split in the personality. As if there is part of one that one has to accept or not accept and another part that accepts or doesn't accept.

S: Or it suggests leaving the situation where it is. You accepting and then there is what you accept, which seems a bit too passive.

V: ...of knowing yourself and sticking to it. I know that sometimes you can be affected by people insisting on seeing you in a certain way and out of their strength, through it happening so much you become that, in the end.

V: I don't think you can.

V: Well maybe not on a deep..., you act that out...

S: And you act that way.



V: ... and you act that out, you satisfy what they want to see in you.

V: Without knowing it.

V: A bit unconsciously.

V: It's what we were talking about yesterday, taking on the mass energy and you think it's you. But I think that this business of acting, that if one is practising in a very sincere way and a very direct way then eventually one will actually come to the point where you will be 'acting' or behaving in exactly the same way, in apparently the same positive way that he had been acting for years, but somehow the life has gone out of it and it just doesn't seem to be any more. And you gradually become aware that there is something underneath it, which is the real kind of grist of the story, in a way.

S: And the conviction goes out of your performance.

V: Right, and gradually what you really want will come to awareness. And it may take years.

S: Anyway, that too is a bit of a digression, let's go on.

"But many say they have realized Voidness. Why do their anger and attachment remain?"

"They are speaking empty words, for when you fully realize the meaning of Voidness, your body, speech, and mind react with pleasure, like slipping fresh butter into barley soup. The great sage Aryadeva said:

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The nature of existence Is it empty or not? Merely feeling this doubt Tears samsara asunder.

"Therefore, when you realize the correct meaning of Voidness, it is just like the Solitary Heroic Medicine, for all of the path is included in that realization."

S: That's a quite difficult question, let's consider this bit. It seems that even in Tibet there were people with the Tibetan equivalent of 'Mouth Zen', people who read about Sunyata, Voidness, talked about it and even claimed to realize it but in whom there was still anger and attachment. And Atisa says, "they are speaking empty words, for when you fully realize the meaning of Voidness your body, speech and mind react with pleasure". How can you possibly be angry when you are in a pleased and happy state, and when you really do realize the Voidness you are in a pleased and happy state. How can you possibly get angry. If you do get angry you can't be in a pleased and happy state, if you are not in a pleased and happy state you haven't realized the Voidness. The Voidness is in fact bliss.

V: Zen people talk quite a lot about this business of doubt, of instilling doubt into a disciple.

S: The doubt that is referred to in this verse is a sort of existential doubt. It's not a doubt about the truth of Buddhism. 'The nature of existence, is it empty or not? Merely feeling this doubt tears samsara asunder'. Atisa is quoting this verse so as to contrast the feeling, even the bare feeling of doubt, here, with the empty words spoken by those who haven't really realized Voidness.

He is saying that if you even feel this doubt, even if you wonder whether conditioned existence is void or not, not to speak of realizing the Voidness, even to wonder whether existence might not all be void; even this produces tremendous effects. Even to feel this doubt tears samsara asunder, not to speak of the effects of realizing the Voidness. This is what he is saying. There should be tremendous positive effects. Just to suspect that this whole seemingly solid, phenomenal world, is in fact void. Even this can cause the whole foundations of your being to shake. Not to speak of realizing the Voidness. This is why he quotes that little verse.

'Therefore when you realize the correct meaning of Voidness, it is just like the Solitary Heroic Medicine, for all the path is included in that realization.' In other words all the different virtues which represent manifestations of that Voidness realization on different levels in different ways. When you have got the Voidness you have got everything. When you realize the Voidness you have everything; love, compassion, generosity, peace of mind and so on. So if you haven't got anything, if you are just like other people, getting angry just like other people you haven't got anything at all. You haven't realized the Voidness ... (break in tape)

(Tape 10) ... yes, even to suspect the Voidness of things causes tremendous upheaval, so what to speak of the total realization.

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V: When you say suspect, do you literally suspect..?

S: Well when you just begin even to wonder, well, maybe things are void. Maybe they are, sort of empty, metaphysically speaking. Maybe they are not as real as they seem. Even just start wondering in this way causes a tremendous upheaval. It is something you actually experience, which has repercussions throughout your entire being, so what to speak of the total realization, you are completely transformed then.

So if people claim to have realized the Voidness but are still exhibiting anger and attachment, how can one take them seriously?

V: If one begins, from that point when you begin to wonder seriously suspect reality of ...

S: It is what Walt Whitman calls 'the terrible doubt of appearances'. Doubting whether the appearances are real after all, as you had thought hitherto. When you feel the ground slipping from beneath your feet.

V: Can one ever really slip back from that point to believing in the reality of things?

S: Well it is difficult to generalize. Some may, others not, depends on the depth of the experience and how can one say.

V: It is possible though?

S: I wouldn't like to say that as a categorical, general statement.

V: (It couldn't have changed, that experience of some sort. ) ?

S: It is in a way, yes.

V: I suppose you can spend a lot of your life avoiding that suspicion. But sooner or later...

S: If you are avoiding that suspicion you have already started suspecting. So, in a quite uneasy state.

V: It's just like a koan.

S: You could say that, yes. Anyway let's go on to the next part of the discussion.

"How do you include the entire path within the realization of Voidness?" the disciples asked.

'All of the path is included in the Six Transcendences (Paramitas). When you realize the correct meaning of Voidness - and lose your blind lust for all things, material and spiritual - your life becomes one flowing act of transcendent Giving. In the absence of attachment, you are no longer defiled by non virtuous deeds, and you enter the ever-flowing harmony of transcendent Moral Practice. In this freedom from defilement, you also liberate yourself from

the passionate domination of 'I' and 'mine', and attain the ever-flowing transcendent [195] Patience. As you take great pleasure in the realization of Voidness, your life becomes one ever-flowing transcendent Effort. Through this, you lose all attraction to objects and enter the ever-flowing transcendent Meditation. And finally, when your mind is freed from the habit of seeing everything through the prism of three aspects, 'you will attain the ever-flowing transcendent Wisdom.'

S: So Atisa is answering the question, 'how do you include the entire path within the realization of Voidness?' The Path is, of course, the Path of the Six Transcendences, the Path of the Six Paramitas. You know what these six are, they are listed here anyway.

The important point is that it is said in the Mahayana that though the Six Paramitas are called the Six Paramitas strictly speaking it is only Prajna which is a Paramita. Now what is meant by that?

V: Only if the, so called Paramitas, are informed by Prajna are they Paramitas.

S: Yes. Just take the example of giving. You can be very generous, you can practice the height of generosity but it is not necessarily the Perfection of Generosity. It is not necessarily Dana Paramita. It is Dana Paramita only when it is dissociated from ego sense. In other words Dana becomes a Paramita only in association with Prajna, otherwise it is just Dana; which is very good and very positive and certainly a foundation for the development of Prajna but it is not in itself a Paramita. It becomes a Paramita only in association with Prajna, and by Prajna is, of course, meant realization of Voidness, Sunyata.

V: So those five Paramitas without Prajna are merely means of accumulating punya.

S: Right. In fact this is sometimes said, that the Buddha has a twofold accumulation, sambhara is the word for accumulation. An accumulation of Jnana and an accumulation of punya. Punya can be regarded as the highest possible development, the perfection of the positive mundane, the perfection of conditioned existence. And Jnana, of course, represents the unconditioned. So the Buddha has got both, this is quite important to realize, we don't always appreciate this. That the idea of Buddhahood represents the union of the perfection of the mundane with the transcendental. This is why the Buddha and the Bodhisattva, for instance iconographically are represented as in the prime of life. As well built, well proportioned, healthy, heroic and so on. This suggests the perfection of the mundane even on the physical level. And united with that the transcendental.

V: That's the two halos as well.

S: Yes, that's the two halos as well, the body halo and the head halo.

Again the Rupakaya is the product of the Buddha's punya and his Dharmakaya of his Jnana. Or his Nirmanakaya and his Sambhogakaya are produced from his accumulation of punya and his Dharmakaya he realizes through his accumulation of Jnana.

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V: 'Jnana', you mean wisdom?

S: Yes. And these are of course correlated with the Six Paramitas. So the first five by themselves, that is to say, dissociated from Prajna represent the perfection of the conditioned. They represent the most positive possible attitude that you can develop short of an actual transcendental experience. Short of developing insight, a vipassana or wisdom and so on. But as soon as they are brought into contact with Prajna they at once become transformed into Paramitas.

So therefore, Atisa says, that all of the path is included in the Six Transcendencies. Because when you attain Prajna, you at once attain, also, all those previous five as Paramitas. Before

you practice them just as Dana, sila and so on. They are not yet Paramitas, but they provide you with a basis to develop wisdom and once you have realized wisdom, the Dana and sila and so on which you are already practising, become transformed into Paramitas.

In other words, in Hinayana terms, your Eightfold Path becomes the truly Noble Eightfold Path, your mundane Eightfold Path becomes the Transcendental Eightfold Path. Your skilful actions become akirya, your skilful actions become spontaneous actions. They look the same but actually they are quite different in essence, because they come out of your realization of the truth of Voidness.

So you can say the Chakravatiraja, the Universal monarch represents the perfection of the mundane entirely dissociated from any transcendental realization, entirely dissociated from Enlightenment. But the Universal monarch looks exactly like the Buddha, but it isn't the Buddha. When the Buddha attains Buddhahood the Universal monarch, as it were, becomes informed with Buddhahood, but externally looks just the same.

V: By that you mean the Rupakaya, do you?

S: In a way, in as much as the Rupakaya is sort of analogous to the figure of the Universal monarch. Because the Universal monarch also has the thirty two signs, so does the Buddha, how do you distinguish between the two. The only difference is that the Buddha is a Buddha. So the thirty two signs, as it were, are informed by the Buddha knowledge. But unless you can see that with your inner, spiritual eye, to you it seems that the Universal monarch and the Buddha are the same. This is why the Diamond Sutra says you can't know the Buddha by his marks, i.e. by these thirty two marks of the Universal monarch. In other words the skilful looks like the spontaneous, or rather the spontaneous looks like the skilful.

V: If say one gained in wisdom without practising the Six Perfections, would their spontaneous action be...

S: Ahh, but wait a minute ...

V: ... fitted with the Six Perfections, if you like, they express that?

S: But the Mahayana doesn't believe that it is possible to attain wisdom without a basis of the previous five Perfections.

V: Is this because it is an integration? By practising the six Perfections to the highest level on the [197] mundane, it's a basis for one...

S: You provide a basis, a springboard.

V: It's a bit like the Eightfold Path, isn't it?

S: Right, yes.

V: (Unclear)

S: Yes, in other words it is the path of regular steps. Of course there is a path of irregular steps and you may get just a little glimpse of the void without any Dana, sila and so on, but you can't sustain it. It comes and it goes and it can even have a slightly shattering effect.

V: Because by practising it one is preparing oneself to..., I've been seeing it in terms of absorbing it, that if you haven't practised then even if you do get a glimpse, well, it's like you said, shattering, because you've had no previous experience.

S: You just can't grasp it. You're not strong enough, as it were. It is like giving someone who has been starving for several weeks a huge meal of very rich food, it can kill him; it is rather

like that. Whereas if you are a normal person, in a good state of health and with a healthy appetite you can eat it, digest and assimilate that meal of rich food without any difficulty at all and it will spread throughout your whole system and do you good.

I like the translation here, 'your life becomes one flowing act of transcendent giving', the expressions here are very good. 'The ever flowing harmony of transcendent moral practice'. This gives a very good impression of the difference of your rather forced, and difficult and reluctant practice of Dana on some occasions and the very spontaneous, everflowing, the outward flowing generosity of the real transcendent giving. They look alike, maybe, to the casual observer, you are giving in both cases but the spirit is completely different.

Any further point arising in connection with that little section?

V: It says, 'when you lose your blind lust of things material and spiritual'. It seems to be talking about, you have crossed to the other shore, you no longer need the Dharma.

S: Hmm. You no longer cling on to the raft. You can actually have a lust for spiritual things even at a lower level. Someone said to me a few weeks ago that he had paid a visit to the Compendium Book shop and he said that he found the atmosphere very unpleasant. So I said, "what do you mean" and he said, "the people were hovering around inside just like spiritual pretas." Their attitude to all the material, the occult knowledge and so on was very preta like, very craving and clinging in a rather unhealthy way and he felt this atmosphere there rather strongly.

So it is this sort of thing, also, that is meant by the 'lust for spiritual things'.

V: We'll have to be careful in our own bookshops.

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S: I hope we don't get any preta like people hovering around the bookshops.

V: It seems to be something to do with the vast, range of things.

S: Yes, it stimulates a sort of greed, a spiritual greed, and confusion which can be quite dangerous almost.

V: But if you have got a few selected books that you know are good, then ...

S: Hmm and that you are really going to study and get down to and perhaps try to practise even.

V: They are looking for some short cuts.

S: Yes.

V: A lot of the books they have there are rather more glamorous than most of the books perhaps ...

V: I notices the same thing in Watkins just before this seminar. There was a big crowd of people around the Tibetan section which seemed to be expanding and enlarging and taking over the whole shop.

S: Zen seems to be really 'out' these days doesn't it?

V: It's all Tibetan at the moment, I don't think it will last very long.

S: I don't think it will but a small residue will be left which will be relatively healthy, as with Zen.

V: Don't you think though, that there's a possibility that even though people are attracted for the wrong reasons to these things that via the contact with the traditions that they are attracted to they could get something out of it and purify their motive?

S: Possibly, that depends on the nature of the contact. I think not just by reading.

V: But I mean, like reading a book about esoteric Tibetan ritual might...

S: For instance when we had that series of lectures on creative symbols of the Tantric path to Enlightenment we had quite a few of these people along for the first few lectures and they had every opportunity of coming into genuine contact with the spiritual tradition but I think we didn't see any of them again.

V: Roger ...

S: Only Roger, was he one of those? Ah, well just one then. I can't imagine him being a sort of spiritual preta.

V: That was the first time he came to the centre and ...

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S: Well there were some spiritual pretas around, drawn by the title of the series, but we didn't see them again.

V: It strikes me that people might go away and ... but come back maybe a long time later because of that seed that has been planted.

S: Let's hope so. It is very nice to hope so, but there is such a thing also as seed scattered on stony ground (laughter) unfortunately.

V: ... in the last day or two where, it begins with the mind, the attitude, and if you haven't got that to start with the chances are that it won't start to grow anyway.

V: I think there are plenty of other places where people..., to go to before they come back for people who encourage that spiritual preta.

V: You could use that for anything. You could say that if you started reading about wife swapping in Epping you might one day come back to that. (laughter) You could use that for anything you can read, couldn't you. It's not necessarily so.

V: I don't quite follow.

V: Well, I mean if you read something on the esoteric doctrines in Tibet, then one day you might come back and that might be a lead on to the tradition. The same thing could be applied to anything you read. You could say why don't you do everything that you read?.

S: And you read the daily newspaper and that might suggest that a seed is planted and one day you will come back to politics. But it is not just that that one seed has been planted, sure it is perhaps, but there are hundreds and thousands of seeds being planted all the time. It becomes rather difficult to tell which seed is really going to sprout eventually. If there is only that particular seed being planted well yes, very likely it would sprout, eventually, but there are millions of other seeds being planted too.

V: All kinds of weeds and strange things.

V: ... one Buddhist seed in all the mess ... of there are a hundred thousand other seeds.

S: Those in hell also have Buddha seeds.

All right on to page 124.

"Is it possible for one who realizes the meaning of Voidness to attain Buddhahood with only the wisdom and meditation of Voidness?" a disciple asked.

Atisa replied, "Whatever you perceive, whatever you proclaim - there is nothing that has not come from your own mind. Understand that this realization of mind is empty. Understanding the non duality of the realization [200] of mind and of Voidness is wisdom. Meditation is the continuous concentration on this wisdom without any distraction. Deeds are accumulating merit and wisdom while you realize from the viewpoint of this meditation that everything is like an illusion. Once you are under the influence of these three, their practice will come even in dreams. Once it has come in dreams, it will come at the moment of death. When it comes at the moment of death, it will be present in the Bardo. Once it is present in the Bardo, there is certain to be accomplishment of the Superior Siddhi, and you will become a Buddha." "

S: So Atisa is in fact saying quite a lot here. But the question is, 'Is it possible for one who realizes the meaning of Voidness to attain Buddhahood with only the wisdom and meditation of Voidness?', a disciple asked'.

What does Atisa say in reply, 'Whatever you perceive, whatever you proclaim - there is nothing that has not come from your own mind.' What do you think he means by that, what is he suggesting, pointing out?

V: There is in fact no separation between what you perceive and what you are.

S: No I think he is getting at something much more ordinary and practical, at least to begin with.

V: It's up to you?

S: Perhaps a little more subtle than that.

V: If you think you realize ... it's still a concept, in a way.

S: The starting point of the discussion is someone who realizes the meaning of Voidness with only the wisdom and meditation of Voidness. The starting point also, one could say, is that the person who makes that statement, someone is saying that there is a realization of the meaning of Voidness with only the wisdom and meditation of Voidness. So there is a distinction, as it were, in the case of the actual questioner between his realization, which may in fact just be a mental understanding, and his own mind. There is a mind there which is making this statement about Voidness. Which is proclaiming Voidness, as it were, there is a mind there. So this shows that the realization of Voidness isn't complete, it's not a true realization of Voidness.

So Atisa seems to be directing the attention of the questioner back to the mind, back to his own mind and pointing out that there is a mind there.

(end side 1)

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S: So, 'whatever you perceive, whatever you proclaim', whether Voidness or anything else, 'there is nothing that has not come from your own mind.' So in directing back to his own mind, if in his proclamation of Voidness there had been only Voidness and no mind, well there wouldn't have been any ground for Atisa to make this remark. But there is his mind there, as it were thinking about Voidness, even realizing Voidness but his mind is there. So Atisa is, as it were, saying, well you have left your mind out of account, don't leave your mind out of account, that is there. There is nothing that does not come from your own mind.

Then he says, 'Understand that this realization of mind is empty'. But how do you understand, to begin with even, how do you have a realization of mind, what is meant by realization of mind? This refers to a quite high level of ordinary meditation and to get up to that level of ordinary meditation you need your ethical practice and so on. So Atisa is, in a way, getting him back on to the path if regular steps.

So he has taken him from his talk about Voidness back to the mind. He is speaking in terms of a realization of mind, that is a realization of the true nature of mind, its inner purity, tranquillity and so on, this comes about only in meditation. So once you have come in contact with mind at a very high level, and the suggestion is that it is still a mundane level, as you get in the Dhyanas, then you can inquire into the true nature of this mind, which of course is Voidness. And when you understand the non-duality of the realization of mind, in its true Void nature and Voidness in general, as it were, that is Wisdom.

So really Atisa is not allowing him to get away with this one-sided realization of wisdom, it is not a real wisdom. He is bringing him back to the mind, back to actual practice and pointing out that the realization of Voidness in the true sense is possible only through a high meditative experience, in which you realize, or in which you see that mind at that level is Void. In other words he is bringing him, you could say from the Madhyamika back to the Yogacara, back to the Yogacara point of view. Because his Madhyamika point of view was only words, or not much more than words, so he brought him back to an experience of the Yogacara point of view as a basis for the realization of the Madhyamika point of view.

V: Although the Madhyamika point of view may be said to be higher one must approach it through the Yogacara? You can't, as it were jump to the Madhyamika point of view.

S: Yes, because otherwise it just becomes dialectics. It just becomes an intellectual thing.

V: So the Madhyamika is looked upon as being higher than the Yogacara?

S: It is here, yes. Though, of course, Yogacara is not explicitly mentioned but this is the implication.

And then what does it say about meditation. 'Meditation is the continuous concentration on this wisdom without any distraction'. This is a quite advanced definition of meditation. This isn't ordinary meditation. So here meditation is the contemplation on the insight already achieved in such a way as to develop it and mature it.

V: Is this in any way connected with Samadhi and [202] Prajna being seen as the same thing?

S: Not quite, no, not really.

There is a suggestion of inseparability but certainly the wisdom is not complete. You meditate, you contemplate on the wisdom you have achieved in order to help it to grow. It's not so much that you meditate on it or contemplate on it but you reinforce it with your integrated energies at their highest possible level.

And then, 'Deeds are accumulating merit and wisdom while you realize from the viewpoint of this meditation that everything is like an illusion'. In other words practising the relative truth and the absolute truth simultaneously.

V: Deeds that create skilful action?

S: It's more than that, because it is not only accumulating merit but wisdom. So 'once you are under the influence of these three their practice will come even in dreams.' That is to say under the influence of wisdom, meditation and deeds.

In other words Atisa has given an interpretation of the sila, samadhi, Prajna. But from a very



advanced point of view. In other words he has brought the question back to the path of regular steps.

It's a bit like the Eightfold path because you go on the mundane Eightfold path from sila to samadhi to Prajna, then on the Transcendental Eightfold path you go from Prajna to samadhi to sila, you could say. Do you see what I mean?

V: Sila in that case would be the Paramitas?

V: It would be the action out of being... rather than the...

S: Rather than the disciplinary action.

V: But that would make it a Paramita wouldn't it?

S: It is not being discussed in the context of the Paramitas but of these three; sila, samadhi and Prajna. But the principle is the same. You have got the dana and sila and so on, as non Paramitas. You practise those you gain wisdom and then once wisdom is attained they are successively transformed into Paramitas as the Prajna permeates those levels. It is just the same as regards to the mundane Eightfold path and the transcendental Eightfold Path. You practise the sila, you practise samadhi as a means to Prajna and having gained Prajna, i.e. having had your perfect vision you then transform your whole emotional life, which is like samadhi and your action which is like sila. And your samadhi here, perfect samadhi at the end is not samadhi in the ordinary sense, it represents the final and complete transformation of the entire nature which has now been achieved.

So it is much the same here, Atisa gets the questioner from a purely theoretical Prajna, or a more or less theoretical Prajna and he points out that Prajna can only be realized by realizing that the mind is empty. But this you realize only in meditation and once you have realized that then meditation becomes a transcendental meditation and action or deeds become a transcendental action or deeds. So it is the same pattern, do you see this?

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So when Atisa says, 'there is nothing that does not come from your own mind. Understand that this realization of mind is empty. Understanding the non-duality of the realization of mind', he is putting him on the path of regular steps. And then from then onwards, realization of Voidness, 'Meditation as the continuous concentration on this wisdom', 'Deeds as accumulating merit and wisdom while realizing from the viewpoint of this meditation that everything is an illusion', that is the descending phase, as it were.

So there is the ascending phase and the descending phase, corresponding to the mundane Eightfold path and the transcendental Eightfold Path. Or the Paramitas before the realization of Prajna and the Paramitas after the realization of Prajna.

Do you see the pattern and the movement?

V: So the mundane is the ascending?

S: Right.

V: ... where you are going on and once Prajna has arisen it's then from that...

S: Then it is question of cultivating the Prajna, increasing it and enabling it to permeate and all the different levels and all the different activities.

This is what the Zen people sometimes call keeping up your practice after Enlightenment. Unfortunately they speak in terms of Enlightenment, which is very misleading, but it is keeping up your practice after a glimpse of wisdom, after a glimpse of insight, and working

on it and maturing it and developing it. Bringing it down to the various other levels so that it pervades the whole being eventually.

V: I thought Enlightenment was something that, in a sense, you are constantly achieving, if you like.

S: Yes, it's not that you complete the whole of the ascending phase at one go and then the whole of the descending phase. You can sort of trickle over into the descending phase before you have really completed the ascending phase.

V: I am not sure about the sense in which you use ascending and descending.

S: Well ascending to Enlightenment, or ascending to wisdom and then descending from that wisdom in the sense that the wisdom manifests at successively, as it were lower levels of your being until it eventually informs everything that you do and everything that you say.

V: You mean like more concrete.

S: It transforms, as I said in the Eightfold Path series, it transforms the emotional nature, it transforms the activities, transforms the whole way of life, lifestyle and so on.

V: (unclear)

S: Yes, lower in the sense of more concrete levels of manifestation.

V: From the tips of your toes.

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S: Right, or tips of your fingers.

So Atisa, very skilfully brings the questioner back from this rather one sided Voidness to a regular and systematic practice of the path. At the same time he gives a quite profound interpretation of meditation and deeds on the descending arc, as it were. That is to say the practice of meditation and ethics after the attainment of wisdom.

Then, 'Once you are under the influence of these three their practice will come even in dreams.' In other words you really are being thoroughly transformed, your unconscious mind is being thoroughly penetrated. And, 'Once it has come in dreams it will come at the moment of death. When it comes at the moment of death it will be present in the Bardo', which is like a sort of dream state. 'Once it is present in the Bardo there is certain to be accomplishment of the Superior Siddhi, and you will become a Buddha'.

V: What's Siddhi in this ...

S: 'Superior Siddhi', that means, not in the sense of magic powers but in the sense of the attainment of Enlightenment itself.

V: Does that mean that you will become a Buddha immediately, without rebirth, or after a certain number of years?

S: It means that that possibility is there, liberation from the Bardo state itself.

Even if your dreams are affected by your practice then you have got quite a long way and the chances are that your practice and its associated experiences will come to your mind at the moment of death and continue even afterwards. Then you are in a very favourable position as the visions of the Bardo state start dawning. One is in a position to apprehend them, as it were, to consciously unite with them. This is the method of liberation in that state.

V: Do you think more attention should be given to the area of dreams and.., inasmuch as they represent our unconscious which we eventually have to sort of tap.. Or, I mean, to start dealing with that at this stage or would that be very irregular.

S: Well it would be perhaps a bit premature. It is like pulling up the plant and looking at the roots to see if it has taken root yet. If you carry on with your meditation and deeds in this sense your dreams are going to be transformed, you need not bother about them. The main thing is to keep on with the practices which are going to change the dreams, not keep on looking at the dreams.

V: Just use the dreams as an instrument that indicates.

S: Just as an indicator, yes. But you have got to have something to be indicated so that is the main thing which you have got to be concerned with. It is like weighing yourself everyday and you are not doing anything about your weight.

V: On the positive side though it could be [205] regarded as a sort of map which shows you where you are but you've still got to actually follow that road.

S: I think dreams can be a bit insidious and you can become a bit too interested in that field for its own sake. But once ones practice does start percolating through on to the dream level then you will certainly have very positive dreams and you will remember some of them sooner or later and you will certainly find them inspiring and invigorating and that's all that is necessary. There is no need to make a special record of.., start analysing them or anything like that. Just remember some very good dreams that you had and you will feel that the unconscious is coming more and more into line with the aspirations of the conscious mind and even the mind which is above that.

V: It seems that, what I feel you are saying is that the actual conscious.., bringing dream material into consciousness as a practice, as a technique, is not very valid. You are saying it is not useful.

S: It is certainly not mentioned here. So, presumably Atisa isn't giving any particular importance to it.

V: In this particular teaching.

S: He says, 'once you are under the influence of these three their practise will come even in dreams.'

V: What I am saying is, until you are under those three is it any use, is it not possibly useful to liberate certain mental states so that you can use that energy?

S: But does that really happen. This is the sort of language that we hear quite a lot but does it actually happen like that? Do people experience this, this is the question to be asked. I don't know if there are any ex-members of the dream group here.

V: I would say it does happen, but you can get too involved in it and indulge in it.

V: Certainly at one stage in my life it had a tremendously revealing, insight producing effect.

S: You are not using the word insight in the strict sense.

V: Probably not, but it made me understand myself a bit better and what was going on. I found that useful in order to decide what I had to do.

S: Well fair enough in that case. But Atisa would probably say that, and also Atisa did himself pay attention to his dreams and he seems to have definitely archetypal dreams, but he

would probably say that the main thing would be to carry on with ones spiritual practice and make sure that it was affecting ones being on that level. So that it would in fact be reflected in ones dreams and one would be practising in the dream state.

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V: It seems there are two different ways, one is looking for something in the dreams and the other one is if you are doing a practice and dreams come up, well they will speak for themselves. It seems like that, in a way.

V: I think that's an over simplification, because I think you can actually, by conscious effort to recollect dreams and understand the ways the symbols work you can actually liberate certain energy which can be used. It's a fairly low level, admittedly, on the level of ... but I think that can be a foundation for further work.

V: But the analysis only directs you to what did that dream say to you.

V: No, I don't agree. I think the coming into contact with the dream symbol can actually liberate energy, change it.

V: But not by analysing it intellectually, if you see it you see it, if you don't ...

V: But that's what dream psychology is about, contacting that symbol.

V: Presumably that happens in the dream anyway, it's the point of the dream, if it doesn't happen there and then in the dream ... I went through a phase where I just didn't bother with dreaming, I used to get up and sit and carry on after that. But just recently I decided to get into my dreams again and I lay there working out what was happening and by ten o'clock I hadn't got up and I hadn't done any practice and I felt rotten, that's not... (laughter)

S: But you knew a hell of a lot about yourself. Maybe that's why you felt rotten.

V: I think that's the wrong use of dream psychology.

S: But also there is the question, how useful is even self knowledge on that level? Whether that time and energy wouldn't be better spent in carrying on with the practice, whatever it was.

If a particularly important dream does come and you do remember it, by all means reflect upon it and try to absorb what it is saying. But perhaps a conscious and regular preoccupation with and analysis of dreams doesn't really give you very much of a clue from a spiritual point of view.

Anyway, any other point arising in connection with this episode, or this teaching?

V: In fact that whole paragraph is something that could be meditated upon for several weeks.

S: Hmm. 'Deeds are accumulating merit and wisdom while you realize from the viewpoint of this meditation that everything is like an illusion'. In other words bringing the relative truth and the absolute truth together.

Let's go on then.

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"Once the venerable Atisa was staying at Nyay-Thang, south-west of Lhasa. He was asked by the teachers of Shang-na-chung, Kyur, and Hlang-tsang, 'What are the teachings of logic (pramana)?"

Atisa replied, "There are many, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, all of which are endless

chains of ideation. They are not necessary, and there is no time to be wasted on them. It is time to condense the essential meaning of the Teaching"

One of the teachers then asked, "How do you condense the essential meaning of the Teaching?"

'Practice love, compassion, and Bodhi-mind toward all sentient beings. Make effort to accumulate merit and wisdom on behalf of them all. Dedicate all roots of virtue to the attainment of Buddhahood together with all sentient beings, whose number would fill the sky. Understand that all these things are empty of self-nature, like a dream or a magician's illusion."

S: Don't forget that Atisa came from the University of (Vikramasila?) and he had studied logic and many other subjects and was quite an expert in it. The word for logic is pramana (?) Pramana means 'a source of valid cognition', and logical studies were pursued very very vigorously throughout the whole medieval Indian period both by Buddhists and non-Buddhists. In fact it was the Buddhists who started it to a great extent. The Buddhist idea was that the Bodhisattva should be able to convert and convince as many living beings as possible, therefore he has to be able to persuade them and convince them. Which meant he had to have reasonings at his disposal, he ought to be able to reason, he should understand the science of reasoning, in other words should understand logic. This was the reasoning behind the early interest in logic. But eventually it became a sort of study in itself and there were tremendous discussions and controversies about various fine points of logic. And an immense logical tradition developed to which both the Buddhists and Hindus contributed.

The development of Indian logic during this period went on for nearly a thousand years and there is a vast literature. Some scholars, both Buddhist and Hindu got completely immersed in this and were interested more in logic than in anything else. Almost like modern philosophers. So Atisa is apparently discouraging the study of logic, and he says, 'there are many', that is many teachings of logic, 'both Buddhist and non-Buddhist all of which are endless chains of ideation. They are not necessary, and there is no time to be wasted on them. It is time to condense the essential meaning of the teaching. One of the teachers then asked, how do you condense the essential meaning of the teaching?.' Then he gives his reply which is a very good summary of Mahayana Buddhism all in just a few lines.

First of all, 'Practice love, compassion and Bodhi-mind toward all sentient beings'. What does that mean, to begin with?

V: Metta.

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S: It is the practice of the first two Brahma Viharas, metta and karuna. And what about Bodhi mind? That's the Bodhicitta. Why do you think that Bodhi mind is mentioned immediately after the metta and the karuna?

V: For the sake of all sentient beings?

V: It arose due to the practice.

S: It arises due to the practice, or it doesn't arise without them but does it arise only as a result of the practice of metta and karuna or is anything else needed?

V: Wisdom

S: Wisdom, experience of the Void, in other words egolessness. This is necessary too. In other words love and compassion practised to the extent of egolessness, these constitute the Bodhicitta. Sometimes it is said that ones love and compassion should pass through the fires of the Voidness and re-emerge the other side, purified, and they would then be the

Bodhi-citta.

So the Bodhicitta is the love and compassion which one experiences by practising the Brahma Viharas after they have been purified by passing through the Voidness, as it were. We did talk a bit about this on one of the previous seminars, the question was raised whether the Metta Bhavana is a samatha type practice or a vipassana type practice. The general Theravadin view is that it is a samatha type practice and that you cannot gain Enlightenment, you cannot develop insight, even, simply by practising the metta bhavana. But this would seem to be doubtful, at least from the Mahayana point of view.

It is interesting that the other evening when we had the reading of the Karaniya Metta Sutta it rather seemed from the end of that Sutta that metta could lead quite naturally into insight. Do you remember that? Which would be more the Mahayana point of view. Because you make the metta infinite and you make it equal to all living beings. So if you equalize your attitude towards yourself and other living beings, as you do, for instance, at the beginning of the fifth stage; yourself, a near and dear friend, a neutral, the enemy. If you really have an equal attitude towards all four it suggests that there isn't any ego. It is put in positive rather than in negative terms, not that you have no ego but that your attitude is one of equality towards all. Equal love towards all. If this equal love towards all is developed to an infinite extent this surely amounts to, at least a form of vipassana, even a form of Bodhicitta. So one mustn't too rigidly separate the samatha from the vipassana or think of the metta bhavana too exclusively in samatha terms. It does seem, when practised intensively to merge into the vipassana level and to become virtually a vipassana practice.

I think we shouldn't be put off by the Theravada classification of it as a samatha method only. No doubt in the early stages it is just a samatha method, though very important as such, but it can develop and grow into a form of vipassana.

The Theravada's relegation of metta bhavana exclusively to the samatha side of things is probably an example of the Theravada's general under valuation of the positive, especially positive emotion.

V: Does the mudita bhavana come in on ...

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S: This is implied. Metta is basic. Where does metta differ from mudita and karuna?

V: Sorry could you briefly say what is mudita?

S: Sympathetic joy, the third Brahma Vihara.

V: Metta is the basis for them.

S: Metta is the basis. For instance you have metta, you feel love, you have a positive attitude towards other living beings. Having this positive attitude you come in contact with suffering, so what is your spontaneous experience, your spontaneous reaction.

V: You feel compassion.

S: You feel compassion. It is not that the compassion develops as something quite separate, as it were, but the metta itself, when it comes into contact with suffering is transformed into karuna. In the same type of way, when metta comes into happiness it is transformed into sympathetic joy. And when you have equal metta towards all, an equal karuna, an equal mudita, then that is your equanimity. So your equanimity arises out of the equalizing of your metta, karuna and mudita. It is not a sort of indifference devoid of any positive emotional content. The equanimity develops only when the love, compassion and sympathetic joy are fully developed and developed equally towards all.

That is a very important point, otherwise if people think of equanimity as indifference or if you think of equanimity as higher than metta or higher than karuna, higher than mudita it suggests that equanimity somehow leaves behind the emotions. Which is not the point at all, even though it is explained that like that very often in some works on Buddhism. When you have equal love towards all then you have equanimity, your equanimity is not a sort of separate emotion above and beyond your love which, as it were, leaves the love behind or does without it, leaving it in a state of cold indifference towards everybody and everything. It is an equal love towards all or an equal love towards all.

This is a very important practical point. Otherwise you say, first you develop love, then OK. you leave love behind, then you develop compassion then joy and then you develop equanimity which is of course indifference. This is the general impression which is given, the way these four are usually explained unfortunately.

V: So with this equal love towards all beings the equanimity comes back to this idea of insight ...

S: Yes. To the extent that there is equality and an awareness of equality, I would say to that extent there is insight. The concluding lines of the Karaniya metta Sutta certainly suggest that. Because it even suggests you gain Enlightenment through the metta because it says, 'he comes no more to birth in any womb', which suggests Arhantship entirely through metta. And there is also a mention of insight attained through metta.

V: Could you say a bit more about insight in this context. I'm not clear in what sense it's...

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S: Insight is, among other things, a realization of egolessness. So if you have an equal attitude towards yourself and others, where's the ego? You don't think in terms, explicitly, of egolessness but your attitude is an egoless attitude. And that is equivalent to a realization of insight from that point of view.

I think the trouble is we think of insight and egolessness and so on, much too much in abstract, metaphysical terms rather than in terms of actual concrete living attitudes and behaviour. We speak in terms, for instance, of realizing the truth of egolessness, but what we really mean is being unselfish. Being unselfish or being egoless. But not the principle of egolessness as some separate special principle which we, as it were, contemplate, regardless of our actual behaviour.

V: I don't suppose, therefore, it's possible to be conscious of oneself as being such.

S: Well not taking conscious quite literally. But you certainly be aware of yourself but you would not necessarily be translating what you are doing into those particular terms.

V: It's a bit like, whenever you've achieved Enlightenment, that this is someone who has destroyed all the asravas but knows that he has done it as well.

S: This knowledge is, of course, a transcendental awareness. It is not a thinking in our sense, that I have done this and I have done that. But the destruction of the asravas is not divorced from awareness. It is not self consciousness, even self consciousness in the positive sense, it is more than that.

V: Is it more like the experience of being without the asravas?

S: In a way, yes. The illustration is given sometime, that when you have been freed from prison, or you have been carrying a tremendous burden and at last you are able to put it down. There is a tremendous feeling of relief you know that you have put the burden down, you feel that you have put the burden down. It is rather like that.

V: You experience it rather than work it out.

S: The feeling that they have all been destroyed, they are all gone, I am not troubled by these things any more. Just like putting down a heavy burden, perhaps it is more like a feeling. I am not going to come back any more unless I really want to from an altruistic point of view. I am completely free to go back or not to go back. There is no compulsion, there is nothing to pull me back or drag me back.

V: Do all these things form a group? Metta, Karuna, Mudita, equanimity?

S: Yes these are the Four Brahma Viharas.

V: Isn't it often said that you can reach different dhyanic states from the different Brahma Viharas? ...

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S: Yes, sometimes the Theravadins do say that only Upeksha, only equanimity can carry you as far as the fourth absorption, the fourth dhyana, the others can't. But I am inclined to view that with some suspicion. It's again, I suspect the general under-valuation of the positive on the Theravadins [part?].

V: I thought all samatha type practices could lead to the fourth dhyana.

S: That isn't the Theravada tradition, no. For instance, the contemplation of the loathsomeness of food, as far as I remember is said to take you only as far as neighbourhood concentration. Not even into the first dhyana.

V: I thought that that, though, was a vipassana practice.

S: No. The loathsomeness of food, not loathsomeness of the physical body, of the corpse and so on.

V: (laughing) it seems to represent an insight for some.

V: It seems to me that all these various lists and descriptions are descriptions of the way a certain type of consciousness is and behaves continuously. Which leaves me with the thought that it is all very well, but you have got to start somewhere.

S: Well there is the ascending arc as well as the descending, you start on the ascending arc and work your way up as far as you can. 'Practice love and compassion and Bodhi-mind towards all sentient beings'. This is what Atisa is starting with. He is starting with the metta bhavana which is quite simple and within everybody's reach.

And then, 'make effort to accumulate merit and wisdom on behalf of them all'. Not just for your own sake only. Definitely accept and follow the Bodhisattva idea. 'And dedicate all roots of virtue to the attainment of Buddhahood, together with all sentient beings whose number would fill the sky'. These roots of virtue are the kusala mulas, the skilful roots. He suggests here that these should be cultivated. That you should get rid of craving, aversion and ignorance and cultivate their opposites. But do this for the sake of all.

V: I was just thinking about what was meant by Bodhi-mind, to practise Bodhi-mind.

S: This is Bodhicitta, the will the Enlightenment for the benefit for all. The aspiration that one should gain Enlightenment, not just for ones own sake but so that one can be of greater help to all living beings.

V: But there again, surely one must either realize that the Bodhicitta has either manifested in you or it hasn't, if it hasn't you can't...



S: First of all, as I said, Atisa said "practise love and compassion", so this you can certainly do, these are possible [212] on the mundane level. This is your practice of samatha or even leading you on into vipassana. And as your vipassana or your wisdom develops that will have a retroactive effect upon your love and compassion, will purify them and they will become transformed or transmuted into the Bodhicitta.

(end tape 10)

V: The roots of virtue then would be non-hatred, non-craving and wisdom.

S: Yes, that's right. All the positive counterparts, contentment, love and wisdom.

V: Ah, that's what I was trying to get.

S: And then finally, 'Understand that all these things are empty of self nature, like a dream or a magician's illusion'. Try to see them as something completely spontaneous and free, detached from any subject, any agent, anyone who is doing these things as a separate subject apart from the actual action itself.

So this represents Wisdom in the full sense.

V: Is this, ... listening to a lecture when you were talking about doing the metta bhavana and not putting yourself in this place by saying 'I am generating love and compassion, I am generating metta. But just, you said ...

S: That there is love, that love is going forth, as it were. Yes. If you are completely absorbed in the flow of metta there won't be any consciousness of yourself as separate from that flow of metta. You will be completely at one with the flow of metta. So you won't be thinking in terms of someone who is producing the metta who is not the metta. In other words you will be completely at one with your actions. You could say that this is another definition of egolessness, to be completely at one with what you are doing and not have any consciousness of yourself as an agent separate from what you are actually doing.

For instance, the illustration is given. Supposing you move your hand, what do we say, "the hand moves", these are two separate parts of speech, the hand which is a noun and moves which is a verb. So the subject of the action is different from the action itself. Just watch, the hand and the movement of the hand are the same thing. It's not that the hand remains here and then it moves, no, the hand itself moves. But we think that the hand moves, but it doesn't what actually happens is that the hand moves. (laughter)

So one is ego the other is non-ego. So you do experience this yourself. When you are completely absorbed in something and are doing it without any consciousness that 'I am doing it, though of course you are aware that you are doing it, the awareness is completely in or with the doing, then you have at least a momentary experience of egolessness.

To see things as empty of self nature, like a dream or a magician's illusion means seeing things as events of which there is no subject separate from the event itself.

V: Sorry, could you just say that again?

S: It means that seeing things as events of which there [213] is no subject separate from the event itself. Separate in the sense of subject and object.

V: Would this be identical to the thing that Schopenhauer developed, that everything is just event, there is no such thing as object, everything is.

S: I don't think Schopenhauer said it quite in that sense.

V: ... the idea that everything is ... idea activity, pure activity, pure happening.

S: But I don't think he quite said that, there was also a subject which he called the will. I don't think he discussed it quite in these terms.

V: I don't quite see how you are applying that to seeing things as an illusion. 'Like a dream or a magician's illusion.'

S: Well actually the connection isn't very clear, but it does in fact mean that.

V: For some reason or other I began thinking about the Bodhicitta, again, as something separate from the ego or egolessness, even. Can it in fact be seen in that way? You say that the Bodhicitta, the Will to Enlightenment, I seem to recall you having said that it is something outside the five skandhas, for instance.

S: This is what is said. In other words it is egoless, it is unconditioned. You can put it this way, supposing you are developing love and compassion and you become so completely absorbed in them, and in loving and compassionate activities that you lose all sense of self. That you are just an impersonal force, as it were, operating. Although impersonal, in another sense you are more personal than ever. Then that impersonal operation in that way would be the Bodhicitta. It's a personal impersonality. I say personal impersonality because usually if you say someone is impersonal this suggests coldness and formality but it isn't impersonal in that sense but only in the sense that when you perform the action there is no sense of a subject of the action, a subject performing that action as distinct from the action itself. Whereas usually we do feel that we are dissociated from our own actions, you could even say that it is a form of alienation. So this is why I said some time ago that egoism is a form of alienation. No alienation no ego, you are completely at one with what you are doing which is actual process and event.

So the Bodhicitta is the stage or experience of being completely at one with your flow of metta and karuna. I think a lot of translation work has to be done, as it were. I don't mean translation in the ordinary sense but translating concepts into something much more concrete and into something much more real and meaningful. The whole Indian vocabulary, including Indian Buddhist vocabulary until we come to the Tantras is very very abstract and very, very conceptual and often that doesn't help us at all. For instance take this word Sunyata which we translate as emptiness or voidness, what does it really mean? We usually take it as something metaphysical or abstract but it isn't really that at all. It means that in the ultimate analysis things can't be defined they have [214] to be experienced, they are indefinable. Reality or 'life' to use the more concrete term cannot be adequately defined in any conceptual terms. It is empty of all those things, they don't exhaust it.

V: But to talk about it as being empty is also, presumably ...

S: It is much more satisfactory and much more meaningful for you, at least of the beginning, that you can't really say what life is. This is the sort of thing that the teaching of Sunyata is getting at. Life is bigger than your ideas about life. Life cannot be reduced to your ideas or to any system of your ideas. This is what sunyata really means, about higher and higher levels of the experience of life. That life is unique and indefinable, unconceptualizable.

This is why the Zen masters, when you start talking and asking about Sunyata, they hit you over the head, just to bring you back to life itself. Actual experience even if it is only experience of the master's stick. Anything to get you away from your own concepts. There are silly people in the West [who] turn it into a parlour game. You know, thirty blows for you, ha ha ha. (laughter)

Thirty blows, if they met a real Zen master they would get three hundred or three thousand, be beaten to death. (laughter)

V: Then they might experience something.

S: Might experience something then. And they say, "my god it's for real". They might have a flash of realization just before they actually died. But otherwise there doesn't seem much hope for them.

V: Does the Mahamudra teaching come to this particular spection(?) is it related to that, this...

S: No it isn't actually. The Mahamudra is usually described as a direct application of the Sunyata principle, if you can call it that. And now there is just ... the Zen master's blow. There isn't a philosophy, to take it as such is really to distort it.

V: I was just thinking in a previous paragraph when it talks about meditation as a continuous concentration ... stressed that whole thing.

S: That is a little bit like the Mahamudra, in a way. That is why it is sometimes said that the practice of the Mahamudra begins with Enlightenment. And they say this in much the same sense that the Zen people say "if you want to climb a mountain start at the top".

Anyway that's enough of these silly Zen sayings. I don't think Atisa would have approved of them at all. In fact they banished that Zen master from Tibet, didn't they? He was defeated in debate, the Ch'an master, as we learned in a previous chapter, and they banished him from Tibet. After that Tibetan Buddhism followed the Indian model not the Chinese Ch'an model. In other words followed the path of regular steps, that was the point of the debate.

All right let's go on to the next section.

[215]

"When the venerable Atisa first visited Tibet, he stayed in the western province of Na-ri. He gave many precepts to the assembled disciples who were under the guidance of Hla-chang-chub-o, and then after two years had passed, decided to return to India. Just as he was departing Hla-chang-chub-o asked, "Even now as you are leaving, could we have one more precept?"

Atisa answered, "What I have already taught you is enough." But Hla-chang-chub-o persisted in his request, so Atisa gave this precept:

"How wonderful! Dear friends, you have clear realization and great knowledge, while I have small worth and am not very intelligent. I am not the one to teach you. Yet, since you who are close friends and dear to my heart request me, I give you this advice from my childish knowledge.

"Friends, until you have obtained enlightenment, the Lama is needed; therefore depend upon the holy spiritual teacher. Until you fully realize the nature of Voidness, you must listen to the Teaching; therefore listen closely to the precept of the Lama. Merely understanding the Dharma is not enough to be a Buddha; you must practice constantly.

"Go far away from any place that is harmful to your practice; always stay in a place that is conducive to virtue. Clamour is harmful until you obtain a firm mind; therefore stay in an isolated place. Abandon friends who increase your fettering passions; depend on friends who cause you to increase virtue. Bear this in mind. There is never an end of things to do, so limit your activities. Dedicate your virtue day and night, and always be mindful.

"Once you have obtained the precept of the Lama, you should always meditate on it and act in harmony with his speech. When you do this with great humility, the effects will manifest without delay. If you act according to the Dharma from the depths of your heart, both food and necessities will come naturally.

"Friends, there is no satisfaction in the things you desire. It is like drinking sea water to satisfy thirst. Therefore be content. Annihilate all forms of pretentiousness, pride, and conceit; be subdued and peaceful. Abandon all that which some call virtue, but which is really an obstacle to the practice of Dharma. As if they were stones on a narrow slippery path, you should clear [216] away all ideas of gain and respect, for they are the rope of the devil. Like snot in your nose, blow out all thoughts of fame and praise, for they serve only to beguile and delude.

'As the happiness, pleasure, and friends you have accumulated are of but a moment's duration, turn your back on them."

S: Worldly friends are meant, of course, not spiritual friends.

"Future life is longer than this life, so carefully secure your treasure of virtue to provide for the future. You leave everything behind when you die; do not be attached to anything.

"Leave off despising and deprecating others and generate a compassionate mind to those who are your inferiors. Do not have a deep attachment to your friends and do not discriminate against your enemies. Without being jealous or envious of others' good qualities, with humility take up those good qualities yourself. Do not bother examining the faults of others, but examine your own faults. Purge yourself of them like bad blood. Nor should you concentrate on your own virtues; rather you should concentrate on the virtues of others and respect those others as a servant would. Extend loving-kindness to all beings as though they were your own children.

"Always have a smiling face and a loving mind. Speak honestly and without anger. If you go about saying many senseless things, you will make mistakes; thus speak in moderation. If you do many senseless things, your virtuous work will cease; give up actions that are not religious. It is useless to make effort in unessential work. Because whatever you do comes as a result of your karma from long ago, results never match your present desires. Therefore be calm.

"Alas, it is far better to die than to cause a holy person shame; thus be ever straightforward and without deceit. All the misery and happiness of this life arise from the karma of this and previous lives; do not blame others for your circumstances. Remember to repay the kindness of the Lama, as all happiness is his blessing.

"Until you subdue yourself, you cannot subdue others; therefore, first subdue yourself. As you are unable to ripen others without clairvoyance, make a great effort to achieve clairvoyance.

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"You will surely die, leaving behind whatever wealth you accumulated, so be careful not to gather defilements due to wealth. As distracting enjoyments are without substance, adorn yourself with the virtue of giving. Always keep pure moral practice, for it is beautiful in this life and ensures happiness in future lives. In this world-age of the Kaliyuga, where hatred is rampant, don the armour of patience, which nullifies anger. We remain in the world by the power of sloth, thus we must ignite like a great fire the effort of achievement. Moment after moment your life is wasted by the lure of worldly activities; it is time to meditate. Because you are under the influence of wrong views, you do not realize the nature of Voidness. Zealously seek the meaning of reality!

Friends, samsara is a vast swamp in which there is no real happiness; hurry to the place of liberation. Meditate according to the precept of the Lama and dry up the river of samsaric misery. Always keep this in mind. Listen well to this advice, which is not mere words but comes straight from my heart. If you follow these precepts you will make not only me happy, but yourself and all others as well. Though I am ignorant, I urge you to remember these words.

V: It's a bit peculiar, this stress on Atisa being ignorant. He seems to be a very learned man.

S: First of all don't forget he isn't addressing his own disciples. This must be just his natural humility. Atisa seems to have had this sort of reputation. In the life of Atisa there are many incidents of this kind, especially when he was a great pandit at (Vikramasila ?).

I think that one should also realize that this sort of idiom of self depreciation comes much more naturally in Eastern languages than it does in English. In English it sounds really awkward and false and artificial and unnatural. But it doesn't sound like that in the modern Indian languages or in Tibetan where there are regular deprecatory terms to be used when speaking of ones self and honorifics when speaking of other people.

For instance when the English translates 'my unworthy self' in the original it is very often the more ordinary word for 'myself' but we have no way of reproducing that idiom. It is like when a man writes his own name and address he won't write 'esquire' after his own name, but when the person writes back to him they might. It's a little bit like that. And no doubt that Atisa did genuinely feel, not that he was teaching them but that they were friends on the spiritual path and that he was just opening up his heart to them and saying when he really felt and thought about the Dharma.

By all accounts he had very great charm and friendliness. Any particular points that we need to discuss? It is more like a short sermon or exaltation. A precept can be just a very few words or quite a number of words.

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V: When it says, 'once you have obtained the precepts of the Lama', does that mean in a general sense or is it...

S: Once the Lama has advised you or once the Lama has given you certain instructions.

V: Could you say something about 'deprecating others'. It seems to be a bit difficult sometimes to speak ones mind about other people, particularly about other traditions or other teachers which you feel aren't quite to the mark without apparently deprecating them.

S: Well the important thing is that you should feel good will towards them. That is the important thing and anything you say which is not exactly praise should not be based upon ill will.

V: I found this interesting, 'as distracting enjoyments are without substance, adorn yourself with the virtue of giving'. That one seems to cancel out the other.

S: Well perhaps he is imagining the sort of situation in which you dress yourself up and adorn yourself for some sort of party or celebration or indulge in a lot of drinking and merrymaking. So rather than adorn yourself in that sort of way adorn yourself with the virtue of giving, of generosity. Not spending on your own amusements and enjoyments.

V: That will make you more beautiful rather than ornaments.

S: Right, yes.

V: On page 126 it says, 'If you act according to the Dharma from the depths of your heart both food and necessities will come naturally'. Could you say anything on that.

S: Well this was very strongly believed in India and Tibet, that if people really saw you genuinely and sincerely practising the spiritual life they would be deeply moved and would quite spontaneously help you and look after you. This suggests a very deep conviction of the basic goodness of human nature. That people are good hearted, they are generous. The trouble is in modern times they probably wouldn't see you. At least when life was less complicated it

was more open. If there was someone meditating under a tree just outside your village you saw him, everybody saw him. So that if you felt that he was meditating sincerely you would naturally feel moved to supply him with food. The trouble is nowadays there are so many people and so much goes on that we don't notice or don't even see, the individual gets lost sight off. Therefore it would be less likely to happen now though not impossible even now.

V: If you do take up spiritual practice you would turn to a more sympathetic circle anyway.

S: Not necessarily. In the East, perhaps, at least formerly in as much as the whole culture and whole social life was based in a sense on religion and recognized spiritual values. So [219] you had something to appeal to. You were practising something which everybody at least in theory also accepted.

V: In the West ... there is what they call a law of ... Which, if you act in accordance with that all your needs will be met. And I have seen this, that when you are living in accordance to those principles things do happen, you will get a lift that is going right to where you want to go ... or things like this. Quite ... if you work on those principles, that is in the West ...

S: Because unfortunately there is also Mara around though.

V: Yes, this is the trouble, I appreciate that and I thought it worked for me a lot of the time. The trouble is if you depend on it, then you lose it, you are going to be stuck, Mara is there as well.

S: I think you do have to be careful, you see this sometimes in the case of Christians. They really do believe that God answers their prayers and God does answer their prayers and they get what they pray for. And then they, of course, say this proves the truth of Christianity, that there is God there, that he is listening, he is responding. We wouldn't quite agree with that. There might be some power or force that is being invoked but not quite in the way that these people think. But then supposing one day the prayer isn't answered, then they fall into paroxysms of guilt, almost. "What have I done, God must be angry with me, is he testing me or is he angry with me". So it becomes a quite subtle point to rely but in a way not to over rely. To believe but not to lose your faith when nothing happens.

V: I can see what you mean in the terms of the Christian thing and the God and so on. I was thinking more in terms of natural flow, and you can't really believe in the definiteness of that ...

V: But what I was thinking of was getting into the habit of relying on that. I feel this, like when one is in a god like state, or you feel the devata looking after you, and it can be good, everything is flowing, everything is just clicking into place. No trouble whatsoever, all your needs are being fulfilled. But then it is relying on that somehow.

S: You can get a bit inflated. That you are being looked after, you are being cared for, you are god's own chosen one, even.

V: It stops you making an effort.

V: There was something I couldn't understand on the Udana seminar, the previous one to this one. That when Kashapa goes on his round, begging round and the gods or the devas try to fill his bowl, and he finds out and refuses it. And I just couldn't understand why he refused it, why not accept from the devatas, but I get more of an understanding of that now.

V: Your heart has to be in the right place for it.

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S: Kashapa's heart presumably was in the right place, he was an Arhant.

V: And he refused the gods help.

V: Maybe he thought that he had to work for that, even from the gods.

V: He had an attitude of giving.

S: He also wanted to give ordinary people the opportunity of gaining merit by offering him food. Thinking, presumably, that the gods who were already there in heaven they didn't need merit so much, that the people on earth needed it more.

V: Since they gained merit by offering, already.

S: Yes.

V: The Taoist equivalent teaching to that which I read somewhere that the man who is in the right place at the right time is nourished by the gods, or something to that effect. I take that to mean that if your heart and your mind are in the right place, if your attitude is right then you will get what you need, not necessarily what you want.

S: I think we have to be quite careful about this because in the end if you are not careful it almost adds up as saying that if you are successful and prosperous it shows that you are on the right path and you have got god's approval.

V: It's like mistaking worldly for the spiritual.

S: Worldly success for a sign of divine approval, or a sign that you are on the right path.

V: It comes down to the same as wrong view of miracles. Also you said on the ... the more successful you are the more interest Mara shows in you, so ...

S: I sometimes used to think that in the case of some of the Christian friends who used to make the claim that God was looking after them, I sometimes used to think that it wasn't so much their faith in God as shrewd business management. But they attributed it to God in such a way as to suggest that they must be on the right path because God is looking after them. So I think one has to bear this in mind. Even though it is sometimes really strange the way in which things come when you need them.

I had a really striking experience of this kind when I was in Kalimpong and before I started the Vihara. I occupied a succession of rented premises and it was really a drag having to move from one to another because the place that I was occupying had been sold and the person who had bought it, the new owner, wanted to move in. So eventually I thought I must buy but I had no idea where the money was to come from so I wrote round to a few friends and nothing much happened. So I had gone on a tour and I came back to Calcutta and from Calcutta I went to Kalimpong and when I reached Kalimpong [221] there was a whole stack of mail waiting for me, about twenty or thirty letters. I opened them one by one, I came to one letter and that letter gave me notice to quit the building I was occupying as it had been bought. The next letter was from a friend saying that he was sending me, I think it was a thousand pounds, to buy a place of my own. It was the very next letter. So that certainly seemed an odd coincidence. If I had heard the next week it would have been understandable but the very next letter in that stack. So then I thought to myself there is really no need to worry.

There is also the point that your self confidence does a lot. If you ask someone to help you with the feeling that people are good, they are kind, they are generous, of course he will help me, you are much more likely to get a positive response.

V: Why do you think that is Bhante? Because the other person picks up on your state of mind?

S: Your positivity.

V: They detect that.

S: Your friendliness. Not detect it, they sort of feel it.

V: And your confidence in them. That you have confidence in them, in their higher nature.

S: But if you think that he's not going to give anything, he's a mean old so and so, not much use asking him, but might as well try. And you say, "well would you like to contribute", the chances are he will say no.

But if you are really positive in your approach you are certainly more likely to get a positive response from the other person. It is just the same in personal relationships the more friendly you are the more likely other people are to be friendly with you. Self confidence, even on lower levels, carries all before it.

Any other points there? I think there are a few. I think we will linger over this precept and clear up a few more points.

There is this attitude towards clairvoyance. 'As you are unable to ripen others without clairvoyance make a great effort to achieve clairvoyance.' This is very much the Mahayana and Tibetan point of view as distinct from the Theravadin, but obviously one is treading on quite dangerous ground. Maybe one shouldn't take the clairvoyance too literally but just sensitivity to the minds of other people. Because without that sensitivity you can't really do much for them or with them. But the Tibetans do usually believe that one should try to develop supernormal powers so as to make oneself more useful to other people, but obviously, in association with meditation and real wisdom. Otherwise you might misuse those powers.

V: It is very noticeable that the emphasis is on the positive aspect of the teaching as well as the negative.

S: One does get this feeling from Tibetan Buddhism as a whole, the negative aspect is certainly there but it is the positive that predominates and Tibetan Buddhism on the whole is pervaded by very positive emotion. Love, joy, compassion, faith, these things are very noticeable throughout Tibetan Buddhism in all its forms.

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V: A line that particularly struck me was, 'always have a smiling face'.

S: Yes, right. But it doesn't mean twist your wretched features (laughter) into some grimace regardless of how you are feeling. The smile should come from within, just like the bloom on the peach. Just express your natural state of health and ripeness. Not the vacant grin of the fool either.

V: What is this, 'Future life is longer than this life, so carefully secure your treasure of virtue to provide for the future'?

S: Future life, not one particular future life but future life in general. Because it will consist of a number of successive lives.

V: 'Abandon all that which some call virtues'.

S: Yes. I think what he has in mind is respectability. It was during Atisa's time, after all, during a whole period concluding with his times that in order to lead a spiritual life many teachers had to leave the monastery, because the monastery had become so respectable, as it were. They became quite unrespectable and disreputable, even, and just lived here and there



in a very unmonk like sort of way just to get away from that conventional monastic virtue. There were of course the Tantric Yogi. And some great teachers had an experience of both ways of life at different phases of their career. Sometimes they followed the one, sometimes the other. At one time living in a monastery, strictly observing the rules and being a very good monk, studying, meditating, chanting and another time though they might have been quite famous as a teacher just wandering here and there like a beggar. Not observing the monastic rules, not wearing the robes, consorting with anybody, eating anywhere, drinking even. Some of them did this apparently quite deliberately. Of course it was a quite slippery path but they knew what they were doing. They made a quite deliberate attempt to rid themselves of respectability and the sort of respect that comes with it.

It is like the famous story about Hakuin, the great Zen master. A young woman who used to come to the temple sometimes who wasn't married produced a baby and she said that it was Hakuin's baby. So she brought it to the temple and left it with him so he looked after it, didn't say a word. So everybody thought, yes he hasn't said anything it must be his baby so he was really abused and mocked and scoffed at for some years. But he brought the child up and after five or six years the woman had a revulsion and she got very repentant and she went and confessed that actually he wasn't the father that it was somebody else and she had slandered him. And she took the baby away, but all the time he hadn't said anything at all. He just quietly brought the child up despite what people were saying.

(end side 1)

V: ... an interesting parallel, not literally but symbolically ... the principle of how much you should refute other people's wrong view of you, what you are doing. Whether you should [223] go on quietly, get on ...

S: Well sometimes perhaps you do need to but sometimes it seems that you are going to spend your time refuting other peoples wrong views about you and you have time for very little else. So sometimes it is best just to let things drop.

V: Even though you can see that it might have bad consequences. It might cause them bad merit because they might be led to bad actions.

V: That story ties up with what you were saying about a genuine attitude towards a situation well explode underlying ...

S: Yes.

V: Do you think that is always so?

S: I don't actually. It is quite possible, suppose the women had been killed, suppose she had died, then no one would ever had known the truth then. It would have gone down in history that he was quite a good meditation master but he did slip up once and he was the father of an illegitimate child, at least he brought it up. That would have been in his biography and no one would have known the truth of the matter.

V: How many of the so called shortcomings of existing teachers are due to misunderstanding?

S: So you just don't know. Sometimes, no doubt there will be definite shortcomings even sometimes when there appear not to be. On the other hand there may be no shortcomings even when there actually appear to be. When we are dealing with people who lived hundreds of years ago how can we always be sure? Sometimes it is very doubtful, who was who's child and where was so and so born, we don't know and we can't find out now it is too late.

V: He uses the term, 'after a few years she had a revulsion', I am not sure what he means by that.

S: Well if you like, a conversion. She suddenly realized how despicably she had behaved and she had a revulsion against her own bad conduct, her mean and wretched attitude, her disgraceful behaviour, slandering Hakuin in this way. She felt really bad about it, revulsion against her self and repented.

V: What comes also from it, that it wasn't just a passive receiving of the baby, when I read the story and she said "you are the father", he just said "is that so?" And when they came back and took the baby and said sorry and all that and people said you are not it and he said "is that so?" again (laughter). But he had made communication with them.

S: That is true, yes. This might have rankled in her mind, that he said is that so.

This is an area where it is notoriously difficult to know the truth of the matter, you have only got the word of the [224] parties concerned and it is very difficult to know the truth.

V: It seems strange that Tibetans should use 'drinking sea water'.

S: Well he was an Indian and Indians were at least familiar with the idea of the sea even if most of them hadn't seen it.

V: It just goes to show that you shouldn't listen too seriously to what you hear.

S: Well listen seriously but don't take it too seriously, always. Distinguish between what you know and what you have only heard. Say, "well I have heard it, and this is what I have heard but I don't know, I've certainly heard it but whether it is true or not I can't say".

V: I like the bit where he says, 'Because whatever you do comes as a result of your karma from long ago, results never match your present desires. Therefore be calm.'

S: Well his explanation might not be quite correct, at least as rendered here, according to the Abhidharma. That not everything is due, in fact, to past karma, but certainly that results never match your present desires. People are very very rarely satisfied, even when successful.

V: Can you comment on that sentence a bit before that, 'give up actions that are not religious', in what sense would one take that word religious? As conducing to higher states?

S: Presumably that, not just formally religious activities - 'give up actions that are not religious. It is useless to make effort in unessential work'. In that which has no bearing on your development as an individual and which is not beneficial to other people.

V: 'There is never an end of things to do, so limit your activities'. (laughter)

S: Don't try to do everything it simply means, just be fully occupied. After all you never do more than one thing at a time so actually you only do one thing. You never do a lot of things, only do one thing.

V: Depends on how you define things. You could probably pour a cup of tea out with one hand and stir it with the other.

S: If your attention was completely unified, that would be one thing.

Right, any further point?

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"When the venerable Atisa was staying on Yer-pa-drak, near Lhasa, he gave the following precept to Ye-shay Bar-wa of Olgood:

"I bow down to the Blessed One and to Arya Tara. I bow down to the Holy Lamas."

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"Noble sons, reflect deeply on these words. In the Kaliyuga the lives of men are short and there is much to be understood. The duration of life is uncertain; you do not know how long you will live. Thus you must make great effort now to fulfil your right desires.

"Do not proclaim yourself a bhiksu if you obtain the necessities of life in the manner of a layman. Though you live in a monastery and have given up worldly activities, if you fret about what you have given up, you have no right to proclaim, 'I am a bhiksu living in a monastery.' If your mind still persists in desire for pretty things and still produces harmful thoughts, do not proclaim, 'I am a bhiksu living in a monastery.' If you still go about with worldly people and waste time in worldly, senseless talk with those with whom you live, even though you are living in a monastery, do not proclaim, 'I am a bhiksu living in a monastery.' If you are impatient and go about feeling slighted, if you cannot be even the least bit helpful to others, do not proclaim, 'I am a Bodhisattva-bhiksu.'

"If you speak thus to worldly people, you are a great liar. You may get away with saying such things. However, you cannot deceive those who have the boundless sight of clairvoyance, nor can you deceive those who have the Dharma eye of great omniscience. Neither can you deceive yourself, for the effects of karma follow after you.

S: Maybe we had better take this paragraph by paragraph as it is a long precept. What do you think Atisa is getting at in that second paragraph, the one beginning, 'Do not proclaim yourself a bhiksu if you obtain the necessities of life in the manner of a layman'?

V: Not just joining the ecclesiastical order and making a career out of it.

S: Right, harmony between the inner and the outer. This is especially noticeable in the case of the Bodhisattva-bhiksu, a Bodhisattva-bhiksu technically is one who has not only received the bhiksu ordination but also the Bodhisattva ordination. In the course of the Bodhisattva ordination you take the vow to dedicate yourself to Enlightenment for the sake of all and you take upon yourself Bodhisattva precepts. In the course of centuries this has become a sort of degree of ordination, you might say, and is given very very widely and very freely. Not only in Tibet but even more so in Japan. But then a situation might arise in which you are a Bodhisattva-bhiksu, technically you received the Bodhisattva ordination but apart from wanting to devote yourself to Enlightenment so that you can help others you are impatient with them and go about feeling slighted by them. Are unable to be even the least bit helpful to them. So there is very little meaning, in fact, no meaning at all [226] in your proclaiming yourself as being a Bodhisattva-bhiksu. In other words your alleged religious status is not in keeping with your actual inner condition.

I came across a little bit of this sort of thing when I started meeting incarnate Lamas coming out of Tibet. I had to urge some of them with whom I was very friendly to do something for the sake of the Dharma, to preach. And they would say, "well I am quite unable to do any such thing, I just don't have the capacity, don't even have very much interest. Just want to live quietly and not take any trouble, not have any difficulty". And then I would say "aren't you supposed to be an incarnate Bodhisattva, aren't you supposed to be a Tulku", and then they would just laugh and say, "that's what people say but I don't know, I'm not so sure." A few of them even went so far as to say that they were quite certain that they weren't incarnate Bodhisattvas but they just found themselves installed in that position. That's something even more advanced, one might say, theoretically, than being just a Bodhisattva-bhiksu, that is a bhiksu who has taken Bodhisattva vows or Bodhisattva ordination.

This is why I think we have to be really careful about correlating these things, that is to say the actual spiritual experience on the one hand and the technical, as it were, ordination on the other which is supposed, ideally, to be expressive of the inner spiritual condition but which very often isn't and is merely just something that you take.

V: Even if there is a correlation, even if ones life, emotional ... are in accordance with what one is officially is, from outside, it would still be wrong to call yourself a Bodhisattva wouldn't it? Because the Bodhisattva is one who has no notion of himself as being a Bodhisattva.

S: Or you can say at least that I have taken the Bodhisattva ordination, you can't say I am a Bodhisattva. You can say I have taken the Bodhisattva ordination or I have taken the Bodhisattva vow, and that would be simply a statement of fact.

V: If one went about claiming any such thing it would mean that ones heart wasn't pure anyway.

S: That's a somewhat different line of approach. Here what Atisa is getting at is the discrepancy that sometimes exists between your religious status and your actual inner spiritual condition. And when these two drift too far apart then the spiritual tradition concerned is in a quite unhealthy state. If there are too many people occupying positions which, in a way, they have no right to possess, purely by virtue of an external ceremony, virtually, instead of by virtue of their actual spiritual experience.

V: But wouldn't that be the responsibility of their teacher or the person who gave precepts to have some understanding of their spiritual experience?

S: Certainly it would but the difficulty arises when it is accepted by the tradition as a whole that what was formerly an outward and physical sign of a distinct spiritual attitude has become just an external formality, as it were. Just marking your position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This is what we find in Japan. All Japanese monks, all Japanese [227] priests take the Bodhisattva ordination.

V: Just as a matter of course?

S: As a matter of course. They get a sort of honorary Bodhisattva ordination, and all Chinese monks, nowadays. The Chinese monks take it at the time of their bhiksu ordination usually, or immediately afterwards. In the case of the Japanese monks they don't have bhiksu ordination or ordination any more, they just take the Bodhisattva ordination. It has become like the ordination of a clergyman, you are then a priest, a minister, an ecclesiastical functionary looking after a parish or looking after a temple. So in this way the Bodhisattva ordination has become really degraded, one could say.

They might be looking after the temple very well, they might be a quite good clergyman, but Bodhisattva ordination is supposed to signify something very much more than that. So one can even say that Buddhism being an ancient religion, 2,500 years old, at least the present dispensation, all ordinations have been degraded. This is why I sometimes speak in terms of upgrading. The Upasika ordination has been degraded, bhiksu ordination, Bodhisattva ordination and so on. This is just due to lapse of time, as it were.

V: It is much better to be in the position of Hui Neng who gained enlightenment while still a ...

V: Bhante would you please say something about Bodhisattva ordination a bit? Because it seems to me that there are two ways of approaching it. One is that it is a recognition of the arising of the Bodhicitta, a process already taking place ... and the ceremony recognizes this ... The other is that, it is like there are different levels of Bodhisattvahood which one can just take upon oneself as a training, you can ... a precept, it doesn't mean that Bodhicitta has arisen.

S: Right, yes. There is this distinction made in the tradition between what they call the intentional Bodhicitta and what it called the actual Bodhicitta. The intentional Bodhicitta is, that without the Bodhicitta having actually arisen, you have a very intense aspiration to

benefit others through your own spiritual development and with this in mind, for this reason, in order to give expression to this, you take the Bodhisattva ordination. This is what usually happens in the case of those who take it with complete sincerity. In very few cases is the ordination an actual confirmation that the Bodhicitta has arisen.

V: Sorry, could you say that again?

S: In very few cases is the Bodhisattva ordination a confirmation that the actual Bodhicitta has arisen.

V: Are these technically novice Bodhisattvas?

S: You could call them that. That is to say, those who have taken upon themselves the Bodhisattva precepts without the Bodhicitta actually having arisen. But even this is a quite extraordinary step and represents a quite exceptional degree [228] of spiritual commitment and so on.

V: You mean a novice level, a priests level?

S: Yes, even that level.

V: If it's done with sincerity.

S: Yes.

V: Because it means, presumably that later you are committed to the Bodhicitta ...

S: Right. This has got the same relation, the intentional Bodhicitta has the same relation to the actual Bodhicitta as intense contemplation on the truth of the Dharma has to the arising of insight. In the case of the intentional Bodhicitta there has to be a very strong, a very powerful development of metta and karuna though short of what would amount to vipassana. Once insight has arisen, once there is some experience of Sunyata in association with that metta and karuna then the actual Bodhicitta arises, or to that extent the actual Bodhicitta arises.

V: To the extent that there is insight.

S: Yes, conjoined with the previously existing metta and karuna. It is the sunyata experience or insight which transforms the mundane metta and karuna into the Bodhicitta, the actual Bodhicitta, which is of course transcendental.

V: So when here the term, 'aspiring, entering Bodhicitta', does that mean the aspiring Bodhicitta is like the intentional?

S: Yes, the intentional, it is the same really.

V: When the Bodhisattva ordination is given in the Western Buddhist Order is it any particular one of those or is it entirely individual. The ordination is given in dependence upon your insight into the development of that individual.

S: Well the ordination itself is not directly related to either. It would, as it were, suffice for both. If the actual Bodhicitta is there well of course the intentional Bodhicitta is there too. But whether the actual Bodhicitta is there as well as the intentional Bodhicitta there is no, as it were, objective means of ascertaining. So therefore all that is insisted on technically is that the intentional Bodhicitta should be there. The actual Bodhicitta may be there in addition too, but this can't be made a matter of objective assessment.

So what one has to safeguard against by all means is that something which should be the external expression of an inner attitude does not become simply a conferring of a religious

degree in a purely external manner, or more or less external manner.

For instance I have seen honorary Yogis, in the sense that they were members of the Kagyu order and technically they were supposed to be able to melt snow by means of the generation of psychic heat and also to dry a certain number [229] of wet cloths wrapped around their bodies. But some whom I met wore the ordinary Tibetan monastic dress with the white cloth of the Yogi over that but actually were not able to generate that psychic heat. It has just become an ordination, almost, in a purely external sense, they'd been given this white cloth. Originally it was a sign that you could dry it when it was wet, in fact dry maybe up to a hundred in succession by the power of your psychic heat. This is another illustration of the same thing.

There has to be a constant upgrading to ensure that the external does correspond to the internal.

V: It's a bit like the Enlightenment certificate.

S: Right, yes.

V: It makes one begin to wonder how the progressive degradation takes place. When in the beginning you have Enlightened teachers and ...

S: Well it is the gravitational pull at work all the time. It never lets up. But you do.

V: But if you have real transmission of insight, of spiritual attainment it means presumably that the person it's transmitted to would not allow that to happen.

S: Right, yes, but one can only assume that the actual transmission of insight becomes discontinued.

V: The Kaliyuga is the age that we live in?

S: That's right. According to popular Indian belief, it is not really a part of Buddhist teaching, it is more like a manner of speaking.

V: Is it not related, thought, to the appearance of the Buddhas. The five periods of time, the five epochs and this is the last, ... mixed up with the Hindu tradition.

S: No it is not quite like that. It is said that this is the bhadrakalpa, the auspicious aeon. Because in this aeon five Buddhas will appear and Shakyamuni is the fourth and Maitreya, the one to come, is the fifth. This is a popular belief.

Any other point on that section of the precept?

V: 'The Dharma eye of great omniscience' is that insight?

S: That is insight, yes.

Let's go on then.

"Moreover, when generating Bodhi-mind, remember the vows you have taken before the Lamas and deities. Do not say, 'It is too difficult to be patient' when you meet with someone who gives you the opportunity for special patience. Remember that even if it is very difficult there is always something that can be done. Prior to taking a vow, consider carefully whether it is too [230] difficult for you to keep. For if you do not keep a vow once you have taken it, you will be deceiving the Lamas and deities. And again, always remember that even though a thing seems to be difficult, there is always something that can be done."

S: You notice that Atisa speaks of meeting with someone who gives you the opportunity for

special patience. Suggesting that you should be quite patient with difficult people who are so kind as to give you the opportunity of practising patience, which is one of the Paramitas, the practice of which is going to get you to Enlightenment. So they are helping you to gain Enlightenment. This is a very typical Tibetan Buddhist reflection. Going back to Shantideva of course, after the Buddhist tradition generally but Shantideva gives it rather special, not to say extreme expression.

V: Was it not also prominent in Indian Buddhism, I mean Atisa too is Indian?

S: As I said it goes back to Shantideva who was Indian.

V: But then it became, subsequently particularly prominent.

S: Yes in as much as the Tibetans do continue the original Indian tradition which isn't continued in its purely Indian form anywhere else. They emphasize certain things even more than the Indians emphasize them, this seems to be one of them.

V: I think it would be quite a good idea if we emphasized that, it's so positive.

S: Yes, and as I have been saying it is always better to emphasize the positive rather than the negative.

V: It also points out the thing about taking a vow. It is more demoralizing if you can't keep a vow.

S: Yes.

V: In a sense then is there any point in taking a vow?

S: Well what is a vow?

V: Just a statement that you will not do something, presumably.

S: It is not just a statement, it is also more like a public statement, made openly to yourself in the presence of other people. And from the Mahayana point of view in the presence of the Buddha's and the Bodhisattvas as well. It is like a public undertaking to do something. So the idea is that if you reflect that you have given this public undertaking to so many people, including yourself, that you will do such and such; well this can function as a very strong support to you. Because you can't possibly let down so many people to whom you have promised that you will do such and such thing.

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Also the public declaration to that effect means that you are totally committing yourself, you are not leaving any loophole. You are proclaiming it far and wide that this is what you are going to do. Whereas if you didn't do that and only you knew that you thought of doing it then you might think, well even if I don't do it I am the only one who will know that I didn't do it so what does it matter. But a vow is something much more open and public and much more difficult to pull away from and which expresses your total determination and commitment to that particular thing.

Therefore if you break a vow to do something it is a much more serious matter than simply not doing that thing without a vow. Because where the vow is concerned your total being, or decision and commitment of your total being, in a very public manner is involved. So for you to go back on that is a very much more serious matter than simply to fail to do something, or to fail to do something which you had simply considered doing in your own mind.

V: Have you personally had any experience of taking vows of a particular nature that you have found tremendous support in this way? Could you for instance give an example.

S: Yes. For instance, when I was in Kalimpong for the last six or seven years, I think, every rainy season I would make a sort of vow that I wouldn't go outside the Vihara precinct for the three months or even four months of the rainy season retreat. So, my experience was, once you make a vow in that sort of way then, in a sense, it becomes impossible for you to do that thing. You just don't think about it, you don't think of it, it just doesn't occur to you that you should break the vow.

V: Was this a public vow?

S: No I would just take it myself when I did my morning puja at the beginning of that rainy season retreat. But in a sense it was public because I would tell my friends, so that they shouldn't try to invite me out or anything of that sort. I would certainly let everybody know that for three months or four months I wasn't moving out of the Vihara. So nobody expected you to, nobody asked you to, nobody invited you outside. I kept to that quite strictly, I literally didn't go outside the gate.

So if you make a vow in this sort of way it, as it were, becomes quite easy to observe that particular thing.

V: You invoke help to be able to keep the vow.

S: In a way you invoke help, yes.

V: ... if you do know what you are trying to do ...

V: Also it is an indication of a much more decisive nature. I know that quite often I hear people say myself, "I don't know, I'm not sure, maybe, I'll see", it's like not wanting to make a vow in the ordinary sense just by saying that one is going to do something.

S: Yes, some people seem to want to safeguard their freedom [232] of action in a very weak, negative and subjective manner. They don't even like to promise that they will meet you at a certain time the next day. "Well maybe I will come round, maybe I won't, don't expect me, it depends on the mood I am in. If I feel like it, if it seems the right sort of thing to do."

V: You don't think that by taking a vow perhaps the thing one is vowing not to do acquires more power over one than it would have done before?

S: Well Atisa does say, 'consider carefully whether it is too difficult for you to keep'. He does say that, so included within that is this consideration. If your vow relates to keeping away from something which, say, one part of your nature at least very definitely desires, then you have to consider it very carefully. The vow must be an expression of your total being, not just of that particular part of your being which is uppermost at the moment. So therefore, vows mustn't be rash or impulsive. This is one of the reasons why the vows are usually administered by the Lama. If the Lama doesn't have the confidence that you can keep that vow he would advise you not to take it.

V: So somebody who can't make up their mind, who does need this space is doing it from the point of view of feeling split ...

S: Yes.

V: ... not knowing what is going to happen next.

S: Not having a self in the sense of not having an integrated self but just a succession of moods, whims, fancies, which are not integrated. That particular person is not yet an individual, even in a quite rudimentary sense. There is no continuity of purpose.

Unfortunately it is often passed off as a sort of virtue to be like this. It is another great



miccha-ditthi, one can say.

V: Go with the flow.

V: Spontaneous.

S: Alleged spontaneity.

V: So you wouldn't necessarily make that kind of public vow to stop you doing that you feel you ought to stop but you still find yourself doing. You will need to make a personal decision first, a private decision.

S: You have to make the personal decision to take the vow. If you are a relatively integrated person but there are just a few unintegrated bits and pieces then the vow can be very helpful. It helps to bring those unintegrated pieces into line, as it were. To integrate them, to make them parts of the whole and co-operate with the whole instead of working against it. But if you are deeply divided it certainly isn't advisable to make the vow with what would be virtually only half of yourself, with the other half of you dragged unwillingly along. [233]

V: It is quite a good idea to make vows, ... for a period of time.

S: Yes, there is that. I felt quite happy about making the vow not to go outside the precincts of the Vihara for three or even four months. I think I probably could have done it for a year or even longer. But if it had been a matter of for life, I think I would have hesitated very much.

(End tape 11)

V: Say, if in the context of the Order one is considering taking a vow of a particular sort, in what context would you suggest this would be best to be done?

S: I think it would depend partly on the nature of the vow. It might be a quite trivial matter. You might vow to give up sweets and chocolates for a month, you would be hardly justified in calling the whole order together to have them witness your vow, it would be not quite important enough for that. It might be a good idea to get together just three or four Order members who are your special friends or for whom you have a special regard, or a special feeling and ask them to witness this vow.

V: Or you could put a special... in Shabda. (laughter)

S: I think you have to be careful, you would be advised, as it were, to put a little notice in Shabda if it was something that required other people's co-operation and help. Just to ask for that, not to announce your vow in that sort of way, that doesn't seem quite right, but if you wanted their co-operation. For instance if you wanted them not to offer you cigarettes because you had made a vow to give up smoking, then you would be entitled to call for people's co-operation.

V: Or if you make a vow of silence.

S: Yes.

Also the vow, in a way, takes advantage of a well known characteristic of human nature that we are very much influenced by the opinion of the group to which we belong. As well as, of course, by the opinion of the spiritual community to which we belong. And the vow invokes that in a healthy way, we want to live up to what we have promised. We don't want to fail in people's eyes. But this can have its healthy side as well as its negative and neurotic side.

V: So what is the danger to be looked for in that then, in that case?

S: In what case?

V: You said it had its healthy side and ...

S: Yes, just fear of public opinion in the quite ordinary sense, public opinion preventing you from doing something that you believe is right to do. Being entirely dependent upon public opinion. Not yourself, deliberately using public opinion to reinforce attitudes which you have decided yourself to cultivate, or a line of action which you have decided yourself to follow. It is you using public opinion for your [234] purposes rather than being yourself subservient to public opinion.

V: Is there any significant difference then between the vow in the sense we have been talking of and a precept, the Upasika precept?

S: Precept here is used in the sense of vow, precept here, in this text is used in the sense of a teaching specifically directed to the individual.

V: When we are talking about the vows, here, is there any difference between the precepts that we take?

S: Not really because we sometimes translate precepts in the context of the ordination as vows, and in fact they are though they are rather general. They are more like vows to put certain principles into operation rather than relating to specific modes of behaviour. As when you vow to give up wrong views, no specific wrong views are actually mentioned but you vow that you will make every effort to get rid of wrong views whatever they may be.

V: Would you say that there is a particular advantage in taking one particular precept, like wrong views or... like that and concentrating on that particular one and making that one personal vow?

S: Sometimes this is done on a daily or weekly basis. I talked about this in connection with the Six Paramitas that you resolve, or if you like you vow that, say on Sunday, you are going to be particularly mindful of the practice of dana or generosity. You will be as generous as you can, you will take every opportunity of practising generosity not only of material things but of your time, energy, interest. Then on Monday you will be particularly careful about observing the precepts, sila Paramita. Then on the Tuesday you will be patient under all circumstances, whatever happens, whatever the provocation, that will be your special practice for that day, and so on. And of course on the Saturday you make a special effort to practise and observe all six.

So one can do the same thing with the ten precepts, the stages of the Eightfold Path and so on. And you learn quite a lot in this way, you learn what the actual practise of that precept or step or stage involves, you also become aware of how lax you usually are, and how negligent in the observance of that particular precept.

For instance if you were to take the precept of right speech very very seriously in the course of a single day...

V: You'd say nothing.

S: ... then you would have to, well even that might not be right, that is running away. You might become aware how prone you were of exaggeration or to not reporting things quite correctly or even minimizing of certain understatements which were not really justified. And that you were not very mindful when speaking and didn't even succeed in expressing exactly what you had in mind. Or that you weren't always speaking in a positive manner, that you sometimes [235] were slightly ironical or a little bit bitter. That sometimes you were not quite open in your speech and you kept something back. So if you concentrate on the practice of perfect speech, even for one day, you would tend to become aware of all these things in a way

that you usually didn't.

V: Even becoming aware of them, it's then very difficult to transform.

S: Even if you are simply aware of them that is a big step forward, to be aware that you aren't practising perfect speech most of the term.

Anyway, the general idea is the more intensive practice of a particular precept by turning it, at least for a day or a week into a vow in the full sense of the term, and observing it as such.

V: Could you say something perhaps about for instance the practice of patience, you undertake to be patient under all circumstances yet you find in those situations that your emotional direction is far from being patient. Surely it is very difficult to put on the act and go through all the emotions of being patient? Would it perhaps for those initial times that you started this practice ... have to put oneself in that position, and not to do anything but just to become aware of how impatient.

S: One should think about that before making the vow. You determine the extent or the limit to which you are going to observe it. You might say that I will practice patience even at the cost of my life. That might be your vow, even if someone attacks me I am not going to retaliate, I am not going to defend myself. You might decide to take a vow of patience to that extreme. Or you might limit it (laughter) I won't retaliate, I won't say anything if people abuse me but if they start beating me, then I shall consider myself entitled to defend myself, my vow of patience won't extend so far. You should think carefully in this way before you take the vow.

V: But ... had a rather confused attitude towards this. Could you recount that?

S: I wasn't sure for the moment whether you were referring to Purna in the Buddha's time or our own Purna in New Zealand. (laughing)

V: The Purna in the Buddha's time.

S: Well you tell it since you remember it.

V: I'm not sure that I can remember it.

S: I'll fill in the gaps if you don't.

V: I can't remember it, I can remember the ...

S: He was going to preach the Dharma among very savage and barbaric people and the Buddha asked him, what will you do if these savage and barbaric people happen to abuse you? So he said?

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V: I shall be thankful that they don't strike me.

S: Suppose they strike you?

V: I shall be thankful that they don't kill me.

S: No, that they don't attack me with stones. And if they do attack you with stones?

V: I shall be thankful that they don't kill me.

S: And if they do kill you?

V: That's the bit ...

S: Then I shall be thankful that they have delivered me from this body.

So varying degrees, you can stop anywhere you like, anywhere you decide to stop. But the important thing is that the vow is an expression of wholeheartedness and it is this quality that one finds lacking, very often. Of wholeheartedness, of doing something or committing oneself to something with ones total being.

V: So the vow is the antidote of half-heartedness.

S: The antidote and the antithesis, also. Perhaps it is in this connection that this discussion has come up recently, as I understand it has come up, in connection with ones private life. Apparently there has been a bit of talk about this private life and public life. 'Your private life is your own' - apparently the vow doesn't operate there (laughter) or some vows don't operate there. This has been a bit of, a subject ...

V: I don't think that's what people mean, actually. I haven't looked at it in that way, anyway.

S: But the private life in a way means that little area which is not involved in the commitment, which you keep back and which nobody must look at. Because when someone looks at it he is looking at it and saying, "look in that area you are not practising, you are not committing." Then the reply is well that is my business, "that is my private life, no one has got any right to look there and to suggest that I am not practising in that area."

V: I think people got confused thinking that, someone said that if you are an Order member you don't have a private life. That meant that you didn't have privacy and some people said that you couldn't have a family, so there was confusion.

S: So what is private life, it raises that question? For instance if you have a family, obviously you apply your commitment, you apply your Buddhist principles to your family life itself. But if you were to refuse to do that, then that would be isolating your family life or your private life, if you like, from the application of what you profess to believe in.

But it is as if a few people have been thinking that [237] your private life is an area which cannot be subject to scrutiny. Even if you don't want to apply your Buddhist principles there, that you can't be taken to task, as they feel it, for that.

V: It's almost like saying it is more sacred than the Dharma.

S: Right, exactly, yes.

V: It means more to them in a sense, it is secondary to the Dharma, in that case if they do have a private life.

S: That really is so.

V: One applies ones own twisted, distorted vision of the Dharma. It is easy to kid oneself that one is applying the Dharma in that particular...

S: But you certainly need space, you need privacy, but you can be quite open about it. Why do I want to get away from people or why do I want some time on my own, why do I want a solitary retreat? - so that I can expand within, as it were. I want to get on with my meditation, I want to revitalize myself, I need privacy, I need isolation to be able to do this. This is certainly not a private life in this sense if you just shut your door and want to be alone and make it clear to other people, which you need as an individual.

V: I think it is a part which one hasn't really integrated, isn't it?

S: Yes it is.

V: ... it's like, I say this from my own point of view, it's like there's still some land that I have to reclaim, some energy that I have to gradually pull into... the fact that I am a Buddhist. And give that energy to that.

V: But that sounds to me slightly different. I associate private life with something which is secret, in a sense. You are speaking very openly but what I associate with is a kind of secrecy.

V: Well what I really mean is something that isn't really shared, it is something that you hold back for yourself. It's one's own private little world, in a way. It may not be anything, it may not even be manifest to people. It is not as if you have your own little house and you go off to it, you may be living with people in a group but there is still a part which isn't really...

S: It can be a little fantasy world that you don't want to share.

V: ... yes.

V: I think it is ... sharing is the important part. With different people it seems to be different things that they don't want to share. Some people do something in the Order which they don't consider has an effect on other Order members and the community that they live in, [238] whichever community. And other people see that it does have an effect, and they are quite surprised...

(break in tape)

V: Quite a simple point, if someone decides to go away for six weeks or something, this happened some time ago, they may not be actually involved in classes or administration at a centre but they are part of the general community, and they just don't tell anybody. You feel that person is out of contact, very strongly, at that time. You don't know where they are or what they are doing or why they went.

S: This used to happen quite a lot. It seems to happen, now, much less but some years ago it was happening quite a lot. And you'd have, for instance, people going off for holidays, during the summer, and once or twice I was left practically on my own to run the big summer retreat, there might have been only one or two Order members with me. Others had just gone off on holiday without any sort of inquiry or information, anything of that sort. But if they had been asked about it they probably would have said, well that is my private life.

V: To see it in another way, just to extend that, even if there wasn't any objective need for you to be around or to tell anybody, at the same time you feel that just the fact that one is part of a community, that one should inform people anyway, one should want to.

S: That you'd like to tell people. It's the natural thing to do.

V: Yes, it's not so much an obligation but a...

V: I think the feeling that stops people doing that, certainly in my case, I've come across that, is the feeling that it is not OK. to do that, that somehow it is going against your Buddhist life to do something like that which you feel is necessary.

S: Perhaps you should ask yourself is it against or is it not. If it is against then I shouldn't do it.

V: Or ask other people's opinion.

S: And if it isn't against, well I go away and enjoy it with a good conscience. Because sometimes to take a rest can be part of your Buddhist life.

But there is, to come back to what Devamitra said, an association of the private life with secrecy. I think for purely social reasons, no doubt coming down from the Victorian period, that there are quite a lot of things that people did but didn't do in public or didn't mention in public that they actually did. Or even denied when questioned that they actually did.

V: (unclear)

S: And their private life was just that little area which they didn't want to be scrutinised, and sometimes quite rightly, because the social opinion itself was wrong. So we do suffer from lingering vestiges of this.

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V: But in the context of our own movement we can't, there is no ...

S: You shouldn't feel that. But if we are doing something wrong we are to be taken to task for that. If it isn't wrong why be afraid to share it. It is just our conditioning then.

V: What about the case of where one feels the need and one has carefully looked at it honestly, looked at ones reasons for doing it and decided to do it on a quite open basis but you feel that the majority of opinions wouldn't understand your reasons for doing that, or would censure what you were doing and say you shouldn't do it? I find that ...

S: First of all one must not think it before actually having tried to ascertain whether that was so. Not take it for granted that people are going to react in that way. Very often they don't when you actually put it to them. And also put it to sufficient numbers of people, and in the right way.

V: Also in the way that one expresses it. If you express it with some doubt about it then you invite a negative reaction to that.

S: Not necessarily.

V: If the doubt is honest, I think people understand that.

S: And people might feel, that no, why should you be doubtful what you are thinking of doing is very positive and they might encourage you.

V: I must say my own experience within the Order has been, whenever I have been doubtful about something, genuinely doubtful and I have asked people's opinion and advice they have always been very very sympathetic and I have never come against what you suggest, never.

S: It seems as though all these different things are quite interconnected, the vow, the total commitment, the not keeping a little private area for oneself, no private life in the neurotic sense; these all seem very much interconnected. Willingness to share.

V: I feel that the confusion often comes in when there is a divergence in one's life. When one part of you wants the Buddhist life and another part wants to go on a different course.

S: Well of course there will be divergence and even if you come with that divergence to other order members they are going to help you overcome it but not by compromising between the two but by urging you and encouraging you to give up the non-Buddhist bits. Or they might point out that what you thought was a non-Buddhist bit wasn't so non-Buddhist after all. They might throw a quite different light on the situation ... false antithesis, there isn't that sort of divergence that you have been thinking. You can follow both, they are not opposed. You might get that sort of reassurance.

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V: It's often one approaches a situation on the assumption that you think it's different and

therefore it's different and therefore people are going to object to it, whereas maybe you should question that assumption in the first place.

S: They might think it a really good idea.

V: ... in a different way ... and he's asked about relationships, taking the community into consideration if you were going to embark on a relationship because it effects the whole community ...

S: Right, yes. Well usually they don't even have time to think before they embark, they just (laughter) ...

V: What happens when you bring a difficulty, are people supposed to share that too.

S: It depends what one means by sharing a difficulty, depends on the nature of the difficulty too.

V: One wouldn't want to tell the whole Order of something that one might be keeping, what you call private, because it would be a difficulty that would make difficulties for other people.

S: It is difficult to comment on that without having any specific examples. But I would say broadly that it is not necessary to tell everybody everything. If you are just very open about a particular matter just with the four or five Order members you are most closely connected with. In most situations, in most cases that would be quite enough. Or that those Order members knew who were actually, likely to be involved with you in a practical way and therefore with your difficulty.

V: It's a bit like Udaya having difficulty with his debt ... which is his own ... in a way. But a few people know what he has got to contend with and he is very open about how it affects him taking classes and so on, so that is a difficulty shared.

S: Yes, right. That everyone accepts it, in a way they share it.

V: And it does affect us in that if he wasn't paying off that debt he'd be doing much more in the centre.

S: This is why in the early days of Buddhism it was a rule and it still is a rule in many parts of the Buddhist world that a monk was not admitted to the monastic order unless he was free from debt. Otherwise the order as a whole might be harassed on account of his debt. So this has a much wider application. And if you do ask for ordination, if you do say you want to commit yourself and join the spiritual community, you should be quite frank about any debts of any kind that you are likely to be bringing with you. Because you are bringing those along with yourself.

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V: This could also apply to a psychological debt.

S: Exactly, yes. For instance to give a concrete case, if at some time or other you have been in a mental hospital, - at the time that you ask for ordination you should disclose that. So that the Order can decide whether we are prepared to accept you along with that particular debt, i.e. the likelihood that you might have a recurrence of whatever it was and then as you are an Order member the Order will naturally have to cope with that. Once you are an Order member the Order can't discard you when you get into difficulties, but they must be given the choice before hand, it shouldn't be sprung on them suddenly. One should be quite open at the time of ordination. Or if you have got for instance a criminal record. If the Order decides to accept you well fair enough, but it shouldn't come up later and the Order be told that they are saddled with your debt, as it were, by virtue of the fact that you are an Order member when you hadn't taken them into confidence at an earlier stage.

V: Presumably if one didn't take the Order into confidence, really that absolves the Order from responsibility.

S: Well, no, unfortunately it doesn't, that is the whole point, ordination isn't a sort of contractual obligation of that sort. Even if people did make that particular mistake and they weren't particularly open, well they are Order members and you have to shoulder that responsibility.

V: I have a quite specific case in mind, where I feel quite worried about it and it is very difficult to know whether to just let the thing go ... and help in any way one can but not force the issue or to bring the thing to a head and really say what sort of action you are going to take. To what extent are we spiritually involved with that situation.

S: I think we actually are even though it is not fair that we should be, but still we are and we have to accept the unfair situation and do the best that we can for the person concerned, the Order member concerned.

V: (Unclear)

S: But then we have a responsibility. Anyway, let's go on

"To stay in a monastery it is necessary to give up worldly ways and attachment to friends and relatives. By renouncing these, you are getting rid of all the co-operating causes of attachment and longing. From then on you must seek the precious Bodhi-mind. Not even for an instant should you allow your past obsession with worldly concerns to arise. Formerly, you did not properly practice the Dharma, and under the influence of past habits that sapped your strength, you continually produced the concepts of a worldly person. Because such concepts are predominant, unless you make use of strong antidotes to them, it is useless to remain in a monastery. You would be like the birds and wild animals that live there."

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S: The essence of what Atisa is saying can be summed up in those last two sentences. To live in the monastery and do nothing about developing yourself is of no use at all. Birds and animals live there, monks have their pet canaries and rabbits and things, they are also living in the monastery but you don't regard them as monks because they are not doing anything about their spiritual development. This seems just straight forward common sense.

V: Doesn't this raise the question of the whole concept of living in the world as a householder and practising in a lay working situation.

S: It might. Have we got any lay people in that sense present? I don't think we have, maybe one or two, no?

V: What do you mean, going out to work?

S: Anyone with a full time job, wife or husband and family?

V: ... is nearest probably.

V: I haven't got a full time job.

S: No he isn't... (laughter).

V: I suppose Ananda, he is a full time student.

S: No, job, I don't count being a student as working.

Ananda: I do!



S: So really it is a bit inappropriate for us, but what had you in mind anyway?

V: Just this being in a situation in which one is constantly faced with other values, worldly values and concepts. And whether this really makes it a serious impediment to progression.

S: It is a serious impediment but it is not necessarily an impediment with which one can't cope. The lotus does bloom in the midst of the mire and one just has to reflect on that. If you can't bloom in the midst of the mire you are not a lotus, you are some other plant and maybe you should change your habitat. Get planted in some nice secluded garden well you will be well watered and weeded and the bugs picked off you when necessary. (laughter) It's as simple as that. If one can cope, one can cope, if one can't it is best to withdraw from the situation. So it is a question, really, of making ones mind up about that. Neither underestimating ones own strength or overestimating it.

Anyway, on to the next one

"Do not think, 'It is too difficult to apply the antidotes right now.' If the Wish-fulfilling Jewel should happen to fall from the hands of a blind man, he may never find it again. As you practice, do not count the months and years, but continually examine the strength of your meditation and the extent of your realization. See whether or not your fettering passions are diminishing. Always be mindful. Do not make yourself miserable, [243] nor should you ever even attempt to deceive yourself or the Lamas and deities. Do not do anything that would bring disaster to yourself or others."

S: There is quite a lot said in this paragraph. What is this about 'As you practice, do not count the months and years, but continually examine the strength of your meditation and the extent of your realization'. What does he mean by that, what does that involve or imply?

V: You can't say, "I've been meditating for five years therefore I am at such and such a point", in fact you might not be very much further along.

S: But not only that, when do you count the hours?

V: When you are not really involved in what you are doing.

S: Yes, right, you become an office clock watcher.

V: It also suggests, actually, a preoccupation with progress.

S: Yes, in a negative sense, because he does say 'continually examine the strength of your meditation, see whether or not your fettering passions are diminishing.' In a way that is checking up on progress but not in an obsessive kind of way. But I think the main point is when you are thinking in terms of how many hours, how many weeks, how many months you are not really involved. I think that is very important, that you loose your sense of clock time and don't try to measure yourself by that.

V: I often thought that it is a neurotic sense of clock time which makes people old.

S: Yes, right. 'So many years, gosh, so many decades, twenty, thirty, forty. I must be old I am forty.' And then of course you start feeling old.

Even on retreat sometimes people do this don't they?

V: Yes, 'it's been four days now!'

S: Been here four days now (laughter). But if you are really absorbed the days just go by and in a sense you just lose all sense of time, you are immersed in it, completely, the whole time.

V: Even measuring by meal times. (laughter) It's so long to

S: Yes, you shouldn't really know whether it is going to be breakfast time or tea time or lunch or whatever, you should be quite oblivious of that.

V: (Unclear)

V: Whether it is night or day.

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S: Well if you get really absorbed this is how you feel. As when you get absorbed in your painting, hint, hint!

V: ... fulfilling my vows.

S: Atisa seems to have quite a good psychological insight. As you practice do not count the months and years, it doesn't matter, it's just what you are doing now that is important.

V: Also this attitude that you mentioned yourself, beginners mind all the time.

S: Yes. You are always making a fresh start, it is always new, it is always the beginning, it is not the same old thing over again, the same old practice that you have done a hundred times. Each time is different, each time is unique.

V: He really seems to emphasize the actual, continually putting more into it... He doesn't just say don't count the months and years but continually examine your practice and get the feeling that if it is not good enough you have got to put more effort into it.

S: Yes, and not, "well I did quite a lot yesterday so I can let myself off a bit today". Sometimes people think "I have been working for six months, I suppose I had better have a holiday," well so what. If you feel like having a holiday today have it, even though you had one last week. If you feel like carrying on working, carry on working.

V: This seems to indicate, if we don't use our energies correctly the head takes over and we start thinking what I should be doing and what...

S: But that is alienation, you see.

V: And being mechanical ...

S: Being mechanical and forcing things, too. It is very difficult to follow a middle way here between laziness and drifting and forcing and being mechanical.

V: Presumably if you, one really is into something in a very concentrated way and it is time to change then you will know, there will be no doubt ...

S: Yes, right.

V: ... will be the next thing to do.

S: If you have been working really hard all day and thoroughly into your work and thoroughly enjoying it but come the evening you just feel like knocking off and having a nice meal. You know, you don't think "should I do a bit more, ought I do a bit more", you just go and prepare a nice meal and sit down quietly have it. Or else you go and see some friends, or something of that sort. But there is no doubt in your mind. I think you always know what is the next thing to do when you are completely into this thing, the thing that you are doing now.

So 'See whether or not your fettering passions are [245] diminishing. Always be mindful',

well that goes without saying, 'Do not make yourself miserable'. Do you think people need to be advised not to make themselves miserable?

V's: Yes!

S: Yes indeed they do! It sometimes seems that they try very hard to make themselves miserable. They certainly succeed, at least in that, if not in very much else. 'Do not make yourself miserable, nor should you ever even attempt to deceive yourself or the Lamas and deities.' The suggestion is, through a remiss or dishonest observance of your vows, you are then trying to deceive yourself and the Lamas and deities that you called to witness your vows, if you try to find loopholes or are not very wholehearted.

'Do not do anything that would bring disaster to yourself or others'.

V: The first bit is also good, 'Do not think it is too difficult to apply the antidotes right now'. That is usually what one does when one is not involved ...

S: Yes, 'If the Wish-fulfilling jewel should happen to fall from the hands of a blind man, he may never find it again'. You've got it now in your hand, you have got the opportunity the possibility, even though you are, as it were, blind. So don't lose it, don't drop that jewel, it is there in your hand. You may never find it again once you drop it.

V: Is that a sort of exhortation about we've 'just got this one life'?

S: It is partly that, that is one aspect of it, certainly.

V: There is a question in this area that I have been wondering about for quite some time actually, and that is the likelihood of finding the Dharma in a subsequent life. You have found it in this one life, but it seems to me that it is such an incredible chance to have found, even in this life. It is the force of ones commitment here and now likely to bring that chance again?

S: That is a very relevant point.

V: Is there any traditional view of this?

S: Yes, if you develop an affinity for the Dharma in this life through your practice of it then you will tend to be reborn in areas and situations where you will continue to have access to the Dharma.

V: Just tend to?

S: That's also sufficient because you're born also with that affinity.

V: You can move towards it even if you are not actually born ...

S: You can move towards it, you feel that there is something lacking, there is something there, what is it and you start looking around and sooner or later you get on the right track and follow that up.

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V: Like planting seeds.

V: So even falling a long way short of the arising of the Bodhicitta, something like that?

S: Oh yes indeed, even a long way short of that.

All right let's go on.

(End side 1)

"When you diminish the activities of this life, you are only doing what is necessary. If there is a heap of filth in front of you, you have to get rid of it quickly. Should someone help you, why not be happy? In the same way, you must get rid of all your habitual thoughts, using whatever antidotes are available to you. And, if the Lama and your spiritual friends help you to do this, why not be happy?"

S: Atisa is saying that is, as it were, like going out of the front door and finding a great heap of filth right outside. So that you are at once thinking in terms of taking it away. So if people come along to help you take it away how happy you would be. It is just like that with regard to your own mind. There is this great heap of filth, as it were, in the form of the Five Hindrances, the natural thing to do is to get to work and start removing the filth, the hindrances and if other people, Lamas and spiritual friends are helping you, why not be happy?

V: I think the difficulty arises when one doesn't recognize it is a heap of filth.

S: When you fall into it you do. (laughter) When you contemplate it, you think "is it a heap of filth" or not, "it is rather attractive actually, look at the way the sun is shining on it and it's all glistening with the dew", but when you walk right in it, with your nose in it, legs kicking vainly in the air and are shouting "help" then you know it is a heap of filth and you are certainly only too glad for any help in getting out and removing it so that you don't fall in it any more.

Sometimes therefore it is best if someone is just standing back and admiring the filth just to pitch him into it, this is why Blake says, "if the fool would only persist in his folly he would become wise".

V: Is that one of the functions of a Lama?

S: Could even be that.

"Having promised before the Lamas and deities to work for the benefit of living beings, do not differentiate between those to whom you give gifts. Although there are differences in people, there is no differentiation in Bodhi-mind."

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S: This is a quite difficult point, in a way. 'Do not differentiate between those to whom you give gifts.' That is simply on the basis of personal liking and disliking. It doesn't mean that you should give to all indiscriminately, regardless of whether they are going to use those gifts rightly or harm themselves even further, but you shouldn't just follow your own likes and dislikes in giving to people. Which is what we often do, or usually do.

V: It is metta isn't it?

S: Yes. Bodhi-mind, he doesn't quite mean Bodhicitta in the ordinary sense, it is more like the potentiality for gaining enlightenment.

V: But that thing, giving gifts... I just experience when I am, maybe writing, or maybe giving something to a member of a community where there are another five people involved. I don't particularly like that one person..., I feel that I want to give to everybody but it would be dishonest that I don't feel that.

V: But if you wanted to give to everybody...

V: No sorry, I'm glad you brought that up...

S: You don't want to be quite the same. You would like to give something really big to the person you like but you would like to remember the others also and give them something smaller, but at the same time you feel that you ought to give everybody the same.

V: Yes.

V: Maybe you should give the person that you don't like the gift.

S: Also it depends on what is the nature of the liking and whether it is something that is known to all and acknowledged and accepted that you have a sort of special liking for that person. This of course raises the question of whether it is a slightly neurotic attachment or whether it is just a very positive affinity which finds an expression in your being particularly generous to that person.

Sometimes one can't be equally generous to all even if you would like to be. Very often you just can't afford it even.

V: Until you find the Wish-fulfilling jewel.

S: Yes, right.

V: It's better to give than not to give.

S: Yes. But on the other hand you don't want to give in such a way that a difference is created. Sometimes people do this, sometimes it is done in the family. A favourite child gets quite disproportionate gifts. This used to be my experience when I was a child, I was my Auntie's favourite, she was my God-mother and everybody else, including my younger sister got very ordinary presents. I noticed it at the time, I was only a child but I thought that this wasn't quite right [248] it wasn't fair and it was creating a little bit of jealousy.

V: I wasn't particularly thinking of gifts, I was just thinking of cards, for example. When you write a postcard that is not in an envelope I just don't know whether to include the whole community or whether, ...

S: I sometimes find this because when I go away I would like to write to everybody and I usually do manage it but sometimes it is quite difficult but I like to write to everybody at least send a card to everybody. I usually manage to do that but it isn't always easy and when there are two hundred or three hundred Order members I am not going to be able to do it any more. At present I can just about manage it, with difficulty.

V: Trouble is when you do that, when you succeed you may have to miss two or three out it's much worse than if you only wrote to one or two in the first place. Because the people you missed out feel it much more.

V: Maybe one should just accept that.

S: Also the nature of this special liking is also quite important.

V: Ones motives, yes.

S: Is it a real gift, or is it a sprat to catch a mackerel.

V: That's a very hard one isn't it. That you do have ambiguous feelings, ambivalent feelings for people. Is it better to not give until your feeling is clearer or does the gift transform ...

S: I would say just give, just get into the 'habit' of giving. Habit in inverted commas of course, sort out the motives afterwards. There is a very positive element in giving anyway with awareness and general sincerity.

V: That will transform the motive, actually.

S: And don't think about it too much. Sometimes people have to weigh it too much, if you feel like giving something, give it. Think about it afterwards, not stopping and "should I, should I not, what are they going to think, do they really want it, what are other people going to think?", etc. If you feel like giving just give, on the spot, as it were.

V: It's..., what's the word, I can't quite find the right word, when you find that they don't want it or don't even acknowledge it as a gift, that's quite an eye opener. Because you realize what you were into then.

S: Yes. Or if they straight away give it to somebody else. "Oh they are giving my present away, I gave it to them." It's theirs if you have given it, it they feel like giving it to somebody else why not? "I made it for him and he's given it away now to somebody else". (laughter)

V: "Last thing I'll ever give him" (laughter).

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S: "Doesn't value my gifts".

V: This is particularly to family heirlooms.

V: It happened to me recently, somebody gave me something and I then met the person who had given it to that person. He was most upset, I felt quite bad about having it, for a moment.

S: Maybe the Tibetan idea is a good one, that gifts should be in constant circulation. I have mentioned before, I think, that Tibetans used to come to see me and bring these tins of cracker biscuits, it was always cracker biscuits for some reason or other. And I used to take cracker biscuits when I went to see people and sometimes I would take a tin that I had been given. We had a joke amongst ourselves that there were some tins of cracker biscuits that had been in circulation in Kalimpong for ten years! (laughter) Getting passed from hand to hand, but never actually being eaten. It may well have been so.

It was never just formality. Because when you do give, you do give, you actually hand it over. And there is some little feeling in fact, however slight.

V: There was always ... things in my family, my parents would give my grandmother something and she would always give everything away, immediately. She was very liked like that, but my parents used to really hate it. Quite upset about it. But she seemed to have a different idea about giving altogether.

S: Well this is the Mahayana idea, very much. That you should accept whatever you are given, even a monk should accept gifts. Gifts of horses, elephants, slaves, these are all mentioned, jewels but he should at once give them away. There are many teachers, many Lamas in the East who do this. Offerings are pouring in all the time but they don't keep anything. They accept it, they don't refuse it, but then at once they give it away. This seems to be quite a good thing. There is movement and circulation of gifts, as it were.

Many Hindu gurus have the same attitude, they don't mind how much they accept but they don't keep it, they just give it away, sometimes on the spot. Some teachers in fact have a vow, to go back to vows, that they won't keep anything until the next day. So whatever they have received in the course of the day they give it away by the evening. They won't keep it until the next day. Some follow this and act on this quite literally, that tomorrow we start completely afresh, don't keep anything until the morning.

There are some very famous and popular teachers who might be given thousands of rupees in the course of a day and they give it away by the evening. Spend it on food for the whole community or give it beggars but not keep it.

V: Would you say, Bhante, that if somebody's feelings were hurt by one giving a gift that they had given to you to someone else, that's just too bad?

S: No, I wouldn't say that, you have to take into account people's feelings, even if they happen to be neurotic feelings. For instance, if someone gives you something and you want to [250] give it away, don't necessarily give it away immediately and in front of them when you know that they are going to feel hurt. At least you should show that you value the gift even if you are going to give it away. At least use it or keep it around you for a few days and then give it away. Not immediately hand it over to somebody else, because this suggests that you don't value the gift. Not the object, I mean, but the person's feeling in giving you. So you have to be careful of that too.

V: Is this why it is always important to accept the gift?

S: Accept it, certainly, in the full sense. If it is something for you to use, use it for a while and then give it away, but not just pass it on as though you didn't value the giving.

V: But if after that they are upset, then that is just a neurotic demand that they are making?

S: Yes. You might handle that quite gently and carefully but certainly not give way to it.

V: It is very difficult to..., I find it very difficult to take other people's feeling into consideration. I am not quite sure usually what..., I usually find that I am unaware of their feelings and one treads on territory ...

S: Yes, people shouldn't be encouraged to be too precious though. You should be very careful of allowing the weak to rule the strong.

Like it was said of a certain woman that she ruled her husband with a whim of iron.

V: One thing I have found very useful, Bhante, was how you put it once before. When you give a gift it should be like pouring water on the ground, I just found that very helpful. That you can't recover that.

S: Yes.

V: Unconditional. A gift shouldn't have...

S: Shouldn't have strings attached. That also applies to the gift of ones self.

V: Giving does seem, in our society anyway to be much more of a bargain, than an expression of generosity. Or it is something done in a more, not a formal sense but a mechanical sense. Like Christmas has become.

V: That's a bargain in a sense because quite often people have the attitude...

V: Yes, because you'll get something back.

V: ... I'll give a present to that person because I know that they will give me one.

V: That's a more obvious form of a bargain isn't it?

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S: You are more worried about who you have left out rather than happy to give to the people you are giving too.

V: This thing about the bargain, it creates a feeling of people not wanting to accept a gift, because they don't want to be under any obligation.

S: Right. This seems very strong among English people. "I don't want to be under any obligation", people often say this.

V: You can only really give a gift, can't you, because ... otherwise you haven't got anything. I mean, how can you give anything ...?

S: Well you give it as an expression of the fact that you don't regard it as yours. Not that you are giving something that belongs to you, but that you see that it doesn't belong to you, actually. Not in any real sense.

I was also going to say that the idea of exchange is important. We mustn't let the idea of bargain obscure the fact that exchanging is also good. An exchange of gifts is a very important activity in many traditional societies.

V: It's the mental attitude behind it which makes it even an exchange or a bargain.

S: That you are not giving in order to get but you both give, you exchange. And this itself is quite positive, it's open, that you are both giving, that you are exchanging.

V: It's like if somebody invites you for a meal you take a bottle of wine with you.

S: Right, yes, or you invite them back. It's more like keeping a balance. Keeping a two way flow, as it were. But to give to them to, as it were, counteract the fact that they have given to you, that is negative.

V: It's very much the motive, isn't it.

S: If you give something to them so that you shan't be in their debt then you are back to square one. Which is your intention, he has given you something so you were in his debt, but "ah, I've given him back something, so we are clear, I don't owe him anything and he doesn't owe me anything." But when it is an exchange it isn't like that. Both have gained, he has given me something and I have given him something, that is much more positive.

You find this in primitive communities, "I have given him my daughter, he has given me his two cows", that is an exchange, which is positive. (Laughter)

V: (Laughing) - good deal too.

S: (laughing), I am only citing it as an example, I am not laying down any sort of sociological principle.

V's: (unclear)

S: I don't want to encourage any lurking chauvinism in anybody.

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V: I'm only teasing.

V: I found it very interesting when John ... started to do freelance gardening around Glasgow and instead of saying "I'll do this job for such and such a price", he would do the job and say "pay me what you think it's worth", and left it up to them, to their generosity. And a lot of people found it quite difficult and tended to give him a much higher price than if he would have put on it if he was quoting a price.

S: Yes, people often do find it quite difficult in those sort of circumstances.

V: I have heard you comment before about Tantric gurus employing this technique, in fact, as an ...



S: You have to ask yourself, well what value do you place upon that persons work? Which in a sense means on that person, what is your feeling towards him? Would you really like to get away with as little as possible or do you really feel like being kind, and not exactly generous, but giving him adequate recompense?

V: It takes you right back to your own true sense of values. And that is quite startling for some people. (S: yes)

V: A labourer is worthy of his hire.

S: This is why it has sometimes been said, in connection with the Centre, and charging for things, that people would rather be told what to pay than have to make up their own minds what to give. Perhaps they have the uneasy feeling that they ought to be giving everything. So if you just charge them, even though it is quite high, in a sense they are let off lightly.

V: It avoids the conflict. (S: yes)

V: It also puts a completely different relationship towards the centre, if you are paying, well you come along because I've paid, get what I want.

S: It is the same with the person, if you just give him what you feel like giving, in a way you are under a sort of obligation to him. Whereas if you just pay him his wages, as it were, you have just employed someone, he is sort of inferior to you.

V: Yes, it's impersonal.

S: Otherwise if you just give him what you feel like giving you are treating him more on an equal basis and some people don't like to do that. They would rather have you employed, rather buy you, as it were, buy your time, buy your work and avoid any personal relationship.

V: I was looking at this in regard to piece work recently, some my Father did. I felt that piece work is very non-conducive to mutual generosity. It used to spark greed off in the worker and a funny sort of preta from the employers point of view ...

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V: Maybe you ought to define piece work because I don't know if everybody understands what piece work is.

S: Certain people won't.

V: Generally you are given a very repetitive job to do, it is certainly quite simple and can be done very quickly, so you are given a very very low price per one you do. So the idea is to work flat out.

S: Like picking apples.

V: Instead of by the hour

V: Piece work is just being paid by the piece.

V: By the bit, so you work flat out to get a decent wage.

S: According to the number of bits you produce so it is up to you to work more quickly or more slowly.

V: It is also quite difficult, I find, to receive.

S: Yes, this is why people like to give back something, very often because they then undo

your act of giving and they don't feel uncomfortable then of having to accept something, having to accept a gift.

"Do not be angry with those who would harm you. If you allow yourself to become angry, how can you meditate patience? When fettering passions arise you must remember their opposing practice. Otherwise, why bother with religious practice that increases fettering passions? Constantly guarding your precious Bodhi-mind, you should not have the slightest gap in your remembrance. If even a tiny gap should appear, the devil of fettering passions will enter. And when this devil enters, he will obstruct the Bodhi-mind, and you will even be unable to help others and even fall into lower states of being. Think it over."

S: Remembrance here means recollection or mindfulness. 'If even a tiny gap', that is to say in ones mindfulness 'should appear the devil of fettering passions will enter.' In other words in the state of unmindfulness you are just very vulnerable to any hindrance or unskilful mental state that may arise. Continued mindfulness is the best guarantee that those unskilful mental states will not gain entry into you. That they will be kept at bay, that they won't take control of you.

'If even a tiny gap should appear', if you are unmindful even for a few minutes, that is enough.

V: ... checking.

S: Mmm. If you are unmindful even for a few minutes you can become angry and in that state of anger commit an action that will affect your life for years and years to come.

V: Phew, think it over!

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V: What is it saying there Bhante, by, 'why bother with religious practice that increases fettering passions'?

S: Well supposing you are trying to get on with your meditation and there is noise or disturbance and instead of pausing in the practice and developing patience you just get more and more angry. "Here am I trying to get on with my meditation and these wretched people disturbing me", then it is almost better not to be doing that, so called meditation.

V: Especially doing the metta bhavana.

S: Yes. Or if a feeling of conceit arose.

V: It reminds me of the story that Vessantara gave in his last lecture about the fruit tree that was giving fruit that gave food poisoning. When the young Prince tried to chop it down it just grew bigger and he found out that even when people talked about it grew a few more branches, even if they thought about it a few more twigs would come out. So he had to plant a white tree by it tended the white tree until it grew and the roots took the nourishment from the black tree. In a way it is like continuing on with the practice.

"Even if you have the thought, 'I have done religious practice,' you will go to death empty-handed. Noble son, when you die, be careful that your Lama and spiritual friends do not worry or despair."

S: That is to say have no good reason for worry or despair on your account.

"Do not bring doubt or despair to laymen who are faithful to the Dharma. You must check yourself again and again by comparing the Teachings of Buddha with your own mind. If you do not do this, even though you think, 'I have done religious practice,' you will stray from the Teaching. Because of this, at the time of death there will be no sign of your having practised Bodhi-mind and when the sign that you will fall into lower states of being appears, others will

feel great worry and despair. Therefore, do not be lazy in your practice of the Dharma or let yourself be deceived by the proud thought, 'I have spent my whole life devoted to religion,' and thus go empty-handed into the instant of death."

S: Atisa has in mind the sort of professional preoccupation with religion. And making of it a kind of career in a worldly and academic, even cultural sense.

What about this sign at the moment of death, or time of death? This is a general Buddhist teaching that at the time of death as the consciousness begins to dissociate itself from the physical body there are various signs in the forms of images that appear to the mind connected with the previous karma and so on. So if you have developed the Bodhicitta in the course of one's lifetime, then there will be [255] very positive and happy and auspicious images arising and one will feel as though one is going to the pure land and will be quite happy and joyful. But if you have led a quite unskilful kind of life and done all sorts of unskilful things then the memory of all those unskilful things may well come back to you or rise up in front of you in the form of an image. For instance it is said if you have been a butcher, then at the time of death you will see an image of animals being slaughtered or a blood stained knife and this will trouble you.

V: Is that generally accepted by all Buddhists, even the Theravadins?

S: Yes, it is explained in detail in the Abhidharma, this is accepted by all Buddhists.

V: Something I got a little bit confused about, you said in the last seminar, that the Theravadins didn't accept consciousness ...

S: They don't accept the intermediate state. They don't accept that there is an intermediate state between two lives. The distinction in my opinion is quite verbal. You could say that that intermediate period could be regarded as a separate birth. So you could say the Theravadins regard it as a separate birth. The Sarvastivadins and Mahayanists, they regard it as an intermediate period between two births.

The difference is more verbal, I think, than real.

V: That's purely Theravadin? It's not something that's general?

S: The Theravadins maintain that one is reborn instantaneously. This is not accepted by, that is to say reborn on earth if you are going to be reborn on earth, instantaneously. The Sarvastivadins and the Mahayanists and Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese Buddhists, they do not accept that. They maintain that there is a certain length of time between the last moment of the old life and the first moment of the new. And that intermediate period they call the intermediate state.

But the way it is described it is as though the intermediate state is itself a sort of birth. So you could look at it in that way from the Theravada point of view. The Theosophists have got again a strange teaching of their own, that there are two thousand years between different lives on earth, but this is entirely their own view. They seem to have got rather muddled here.

V: Similar the Pythagoras teachings, teach that one ... spheres and you will stay there according to what you have done in your previous existence, for a certain period of time.

S: Well so you may. There is this possibility in Buddhism also that if you perform many meritorious deeds you may be reborn in a higher heavenly world and stay there for a very long time. But the Theosophists maintain that this happens to everybody, that there is a two thousand year period or sojourn in what they call the Devachan (?) This is certainly not the Buddhist teaching. The Buddhist teaching is that most people are reborn after a fairly short interval. The evidence, whatever it is, suggests after two to three [256] years.

V: As long as that?

S: It seems that this is the average period, as far as we can tell. From what evidence there is.

V: Based on the Tibetan ...?

S: Partly that but partly on the general evidence available with regard to alleged cases of recollection of previous lives. They nearly all suggest a period of two to three years, including of course the Tibetan ones, the reincarnate Lamas.

V: It is very difficult to think of that time in connection with ...

S: There is that point too. The Tibetan Book of the Dead speaks in terms of a period of forty nine days. But this is obviously suspect, one might say, because it is seven times seven. And seven is always a symbolical number. And there is the point that one is experiencing a different kind of time. This point is explicitly made in the Abhidharma, that each of the different spheres, each of the different worlds has its own time scale, its own experience of time. So someone may be absent from earth, say, for two or three years but he may be experiencing that according to the time of the world in which he is living as several thousand years, or as a few minutes.

V: That ties up with Einstein's special theory of relativity

S: Ahh, that's quite reassuring (laughter)

V: That the experience of time varies according to your speed and acceleration and position.

V: Can you experience these states in meditation?

S: Yes, in as much as each sphere or world is correlated with a state of consciousness. Sometimes you do feel as though you have been meditating a long time but when you look at the clock it isn't so long. I don't mean just in those cases where the meditation has seemed to drag. In the same way in dreams. Sometimes you can dream the experiences of a whole lifetime, as it were, and feel that you have gone through years and years, but you wake up and it could be just half an hour, even five minutes. So that this shows that time experience varies considerably even within our own relatively normal experience. The same thing on acid trips, people say that time sense greatly alters.

V: I was in a car crash and that's what that did. As we were going over my life was just shooting past me and I could see it, and that was only a matter of minutes. Just experiencing quite a lot of my life in ...

V: In the case of people who recall previous lives, have they also been able to recall the intermediate period as well or has that not been researched?

S: I have heard of examples but I don't remember any [257] details. And in the same way there are people who are said to have been able to recall the time that they spent in the womb before birth. Some psychoanalysts do claim, and it seems the claim is well founded, to be able to take people back not only to infancy but through infancy and back into the womb as part of the psychoanalytical process.

V: The Scientologists do this.

S: Do they. But they seem to do it in a rather fanciful sort of way. Get mixed up with science fiction. Because the founder of Scientology started off as a science fiction writer, and in a way he seems to have stayed one ever since.

V: It's just one big science fiction model that he has created.

S: On we go.

"In short, staying in a monastery will not be helpful if you do not reverse your obsession for fine things and do not renounce the activities of this life."

S: I remember in this connection talking with one of my pupils in Kalimpong about life in the very big monasteries in Lhasa. He had been a monk in the Drepa Monastery which is the biggest of the three big monasteries and he felt he had been a fighting monk, a dubdo. And these who were monks who were like policemen and guards. Sometimes they had even to fight. Sometimes remote monasteries were attacked by bandits and so on and the fighting monks had to ward them off. They were never given full ordination, they always remained sramaneras, and they were quite distinctive. They used to wear their hair long, used to kilt up their robe in a particular way. They used to walk with a very special, kind of swagger and were allowed, not to say encouraged, to push other monks out of the way rather rudely. And they used to practise fighting with sticks and swords and stones and things like that.

The point that this pupil of mine made was, that in his opinion the fighting monks were the best monks of all. He said that they lived the most simple life. That other monks would collect little knickknacks and trinkets and things of that sort but the fighting monks never did. In fact they weren't expected to. They also, by the way, used to blacken their faces with soot, so they were quite a fearsome sight. They used to possess just the clothes they stood up in, just their bedding, very simple bedding and a single Thangka on the wall and a single small butter lamp to burn in front of it and nothing else at all, apart from of course the rosary. And that they never accumulated anything and always lived very simply and were ready to fight for the monastery. And according to him, and he used to tell me great long stories about the exploits of these fighting monks, they were the best monks of all. The most sincere, etc. etc.

And sometimes it happened in fighting that they killed somebody, but then they had to give up being a monk and leave the monastery because they had broken the monastic rule. Which seemed a bit hard, in a way, but this was the custom, this was the tradition and in ... there were apparently some hundreds of these fighting monks, because there were thousands [258] of monks altogether. About three hundred of these fighting monks and he had been one of them for several years, since he was about fifteen or sixteen.

V: Especially trained?

S: They train themselves. He used to describe to me how, when the weather was fine, they would go outside the monastery and they'd go to a bank of a river and they would bathe in the river and then they'd practice flinging stones and fighting with sticks. It was all quite simple and primitive, they didn't even have any guns, apparently, they were using sticks and stones, swords and clubs and things like that. But they were very much feared by the populace and by other ordinary monks.

Though they were very very respectful to the high ranking Lamas and so on. It's just it was quite ... when they were around.

V: It's a very special position to be in. I can't quite imagine, well I can imagine but ...

S: He used to say that they were very fervent in their devotion and they all kept up their regular meditation and a lot of mantra chanting, a very austere life.

V: They are quite close to death themselves, in that sense.

S: Yes, it seemed a bit like medieval Zen in Japan, a little bit like that although they certainly didn't idealize it in any way. They seemed to lead very austere, simple lives, very genuine lives. He firmly maintained that they were the best monks of all, apart from the incarnate Lamas of course.

V: But they weren't fighting monks ... be something else, they remained...?

S: They remained fighting monks but they joined in the chanting services which might be held three, four or five times a day. They were regularly participating in that, like all the other monks. They also kept up their own devotions, their own meditations, they had their own Lamas of course, their own spiritual teachers.

V: Who were also fighting monks themselves?

S: No, that would be quite unthinkable. Their Lamas were just drawn from the teachers within the monastery, not separate Lamas, or not a separate class of Lamas for them.

V: Presumably they must have become ordinary monks at some point, when they were getting a bit old.

S: I think very likely, I didn't go into this but I think more than likely. In his case he did in fact, I remember now, he went to the monastery when he was quite young, fifteen or sixteen and I think for four or five years he was a fighting monk and then he became an ordinary monk.

V: Didn't this create any kind of conflict with regards ...

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S: Apparently not, certainly not in his mind and he was subsequently the manager of an important incarnate Lama who was a friend of mine after he became a refugee. This incarnate Lama, when he left Kalimpong handed over this young monk to me to be my manager and assured me he was thoroughly trained and he knew how to manage a small monastery; and indeed he did. He was very good indeed.

So that's just by the way. So they certainly didn't have an obsession for fine things.

"For if you do not cut off these inclinations, thinking that you can work for the aims of both this and future lives, you will perform nothing but incidental religious practice. This type of practice is nothing but hypocritical and pretentious practice done for selfish gain."

S: That seems really severe but no doubt it is true. 'incidental religious practice', that is quite an important statement. We discussed this, admittedly in a different context, in the course of the last seminar when we found the Grand Master Chi I, as it were, raising the question, 'how can one keep up one's practice all the time and not have gaps?' In a way, even, how can one meditate all the time and not have gaps. And the point was made in that connection that religious practice, or spiritual practice rather, has to be continuous or not at all. Because if it is not continuous, at least until such time as you develop insight, then you gain when you are practising but you lose when you are not practising. So you go up and down, up and down all the time. So you have to find some way, some means of making your practice continuous. Occasional practice is of very little help, or incidental religious practice, that is to say practice once in a while is of very little use.

You must be applying or practising in some form or other even if it is only, I say only but it is still very important, keeping up your mindfulness all the time. At least that, that is the absolute minimum. Otherwise you just slip back and you undo the good that you have done by your actual practice, whether meditation or anything else. It is very easy to have this up down, up down kind of rhythm and you can be thinking that you are continuing and making progress when you are only continuing this up down up down process. You are getting a little way on every time but then you slip back by an equal distance each time, then you go on and you gain the point that you previously gained but then you slip back again afterwards. This may go on for years and years, there is not really progress, there is no overall progress, very often.

So you must find some way of making the practice continuous and, as it were, full time. It is in this sense the old fashioned ideas of monk and layman is quite out of date and quite unreal. If you mean by the layman someone who just occasionally indulges in a bit of Buddhism, well he is not a Buddhist at all. You have to find some way of keeping up your practice constantly even though you have got wife and family and regular job, and so on. The layman is not the part-time Buddhist, he is also a full time Buddhist, one might say, but he is trying to be a full time Buddhist, or is a full time Buddhist within slightly more difficult circumstances than someone who is living as a monk or equivalent of a monk.

V: So in a sense, I suppose one could say that [260] the determination, really, would be greater to face that more difficult situation.

S: Yes, but that doesn't make, of course, the situation inherently better and it doesn't give us any reason for idealizing it in a false kind of way.

V: I've heard in big Tibetan monasteries that the monks don't actually meditate. If they want to meditate they go away by themselves while the monasteries are much more concerned with study, arts and crafts, taking care of the monastery and so forth. That that has to be a practice in itself.

S: Yes and no. Don't forget they also have the rituals.

V: The Pujas?

S: The pujas, the pujas being, Mahayana Buddhist pujas, even Tantric Buddhist pujas often include a great deal of recitation of mantras, even visualizations. And many of these lengthy rituals and lengthy pujas are the equivalent of meditation. They have the same sort of effect. At the same time it is true that someone who wants to take up meditation very very seriously and be a real Yogi does leave the large, organized monastery and retire into a small hermitage.

The usual custom is that the monasteries have their own hermitages which are attached to the monastery. Each big monastery has a number of hermitages within half a mile or two miles or three miles, where the monks who want to be Yogis can retire and meditate in solitude and in many cases have their food brought to them every day from the monastery, so that they don't have to bother about cooking. But some, of course, go completely away and have no contact whatever with the monastery.

V: I think this is the principle they use at ... They do apparently, very little meditation in the form of sitting ... done is work and if someone wants to do a lot of meditation on their own ...

S: In the Tibetan monasteries all the monks do their own individual practice on their own in the early morning. Very often before dawn, before the first of the congregational pujas begins. Don't forget every monk will have been given an initiation, every monk will have been given a special practice and even the most lax, the most ignorant, will at least be chanting prayers and mantras for quite a long time early in the morning. So it all has its effect, there is something going on all the time, there are no gaps. Even if you are just bringing water for the monastery, that is also, in a way, a religious activity.

V: And you can still say a mantra.

S: Yes, many of them do.

V: Does this create atmosphere, when you walk into a monastery in Tibet?

S: I don't know because I have not walked in, not had the opportunity of walking in. But certainly I have walked into [261] much smaller monasteries in the Kalimpong area and there definitely is an atmosphere. And it is usually a very cheerful atmosphere, this is the first thing

that strikes you about Buddhist monks everywhere. I think I have spoken about this before, they are very cheerful people and very friendly people. The Tibetan monks, especially, are busy, hard working people, they are always doing something in the monastery. They are 'house proud', as it were, monastery proud, they like to keep their monastery spick and span and you very very rarely find a monastery that isn't. It is usually clean, tidy, well swept, well brushed, dusted. The monks are always taking down curtains and putting them up and seeing that they are clean. They take great pride in the monastery in this way.

The more ordinary monks, I say ordinary in inverted commas, spend a lot of their time in this way, they are occupied, they are very devoted to the monastery and to Buddhism. Very devoted to the Lamas and take great joy in looking after the Lamas so that they can get on with their meditations and practices and have time to give teaching.

I think I say, that ninety nine out of a hundred people in the East, who have been monks, or are monks, are strongly convinced that life in the monastery is the best of all possible lives. They really do believe this, especially when they look around at the life of most lay people they are more convinced of it than ever. Monks are noticeably more cheerful than lay people everywhere, whether it is Tibetan monks or Thai or Sinhalese.

V: (Unclear)

S: Really, yes.

All right let's go on.

"Therefore you should always seek spiritual friends and shun bad company. Do not become settled in one place or accumulate many things."

S: When Atisa says, 'do not become settled in one place', he is not of course excluding the possibility of being settled in one place for the sake of spiritual practice, as when you spend three years, three months, three weeks, three days, and three minutes in solitary meditation in one place. But don't become settled in one place just due to inertia or attachment or because you have got into a rut. And of course if you do become settled in one place you are more likely to accumulate many things. It is difficult to accumulate many things, it is difficult to accumulate many things when you are moving around all the time. Has anyone noticed this?

V's: Yes.

V: You don't realize how much you have got until you move.

S: You really don't. Especially books.

V: When do Tibetans do their three years, three months and so on?

S: They don't all do it, by the way.

V: No, but is it a fully closed retreat, with [262] no contact with the outside? ...

S: Usually they say there are three degrees of practice. The third is the strictest and that is just that you have a little hermitage and you literally do not see anybody for that period, you are walled up inside. Little hermitages of this sort are built as self contained units. They are usually double storeyed although there is a wall around the upper story, you can walk up there, it is like an open flat roof. You can walk around and take a little exercise but not be seen. Downstairs there is a sleeping place and a room to sit and meditate and do your pujas and there is a stack of firewood, cooking arrangement, toilet facilities. And either you will be left, say, barley flour and butter sufficient for the whole period or food will be brought and pushed through a hole at intervals, without your seeing the person who is doing it. So that is a completely enclosed retreat.



Then there is the possibility that you do have the three year and so on retreat and you don't move from the hermitage and you spend all or practically all of your time in meditation but you do see people occasionally, but you are living remote, you may even speak a few words to them very occasionally. That is the second degree.

The easiest is that you just stay in a quiet corner of a monastery and don't move out of your room but you do receive visitors, people who want to come to you for advice or discuss the Dharma or take a little teaching. But most of your time is devoted to meditation and you don't go out of your quarters.

Those are the three levels of practice. Usually when they refer to this they mean the most thorough going one when you actually are enclosed and your teacher usually encloses you and puts his seal on the door.

V: He bricks you up. (S: Yes, bricks you up)

V: Do they often do this quite early on in their career? I know the story of Milarepa, it's fairly early on in his career that he is bricked up.

S: Well he didn't come into contact with Marpa until he was forty, sometimes that isn't realized, that he wasn't a young man. He must have been over forty, it can be done when one is quite young, it just depends whether one's teacher thinks one is ready.

V: (Unclear)

V: I read somewhere that they had a small ...

V: (Unclear)

S: No you are mixing it up with an ... No, this is a special monastery in Gyantse where they used to train the Lung-gom-pas. One of my friends in Kalimpong had been the governor of Gyantse, ... this area. And it was part of his official duties to supervise the ceremonies

(Break in tape)

at the end of these retreats. And these monks, these Yogis were immured for twelve years. That is the complete course, the complete length of time that they had to practise to be [263] Nyingpas or Nyingkompas. And the sign of success was that the end of the twelve year period they would be able to levitate out of the hermitage which was open at the top. That is to say it would be built round a small courtyard in two stories so that there was an open well and then they would be expected to come out through the well. He assured me that he had personally witnessed this in his capacity as the governor of Yangtse.

V: If you couldn't get out that way did they let you out? (laughter)

S: This I don't know, but he did assure me that he had witnessed this and I personally believe him because I have no reason not to.

V: It would certainly be an incentive to do the practice!

S: That's a special kind of retreat a special kind of Yogi.

V: With the question of not becoming settled in one place, do you feel this should apply to Order members? One should be prepared to stay in a place for a certain time ...

S: It is also the reason why one is staying. The sort of settling that Atisa is referring to is just settling due to inertia and becoming attached. Not settling because it is the right place for you to be and continue to be and there is work to be done there or practice to be done, but you just

settle down and it becomes your home.

V: Yes, because it is very easy...

S: It becomes your nest. You start feathering it and decorating it and so on. and so forth. And accumulating possessions.

V: But because this happens, because of the gravitational pull do you think people should ...

S: I think it is very doubtful whether people should stay longer than three years in any one place unless there was a definite spiritual reason to do that. I think if you have been anywhere for three years I think you should start seriously asking yourself, "why am I here, is there a positive spiritual reason for my being here or is it just the force of inertia?".

V: That wouldn't apply to people with families of course.

S: No, because one accepts a certain measure of inertia. In that case, unless the family is very mobile anyway or social conditions are such that even families can be mobile. But usually when families are mobile it just indicates restlessness and instability. Like that American family, the American family, so I was reading, doesn't stay longer than five years in any one place, then they go elsewhere. [264] This is quite usual. So this can be very unsettling in a move around with their parents. Very often children get upset when taken away, say, from a school where they are doing well, and taken away from their friends. Having to go to a new school and making new friends. If this happens five or six times then the child can get quite disturbed.

V: I think with the Americans though, it's a bit like changing cars, it's a bit more ...

S: You change your job and you go and work somewhere else, you go and live somewhere else. You change your house. I was reading about people in California, especially, who every four or five years buy a new house and contents. They never bother renewing carpets and curtains, they just buy a new house fully equipped and get rid of the old one with all the old contents, leave everything behind. Have new furniture, new carpets, new curtains which of course they don't install themselves or choose themselves, they just come along with the house. This is apparently quite common now in California. It is even complete with vases on the mantelpiece, everything, every detail.

V: A bit like this place.

S: Yes.

V: House swapping. They have got fed up with swapping wives so they are swapping houses instead now.

S: But one should look very seriously at this question of settling. And if one is settled, relatively speaking, or objectively speaking make sure that it is for the right reason, for a positive reason. Not because you lack the energy to get up and go or because you are really snug - 'like a bug in a rug'. (laughter)

V: Maybe for the individual it would be, but maybe a restless person would have to give up and settle down.

S: Yes, right.

Just as a matter of interest who hasn't moved for say three years?

V: I've moved house and not moved area.

S: Only three, that is pretty good actually, that only three.

V: I've been in Archway for ...

V: It's been good for me I've never stayed in one place so long.

S: I've had lots of moves, that's why I can talk so freely on them with a clear conscious. In the last couple of years, [265] or three years I think there are about nine moves, nine or ten different addresses. I am going to settle down at least for a year ... in one place for a whole year.

V: You do need to be settled for a certain length of time, don't you?

S: For certain purposes. If you want to write for instance.

V: Continuity. (S: Mmm)

V: The other extreme is probably Durangama who never remains anywhere long enough.

S: Doesn't stay anywhere long enough to leave (laughter) Anyway we were really talking about..., no we weren't that was the previous one. Let's move on?

"Whatever you do, do in harmony with the Dharma. Let whatever you do be a remedy for the fettering passions. This is actual religious practice; make great effort to do this. As your knowledge increases, do not be possessed by the demon of pride.

S: So whatever you do, do in harmony with the Dharma. This is the criterion, not so much of whether you are a monk or a layman, but whatever you do let it be in harmony with the Dharma. And let whatever you do be a remedy for the fettering passions', whatever you do should be a remedy for your natural unskilfulness. Everything you do should help you to grow, to counteract your inertia. 'This is actual religious practice; make great effort to do this.' But, 'As your knowledge increases do not be possessed by the demon of pride'. "

V: How do you counteract that. (S: which?) Pride, practically speaking?

S: Well there are Vipassana practices to get rid of conceit. General awareness and mindfulness, practising gratitude and practising rejoicing in the merits of other people.

V: As the situation actually arises? (S: Mmm)

V: What about craving?

S: You mean in the this connection? (V: Yes) Well Atisa has pride in mind for obvious reasons because he suggests that you are making progress, you are getting somewhere, you are getting rid of your hindrances, but the great danger is that you start thinking too much of yourself. You become conceited, therefore he mentions especially pride. But you could look at it in terms of craving, that you cling on to your own virtues, your own progress.

V: Also when beings are going well it seems to be the hardest time, or the easiest time to fall. I've noticed it with myself. Probably because one let's go, everything is going well, got lots of energy.

S: We talked about that some time ago and I quoted a Zen [266] story about the Master gardener who sent his disciple up to the top of the tree to get something and it was a very dangerous climb but the gardener just stood there watching the boy. Didn't say anything even when he was near the top. Anyway the boy got whatever he was supposed to get or did whatever he was supposed to do, started climbing down and it was very dangerous but still the master gardener didn't say anything. Just as the boy was near the bottom he called out "be

careful", when the boy was near the ground. When he was asked afterwards "why did you do that, when he was so near the top and it was so dangerous you didn't warn him but you called out when he was right near the bottom and near the ground." So the master gardener said, "well he knew quite well when he was at the top that it was dangerous but as he got nearer the earth he might start thinking that the danger is over, not be so careful and make a mistake. So that is when you need to be warned."

So it is like that. When things are going well you can become a bit intoxicated with success, a bit unmindful and a bit too happy go lucky, a bit careless, and then you trip up. You should be very careful when things are going well, not let it go to your head.

"Staying in an isolated place, subdue yourself. Have few desires and be contented. Neither delight in your own knowledge nor seek out the faults of others. Do not be fearful or anxious. Be of good will and have no prejudice. Concentrate on the Dharma when distracted by wrong things."

S: Again very simple, straightforward advice. When he speaks in terms of staying in an isolated place and subduing oneself presumably he is referring more to the meditative life. 'Do not be fearful and anxious.' Don't worry, some people just worry too much, go worrying all the time. But that's a real hindrance.

V: I sometimes think that it's that you are 'supposed to'.

V: I've found that.

S: It's almost a 'virtue' to worry.

V: You get this an awful lot in offices. (S: Do you?) If you are not worrying you are often considered as not doing your job properly.

V: What did you find?

V: I'm sure it's very true, especially when I was working for an American company. If you didn't have trouble you weren't working properly. (S: Ohh.) People there moved every two years. (laughter) ...

S: None of us would get on, a better job, more trouble and more worries. More ulcers...

V: Bhante, wouldn't you say that when there's fear you are often far more, or one is more aware of things? Just more alert in general.

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S: If there is real genuine danger but he seems to be referring here just to fearfulness. That is to say being full of fears when there is really no reason to. But when you are confronted by natural danger this does really alert you and concentrate you. But this is a quite healthy thing, in a way, that kind of fear which is just an awareness of danger, consciousness that you are in a very dangerous situation. All your faculties are keyed up in an alert and healthy way to deal with the situation.

V: So in that kind of way it would be a positive situation, or it could be a positive situation?

S: It could be, if you were faced by real genuine danger. It could be positive even though you felt fear.

V: But you are faced by real genuine danger if you are in danger of losing your mindfulness or being overtaken by a negative ...

S: Yes, but you shouldn't worry about it. If you worry about losing your mindfulness, well

you are being very unmindful, you have lost it.

V: It's more a case of being rather like being, say a fish. Being ever mindful of ducks and things, I was thinking of this looking at the goldfish in the pond that their life must be one of continual awareness of all the dangers around, but they could worry about it

S: Apparently it isn't. Animals don't think, except at the moment, when the reaction is instantaneous and they forget about it immediately afterwards if they haven't been swallowed.

V: That's what I was getting at, it is almost as though we should be a bit like that with mindfulness.

S: Yes, plus the human awareness and mindfulness yes. React to danger when danger is there but not bother about it in between.

Some people are always worrying about losing their job, what will they do if they lose their job. Other people are always worrying about getting a job, what would they do if they have to work (laughter). They always seem to find something to worry about.

Anyway any further point on that. 'Concentrate on the Dharma when distracted by wrong things.' In other words the positive remedy is the best. Don't just try to get rid of the wrong things, just concentrate on the Dharma. Put your mind on to something else, something positive, something inspiring, something uplifting. Even go for a little walk, look at nature, look at the trees, flowers, birds, butterflies, anything to take your mind off those wrong things.

Let's go on.

"Be humble, and, if you are defeated, accept it gracefully. Give up boastfulness, renounce desire. Always generate the compassionate mind. Whatever you do, do in moderation. Be easily pleased and easily sustained. Run like a wild animal from whatever would entrap you."

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S: 'If you are defeated accept it gracefully', this is quite difficult for most people, isn't it? To accept defeat? Of course what is defeat for one person is sometimes not defeat for another? What you consider as defeat depends to some extent on your general attitude about that. But to accept gracefully something which for you is defeat, this is quite difficult, usually.

V: What do you think Atisa had in mind here, by defeat?

S: I think probably here being defeated in debate.

V: Or being showed that you are wrong, that something that you are doing is wrong.

S: Defeated in argument.

V: Would that also be defeat in your view?

S: In as much as your view was expressed in an argument you upheld that view in a discussion but you were shown to be wrong, in a sense you had been defeated. But you should accept it gracefully, it is good for you.

But even supposing you had been defeated merely in argument but your view is basically sound, the other person has simply been more clever or more skilful in arguing, and you see this, you know this, but you can't do anything about this because you are not so good at argument, though you know that you are right. Well just accept this gracefully, this apparent defeat, don't bother about it. Don't let it disturb you.

V: I was trying to think why it does disturb one. Because I suppose one wants more from the situation than the argument, than the objective argument...

S: Also you want reassurance. You may not always be completely convinced that your view is right so if you defeat another person it means that he thinks you are right. He accepts your arguments so that helps you. You think, "well these arguments must be pretty good, I have convinced that person. So what I think must be right, even he has accepted it". But you may not be fully convinced yourself. And you may even have the experience of using, on other people, arguments that you don't personally find convincing but you find that they convince them, because they may not be very good at arguing.

V: I've noticed something else about admitting defeat, that when one finally realizes that one is not what one thought one was and one can't do what one thought one could, one is no longer offering up any resistance to realizing that so one has much more energy.

S: Mmm. Or about being defeated, say in the context of karate. You accept it, in a way you are glad that you have met someone who is better than you, you can train with that person, you can learn. Whereas if you defeated the other person, well what is in it for you, not very much and you've not learned anything? But when you come up against it, when you are defeated, that is potentially a learning situation because you have encountered something bigger or more powerful [269] than you.

V: A great joy when you realize you can be defeated.

S: To accept it gracefully, even thankfully. Like at the end of the karate, you might have been knocked all over the place, I don't know if they do this in karate, but let's sort of assume that they do, you might have been knocked all over the place. And bashed about and defeated, so what do you do at the end?

V: Bow.

S: You give your little bow, thank you.

V: That's not always the case in competition, in karate it seems it's very much a competitive thing ...

S: Yes, still we are speaking of the ideal karate. Karate as a model, as it were, for everyday life.

V: FWBO Karate.

S: Right, which doesn't yet exist but which we hope will exist one day.

V: The competition ... outside of ones thoughts ...

V: I think in ... skills in Britain are that type, there's only ...

V: This is quite recently, hence the karate craze.

V: It's been going on all the time it is just that it generates that type of feeling in people, people go into it for the competitive bit.

V: There's probably nothing wrong with the competitive bit if you can accept being defeated.

S: Yes, right.

V: It's a very healthy thing if you are both open to doing your best and not worrying about who wins.

S: Yes, you have each done your best. You have each contributed to the encounter regardless of who technically wins. And then you know where you stand, he is better than you, if you know that someone is better than you then you can relate to them in a more honest way. That recognition sort of clarifies the relationship. You know him better and he knows you better.

V: I was reading an article on Zen tennis. (laughter)

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S: So that's what we had last week!

V: It's very interesting, they play tennis in that spirit, they didn't go out to win, they just want to play tennis if you did happen to win ...

V: (Unclear)

S: But at the same time to play as hard as you possibly can and go all out, not to win exactly, but to play your best and put all your energy in it. If you win, fine, if you don't win fine.

V: Victory should come as a surprise.

S: Yes, well not even a surprise. One of my own teachers used to say, "if I succeed, very good, if I don't succeed, even better". (Laughter) He was a straightforward Theravadin.

'Whatever you do, do in moderation.' I think that's quite straightforward. 'Be easily pleased and easily sustained'. This especially applies to the monk, people are supporting you, people are looking after you, don't be troublesome, don't be too demanding. Be easily satisfied and easily pleased, but it has a very general significance.

There's a saying of Confucius, I hope I've got it right:- "The superior man is easy to satisfy but difficult to please. The inferior man is easy to please but difficult to satisfy". I hope I've got it right.

V's: Discussing which way round it is.

S: The superior man is difficult to please but easy to satisfy. That is to say his objective needs are quite easy to meet. It depends how you take the word please and satisfy, you can take them in two different ways.

V: Yes, and if somebody is easily pleased, in other words to make do with little ... but not so easily satisfied say with higher ideals...

S: Truly satisfied, yes.

V: ...then he is like the superior man. Somebody who is not pleased, like always wants something on a much lower level.

S: But he is easily pleased in the sense of easily gratified. You can easily get on the right side of him, though that may change.

V: You can run the same series of ideas with contentment and satisfaction. That the superior man becomes easily contented but not satisfied. The inferior man is easily satisfied but never content.

S: Yes, that's right. So be easily pleased, though maybe satisfied would be a better word here, or contented, satisfied with what you are given. And easily sustained, not very troublesome to people to look after. Requiring very little.

But what about this. 'Run like a wild animal from whatever would entrap you'? What sort of

things do you think he [271] has in mind?

V: Wine, women and song (laughter)

V: Depending on whether you are a woman or not! (laughter)

V: Any negative state.

V: Or relationship.

S: But also, 'run like a wild animal', in other words your reaction should be instinctive and instantaneous, don't linger. There is no disgrace in running away, usually we think we mustn't run away but it is quite justified in situations of this sort.

V: A wild animal is free.

S: You remain free. Because this isn't escapism in the negative sense. Escapism is pretending to run away, saying, "look at me running away", but actually you are right there in the midst of it all. You hide your head and think because you can't see the trap it isn't there.

V: What sort of situation do you think would be a seriously a trap?

S: It depends on what situation would actually entrap you and what is being trapped. So what do you think Atisa means here? It's a very strong statement.

V: Situations when we are being tempted by the lower mind.

S: Those situations in which you would not be able to resist. You stood no chance of overcoming it, so remove yourself from the situation, change the environment. If you are living in a house where it is absolute bedlam, well you can't think of meditating, you would have to leave, change the environment, run away if you want to meditate.

V: So in other words put yourself in a situation where you are doing your best and where you are at your best as much of the time as possible.

S: Yes. And it should be a sort of instinct.

V: It also reminds me of guarding the gates of the senses. (S: Yes) And also the fish in the funnel net, don't linger around the mouth of the funnel net because you may accidentally wander in.

S: In a way it is complementary to the guarding the gates of the senses. But there you are free inside and you are not allowing anything to come in and destroy the freedom where here you are in the trap, or in danger of being in the trap so you leave the trap, the situation, behind.

Let's go straight on.

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"If you do not renounce worldly existence, do not say you are holy. If you have not renounced land and agriculture, do not say you have entered the priesthood. If you do not renounce desire, do not say you are a bhiksu. If you are without love and compassion, do not say you are a Bodhisattva. If you do not renounce activity, do not say you are a great meditator. Do not cherish your desires."

S: Once again Atisa is insisting that the inner and the outer should be as one, there should be no false professions.

"In short, when you stay at a monastery, engage in few activities and just meditate on the



Dharma. Do not have cause for repentance at the time of death."

V: Bhante, could you clarify this, something that has worried me quite a lot, 'if you do not renounce activity, do not say you are a great meditator.' How, practically speaking, if one is doing a lot of meditation does one cope with the need for physical activity?

S: Mmm. Some people say you should just walk up and down your cell. If you are the sort of person who really needs a lot of physical activity well maybe you are not cut out for meditation, maybe that isn't your way. Here, obviously, it is the full time meditator that Atisa has in mind.

Also, I have been making this point very strongly recently, that meditation is essentially the uninterrupted, the continuous production of skilful mental states. So if, while active, you are producing skilful mental states, then, in that sense, you are meditating. But here Atisa is referring to the specialized practice of meditation, that is to say meditation in the sense of sitting and meditating and producing the uninterrupted flow of skilful mental states in that situation, in that sitting posture. But we mustn't limit meditation in the true sense to that even though it is of most easy of access for most people, at least for a while, from that posture or in that manner.

V: In this case then, is someone of such a temperament did a solitary retreat would you advise them not to do so much meditation, or engage in physical activity deliberately. In a sense take...

S: One would have to enquire into the nature of this need for activity. Some people are just neurotically restless but others do definitely seem to remain in a healthier state, both physically and mentally, if there is a certain amount of physical activity. So in their case it becomes a matter of allowing them scope for physical activity of a kind which will help the generation of skilful mental states. Or at least which will not lead to the generation of unskilful mental states.

V: Could you give an example of that?

S: I was trying to think of one, actually. Even walking, you can be walking and saying a mantra to yourself. In the [273] Pali scriptures we often find the Buddha described as walking up and down and meditating. So you can walk or walk up and down and recite your mantra. Or just engage in physical activity but being very aware.

V: Perhaps meditation isn't really the best word.

S: Perhaps it isn't, no.

V: Perhaps we ought to have another word that means this skilful state of mind and meditation, or some other word specifically for sitting meditation.

S: Mmm. Because the purpose of meditation is to produce this uninterrupted flow of skilful mental states. Some people do produce that flow when not technically sitting and meditating. As I have been saying recently, the ideal is to be in that state all the time. It is a normal, healthy and human state. Maybe not up to the point of the absorptions but certainly bordering upon that.

V: So presumably a very healthy person would know how to change his or her mode of living in order to keep that going.

S: Yes, they would automatically correct any imbalance, or instinctively, or intuitively correct any imbalance.

V: It just shows how alienated so many people are. They are not in tune with themselves.

S: They don't even know what is good for them.

V: They have to be told.

V: When somebody says that in their day to day activity they are just in a continual skilful mental state and so it's not necessary for them to meditate, but then they also say that they can't meditate, they get restless when they are meditating; do you think that means they are just kidding themselves?

S: I think very likely. At least they should be able to sit calmly, at least for a short period. If they aren't used to sitting cross legged, well obviously it may be difficult for them to do that and therefore they may get a bit restless physically, even though mentally they may be in quite a skilful state. But I think I would be a bit suspicious of the sort of person who couldn't meditate but who claims to be in a skilful mental state all the time. It suggests that they are just keeping themselves busy and occupied and become restless when there isn't something to do. If they were actually skilfully active, or active with a skilful state of mind all the time when there was nothing to do, they would then be able to sit down and enjoy their skilful mental state. And this is all that you really are doing when you sit and meditate, if you are a healthy person. You are just enjoying your naturally skilful state.

V: And you wouldn't get bored.

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S: They wouldn't get bored. You do find this, in fact, with some people, they can work very hard but when there is nothing to do they can sit and do nothing quite happily. But some people just get restless and irritable when there is nothing to do.

V: Isn't the sitting part of the practice to enable you to intensify your skilful mental state, so that you do need to do both for quite a long while?

S: Yes, you do, you certainly do at the beginning.

V: Again it is a sort of cop out to say that you just ...

S: Mmm. I remember one of my own teachers, the same one who made that little observation I quoted earlier on. He was quite remarkable in this respect, I have described him in my memoirs. He was capable of working for twenty four hours without stopping, really hard, without any difficulty, but he was also capable of lying on his bed not doing anything for twenty four hours - equally happily. He never got restless if there was nothing to do, if there was no work to be done he just didn't do anything at all, just laid on his bed. But if there was work to be done he could work for twenty four hours, day and night without stopping. This was one of his quite remarkable characteristics.

V: He wouldn't go far in this country.

V: When he was lying on his bed he didn't actually go asleep?

S: Sometimes he did.

V: (laughing) and he enjoyed that as well.

V: Was this Jagdish Kashyap?

S: Yes. In a way it is a bit like an animal but in a healthy way, on a higher level. You should be able to work and enjoy work and get really into it but when there is nothing to be done and you have no inner feeling to do something, real inner feeling, do nothing completely happily with a clear conscience. Not thinking, "I ought to be working or I really ought to be doing something", make something to do when there isn't something to do. That isn't really skilful.

V: You say in order to do anything you must have a ... feeling to do it?

S: Not just a feeling apart from the situation necessarily, if you get a feeling that is more creative, more purely creative. But you might, when you are sitting and doing nothing suddenly be confronted by a situation where action was required, then spontaneously you just leap into action. But you would be equally happy, equally in a skilful state whether active or doing nothing. And your sitting and meditating should just be an intensification under specially helpful circumstances of your naturally skilful state.

V: Is this the significance of Avalokiteshvara's [275] pose with his leg down ready to step out into the world? His mind is in the same state whether he is sitting or ...

S: Yes, one could say that. In his case of course on a much higher level.

V: In a way, say from the Bodhisattva Ideal point of view, isn't there always something to be done?

S: Ah yes, but in the case of the real Bodhisattva sitting and doing nothing and engaging in activities have become one and the same thing. But on a lower level they are different things, but even so on that lower level they should be things that we can engage in at different times with equal ease and equal satisfaction. But for the Bodhisattva they have become one, he's functioning and he is completely calm and his calmness is not incompatible with function. So he doesn't need to rest, he is always resting and he is always active.

V: But not doing something when it has to be done and just saying I don't feel like it is quite different.

S: Yes, that's quite different. It's not responding to the situation, that is a sort of laziness, sort of indifferent to the ...

V: But if you really don't feel like doing something should you do it?

S: Again it is a question of taking all the relevant factors into consideration.

V: I think if you really don't feel like doing something and you can really acknowledge that and experience it then somehow you can still do that thing and not ... I think it's when you are not really sure that you don't want to do it that ...

V: And you don't really know why.

V: You can't get into it.

V: But I think you can say I actually don't want to do it but somehow that gives you the energy to go and do that thing even though you don't want to do it and it doesn't really bother you.

S: Yes, and this is why I sometimes say if you are not sure what you ought to be doing or whether you ought to be doing this or not doing it, then just stop and don't do anything for a while, until a desire emerges "well I'd like to do that", and then go and do it, and then the next thing. But if you are confused and uncertain and there are a lot of things you could be doing but you are not sure whether you should or whether you want, then just stop. Do nothing until a definite urge to do a certain thing, one thing rather than another arises.

V: I think it's very hard to do that, actually, just to stop.

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V: Because then instead of all these pieces saying go here and go there, go everywhere, you have stopped and you are maybe allowing another part of yourself to be integrated so there is

more of yourself going to do it rather than ...

S: And sooner or later, in that way, whatever really has to be done will be done.

V: It is often very difficult though to just to have to sit with all these conflicting things pulling you this way and that.

S: Well run away!

V: It's not that easy.

V: It's very easy, I think if one cuts down ones sphere of activity to say three very simple things, or two or one which is active and one which isn't (S: Yes) And just start there and say, "right everything else I am getting out of the way and I start with those". Once one gets into the flow of those two things then more things start.

S: Yes, this is one of the things I like about retreats, speaking personally, I have only two or three things to do. Whereas usually there are about two hundred or three hundred things to do. But it is very nice just having two or three things to do.

V: What's your personal, sort of, plan of attack in a situation in which really objectively you had a lot of different things to do and you just don't know which one to start with?

S: I follow my own advice, I just stop, I don't do anything, take a holiday. Especially if there is a lot of work, just take a holiday. (laughter) That's the best time! Then you get a definite feeling, "I'll do this or I'll do that."

V: In other words it amounts to saying don't do something ...

S: Of course no doubt I am simplifying to some extent. Situations, life itself isn't all that simple or straightforward. Sometimes one is not really even confronted by this sort of choice. But sometimes one is, then one can act in this sort of way. Maybe situations in which you have put yourself and which not you don't feel like facing up to but you can hardly avoid facing up to. And there may be very strong reasons why you should even though you don't feel at all happy about it, and you can't opt out, you can't stop, sometimes that happens. But then again you must learn the lesson and be careful next time not to put yourself into situations which are likely to develop in that sort of way.

Right, on to the next precept.

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"At another time, Atisa stated, "This Kaliyuga is not the time to display your ability; it is the time to persevere through hardship. It is not the time to take a high position, but the time to be humble. It is not the time to rely on many attendants, but the time to rely on isolation. Nor is it the time to subdue disciples; it is the time to subdue yourself. It is not the time of merely listening to words, but the time of contemplation upon their meaning. Nor is it the time to go visiting here and there; it is the time to stay alone."

S: Atisa was, perhaps, rather conscious of this being the Kaliyuga, to put it in the popular Hindu way. Because don't forget Buddhism was, by his time, really on the decline and the Muslim invasions were beginning. He and some of the other leading monks were quite well aware that Buddhism was definitely threatened in India, Brahmanism had revived, there, was a lot of hostility to Buddhism, a lot of opposition. So he is giving advice as to what to do in this sort of emergency situation.

V: 'It is not a time to subdue disciples it is the time to subdue yourself', it seems a sort of contradiction, something like that.

S: Perhaps Atisa is thinking of someone who without adequate preparation, who is thinking more in terms of enlisting lots of disciples and ordaining a lot of people and having a lot more monks but on a comparatively shaky foundation, perhaps. Both as regards himself and as regards them. But if he does subdue himself no doubt he will attract disciples in due course, quite spontaneously. So in that sense the two are not contradictory. But to think in terms of enlisting disciples and going out and getting them when one hasn't a really adequate preparation oneself, this is what he is discouraging.

This is connected with what we were talking about a little while ago. A good teacher may have many disciples, so some people might think, if you want to be a good teacher the best thing to do is to get many disciples, so they go out collecting disciples. In other words they want the position of a prominent teacher, so instead of developing the qualities of such a teacher they just try to assemble a large number of disciples. So it is this, again, which he seems to be discouraging.

V: It also seems that he is indicating, don't really try and look for more but try and get as much out of what you have got already by not listening to more words.

S: It's more like consolidation and husbanding one's resources rather than spending them, at least squandering them.

V: So perhaps you could say that this precept is, putting it into a more definite context, when things are going in a difficult for oneself it is then time to, as you said, husband resources and things.

S: I have a feeling there is a hexagram in the I Ching which says something to this effect. I can't think of it.

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V: Pulling it together. (?)

V: Isn't it retreat?

S: It's not exactly retreat, not what I was thinking of.

V: It doesn't actually mean retreat, but it means collecting all your energies together, and not letting them all disperse.

S: Yes, collecting the scatteredness.

V: Yes, this reads a bit like a sort of I Ching, it just occurred to me.

S: It is definitely a collecting together as opposed to scattering. But it is as though, in terms of danger, collect your forces. Collect your forces in time of danger.

V: (Unclear)

S: Yes. One can also say a time for concentrating on fundamentals, getting down to basic issues, strengthening the foundation, strengthening the centre or making sure that the trunk is firmly established or well rooted, not bothering to decorate the branches. It is more like that.

No doubt it represents a very important general principle.

V: You get this in painting, that if you don't lay down a basic foundation of the painting before you start putting the detail on that's ...

S: Yes, right.

I think we'll stop there for today because we have come to the end of Atisa's own sayings and tomorrow we will be going through those of his disciple Drom and a few others in the succession. Just look back over what we have done so far of Atisa's own precepts and see if there is anything we have missed or need to go into a bit more.

V: They all seem to come back to this business of the inner corresponding to the outer.

S: Yes, right. Perhaps this is partly because Atisa did live towards the end of Indian Buddhism, the end of Buddhism in India rather, and also because he arrived in Tibet after a period of relative deterioration of the Dharma, not to speak of degeneration. And perhaps he was very very conscious of this discrepancy, or the possibility of this discrepancy between the inner and the outer for these reasons.

(break in tape)

V: Having worked recently on the Hui Neng seminar this is something that stuck quite firmly in my mind, that Hui Neng quite often goes into it a lot too.

S: Yes, we have gone into it ourselves a lot, say with regard to the Going for Refuge. That this shouldn't be just a formality, not just something that shows that you are just a member of a vast population of nominal Buddhists. Just a slogan that you recite on high days and holidays, which it has [279] become in the East. And don't forget that in Atisa's time Buddhism had been known in India as long as Christianity has been known in Britain today. There is a great long history to the ... so a certain amount of deterioration. Certainly there was deterioration in Tibet, which is one of the reasons why he was originally invited, to put things right, to teach the pure Buddhism, pure Dharma.

V: I can't remember, what time did he go to Tibet?

S: This was the Eleventh Century.

V: And Padmasambhava was...?

S: Padmasambhava had been some hundreds of years earlier but there had been in the meantime, since then, a great persecution of Buddhism and all sorts of strange teachers flooding in subsequently from India and Central Asia, Kashmir. Some of them teaching very mixed forms of Hinduism and Buddhism, some of them teaching strange cults of their own, and all of this was very much in circulation.

V: It's very much of direct, I suppose you could say advice, you could use that word.

S: It is also remarkable that though he was a very great scholar and a very learned man his teaching is very simple and straightforward and with a very strong feeling element.

V: It reminds me on the whole of the teachings of Hakuin ... it's very, very ... sincere ...

S: Hmm, but at the same time there is no touch of harshness. You notice that? He is very firm, very clear, quite straightforward but there is no harshness, no asperity, no denunciation. There is a very great feeling of warmth and kindness at the same time.

V: It seems also that, in view of the history of Buddhism in Tibet that Padmasambhava is regarded as establishing Buddhism in Tibet as opposed to Atisa, who perhaps really did.

S: Padmasambhava certainly established Indian Buddhism in Tibet, especially the Tantric tradition, as far as we know, but it had to be re-established, virtually, by Atisa. Certainly as regards large areas of Tibet, not the whole of Tibet.

V: But one is conscious of Padmasambhava but not of Atisa, at least I have been. (S: Yes)

V: There's also the element that according to Tibetans that Padmasambhava left a lot of teachings to be discovered later.

S: Yes. it is as though Padmasambhava is a much more mythic figure. Atisa is much more of a historical personality and he comes across much more as a human being, though a very advanced, even Enlightened human being. And traditionally I [280] suppose, in Tibet, for most people the figure of Padmasambhava, that is to say the mythic, superhuman figure, the marvellous figure would be much more attractive. Atisa is comparatively sober, and that wouldn't be so attractive then, but maybe it is perhaps equally attractive now. You can believe in Atisa, he feels like a real personality, he comes across as a real personality.

V: Is he looked upon as being, as having been an Enlightened master.

S: Yes.

V: (unclear)

S: And historically he is very important in as much as the Gelugpa school arose out of the Kadampa school, and is sometimes called the new Kadampa school. And it was Atisa who founded the tradition that became the Kadampa school, the school of the precept, the oral teaching. Not in any esoteric sense but in the sense of direct personal communication from the Lama to the disciple. Applying the general principles of the Dharma to his special, individual needs.

V: Is it true that Atisa didn't, in fact, have a great many disciples himself?

S: In Tibet it seems he didn't, but he had Drom and Drom became very very important and he had quite a number of disciples. Also Atisa was only in Tibet, I think it was for twelve years. He went there as quite an old man and he was well advanced in middle age and he knew that it would shorten his life to go there, apparently, but nevertheless he went. I think he went when he was sixty and died in Tibet at the age of seventy two without ever having returned to India.

V: Didn't he also found a school of painting in Tibet?

S: I don't remember that. He might have inspired one, which is quite likely.

V: Where did you say his biography could be found?

S: I have a copy of it at ... it is a rather scholarly work, by an Indian scholar, very complete, very detailed, a lot of information and some translations of some of Atisa's work.

There is a passage we were reading yesterday but didn't have much to say about, 'we remain in the world by the power of sloth, thus we must ignite like a great fire the effort of achievement.'

V: It's very difficult to distinguish between a genuine slothfulness, (laughter) I mean genuine tiredness and slothfulness.

S: Is it?

V: It's something I'm finding difficult, I sometimes get a bit tired but I think am I really tired [281] or is it just part of me ...?

S: What are the symptoms?

V: Well, just sort of doziness, cropping up for instance even in the study, round about one o'clock I have been getting a bit dozy and drifting off.

S: It is not the best time of day, in a way, at least for some people, and the atmosphere has been a bit heavy sometimes.

V: But that was just one particular example. Quite often in the afternoons I find I'm a little bit tired and I don't know whether if it is something that you have got to break through.

S: I think you must see your life as a whole. How many hours a day for instance you do spend actively, how much you do get done?

V: Would it go together with feelings. Like if say you are tired but you feel quite positive, could that just be a genuine tiredness out of work, but if you are tired and feeling irritable quite often you just need to get up and break through it or do something.

S: Do something else.

V: I know it is a hard one for me because I quite often kick myself and I sometimes wish I was ill so I could take a rest because I always feel I ought to be doing something, I can't allow myself to be tired, or I feel guilty. It's very useful if you can distinguish.

(End tape 13)

S: Also take it as a general axiom that most people can do far more than they usually do. They are usually underworking themselves.

V: I think what makes one tired, to a large extent, is working hard for the wrong reasons and in the wrong state of mind.

S: I think it's usually more like conflict that uses up energy and makes you feel tired.

V: And you are forcing part of your nature to go against ...

V: But in a sense isn't that deliberate? This is basically what I am really asking is that if you deliberately alter the rhythm of your life and you are consciously trying to put more energy in one direction but you come against, after a few hours, not really very long hours, maybe you've been working four or five hours in the morning and then you have a cup of tea and you almost haven't got..., you feel a bit sapped of energy and can't really get back into it. You haven't really worked all that long, but I wonder if, is that something you have got to break through because you are in a sense quite deliberately going against...

S: It probably is. If you are unable to give as much [282] time to your chosen work as the average person just gives to earning his daily bread then it seems that there is something wrong.

V: I mean you should be able to work at least eight hours! That's not unreasonable.

S: Yes right, especially if you are doing what you supposedly want to do, or something in which you do supposedly do believe, you should be able to work eight hours a day.

V: So you would try and break through that tiredness?

S: I think so, at least as a sort of experiment to see what happens. If you are able to work eight hours a day for Mammon you ought to be able to work eight hours a day for 'god', as it were, to use that expression.

V: I remember that on the occasions that I had worked all day long and even into the evening as well I felt very tired but not drained of energy, I've just felt tired. And that's been a really good tiredness but on these other occasions it is, ahh - so sapped, almost can't be bothered to do it.



V: I think this one can tell this almost physically if you are genuinely tired and you lie down you should be physically and mentally relaxed. If you haven't used up the energy there should be tensions, even physical tensions.

V: How do you experience it?

V: Like lying in bed at night with either my head spinning round or one fist clenched and I didn't know it.

S: Talking in your sleep.

V: In other words normally, just a sort of heaviness. Slothfulness, I always find you can tell by just the heaviness of it.

S: If you are just tired and sleepy you can feel quite light and quite sort of happy, but you are just drowsy in a pleasant, nice sensation. Just to relax, and maybe have a little doze.

V: There seems to be a very narrow dividing line between the sleepy stage and a very highly alert, very light poised stage, you can almost switch from one to the other by a change of effort.

S: If in doubt assume that it is inertia and it ought to be overcome, I think that's the simplest answer.

V: I sometimes find that if I am getting really heavy, that sleepy heavy feeling, if you just sort of let go and go into it for five minutes and then you get fed up with it and just jump up and do something. Or just have a little snooze for ten minutes or so.

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S: All right page 133.

"After Atisa passed into Parinirvana, the teacher Drom became his successor. One time his three disciples, the brothers Po-to-wa, Chen-na-wa, and Pu-chung-wa, asked Geshe Drom, "Please tell us the method of practice which includes the essence of all the paths to omniscient Buddhahood."

Geshe Drom answered, "Although there are an inconceivable number of precepts, each of which is an entrance to the path of enlightenment, there is, for one who has the necessary foundation for practice, only one thing to be obtained."

"What is that one thing?" the three brothers asked.

Possession of the essence of Voidness and Compassion. Let me explain this: Voidness is the absolute (don-dam) Bodhi-mind; it is the realization that all phenomena are by nature without truly existent birth. Compassion is the relative (kun-rdzob) Bodhi-mind; it is great compassion extended to all living beings who have not yet realized this fundamental birthlessness.

"Therefore those who practice the Mahayana path should first make effort in the method of generating these two aspects of Bodhi-mind. Once this Bodhi-mind has been attained, it should be diligently practised. By doing this, one is certain to manifest the Rupakaya and the Dharmakaya, the final effects of achieving both aspects of Bodhi-mind.

"There are many methods of generating the two aspects of Bodhi-mind. Should they be condensed into a way of practice, there are no more than three root methods, and sprouting from these, nine principal branch methods. The three root methods are mind-practice, the accumulation of merit and wisdom, and the search for samadhi. Each root method has three principal branch methods.

"The three principal branch methods of mind-practice are the meditation of impermanence, the meditation of love and compassion, and the meditation of the egolessness of all persons and phenomena. Among the various methods of mind-practice, these three are the only important ones; all others are included within them.

"The principal branch methods for the accumulation of merit and wisdom are to honour the Lama, to worship the Three Jewels, and to honour the Sangha. All other methods of the accumulation of merit and wisdom are contained in these three; thus they are the only important ones.

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"The principal methods of seeking samadhi are to maintain perfect moral practice, to pray to the Lamas of the lineage, and to maintain continual solitude. These three methods are the only important ones in seeking the highest samadhi of Abiding Tranquillity and Intense Insight; all others are included within them.

"By practising these nine methods, you will naturally produce the two aspects of Bodhi-mind. When you produce the absolute Bodhi-mind, you will spontaneously realize that all phenomena, whether inner or outer, are empty of real existence, from the beginning without truly existent birth, and totally free from ego-reflection. In this realization, you will find boundless joy. When you produce the relative Bodhi-mind, you will generate a deep love and compassion toward all those living beings who have not realized absolute Bodhi-mind. Then, whatever you do will be for nothing other than the benefit of these myriad beings, and, because you have achieved Bodhi-mind, whatever you have done previously will be for their benefit also.

"There are two aspects to the conjoining of absolute and relative Bodhi-mind. At the time you generate absolute Bodhi-mind, you perceive the Voidness of all existence. You must at this same moment of perceiving Voidness, generate special compassion toward all living beings, who are not negated by your perception of Voidness. At the time of generating relative Bodhi-mind, deep compassion toward all living beings, you must also see the non differentiation of self and others.

"Appearances are like a magician's illusions; actually they are empty of self-nature. When you have successfully generated this unified realization of the two aspects of Bodhi-mind, you have correctly entered the Mahayana path. By practising that realization, you will come to the completion of meditation and will naturally obtain the Rupakaya and the Dharmakaya. The Dharmakaya arises from Voidness - the absolute Bodhi-mind; the Rupakaya arises from Compassion - the relative Bodhi-mind. From inseparable practice of the two aspects of Bodhi-mind, you will obtain the inseparable Dharmakaya and Rupakaya."

S: This precept, which is really a discourse by Drom, really gives the essence of Tibetan Buddhism, in a sense leaving aside the specifically Vajrayana aspects. Though again bearing in mind that the Vajrayana is more concerned with certain specific methods of practising realization rather than with different goals or the different philosophies. The Vajrayana only employs certain specific methods of realizing or applying the principles which Drom has set forth in this precept.

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So virtually the whole of Tibetan Buddhism is contained here. The whole of Mahayana Buddhism, one could say.

So let's go through it little by little. First of all anything that isn't clear to anybody.

V: He mentions worship of the Lama, the Three Jewels and to honour the Sangha. I don't quite understand that, because the Sangha would be contained within the Three Jewels.

V: Well in distinguishing the Sangha, the monastic Sangha from the Arya Sangha.

S: Mmm, when one is said to worship the Three Jewels it is the Arya Sangha which is meant there and when the Sangha is mentioned separately it is usually the concrete Sangha, especially in the form of the community of monks or those who are the full time followers of the path.

One quite significant point at the beginning. Drom says, 'although there are inconceivable number of precepts, each of which is an entrance to the path of Enlightenment' - each precept is an entrance to the path of Enlightenment, what do you think he means by that?

V: Presumably as each precept is directly related to the questioner it is directly related to the next step that particular practitioner needs.

S: Yes, each precept can get you started or help you on further if you have already started.

V: "'What is that one thing?' the three brothers asked', then he mentions two things.

S: Not really, he says 'possession of the essence of Voidness and Compassion', it is the essence which is the one thing. Suggesting that Voidness and Compassion are only in appearance two things, that is to say unified at the highest possible level. And that which constitutes their unity, their essence, that is the highest thing.

V: This is presumably the sun and the moon of Tibetan iconography?

S: In a way, though one has to be very careful there. It is not two cosmic principles or two mundane principles that are being unified. In a sense, though only in a sense, this is the conditioned and the unconditioned, the mundane and the transcendental. Voidness standing for the transcendental, Compassion for the mundane.

You notice that Drom establishes first of all Voidness and Compassion as the highest, the most rarefied, also the most sublime of the, as it were, pairs of opposites. And then he traces those pairs of opposites at other levels or in other contexts.

For instance in connection with the Bodhi-mind, the Bodhicitta. There are two Bodhi minds, the absolute and the relative, or you can say the intentional and the actual. Or you can say love and wisdom, or you can say Rupakaya and Dharmakaya, all these pairs of terms are related in the same sort of way. Or rather the terms which make up these pairs [286] are related in the same sort of way.

V: Like the line of 'you must at this same moment of perceiving Voidness, generate special compassion toward all living beings, who are not negated by your perception of Voidness'.

S: Why does Drom say that?

V: So that we don't lose sight of the relative ...

S: So that there shouldn't be a one sided realization. One can say that Enlightenment is the unity of love and wisdom or compassion and wisdom on the highest possible level.

What about these three different methods, the three root methods and the nine principle branch methods? These nine methods don't seem to be really symmetrical, as it were, there is quite a bit of overlapping, but that is perhaps unavoidable. Mind practice seems to suggest formal meditation of the more Hinayanic type, meditation on impermanence, death and so on, or love and compassion which is, of course, the metta bhavana and karuna bhavana. And the meditation of the egolessness of all persons and phenomena, which in a way is a meditation on Anatma and on Sunyata.

Again merit and wisdom also are a pair analogous to Voidness and Compassion. Merit being connected with Compassion or love and wisdom with Voidness. It might be an idea to put

these pairs of terms in columns so that you can see the correspondence between them. So that in that way, if you go through, you have

Voidness and Compassion Absolute Bodhi mind and Relative Bodhi mind Dharmakaya and Rupakaya.

V: Is there any reason for them to be like this, in ascending order or is it just the way it's come, you're reading it from the book?

S: I'm reading it from the book but it does seem to go from the lower to the higher level, from the more general to the more specific.

then Wisdom and Merit

(break in tape)

You could also add to that:

Unconditioned and Conditioned Nirvana and Samsara

So all the terms on the left hand side are related in one way or another to Voidness and all the terms on the right hand side are related in one way or another to Compassion. Voidness and Compassion being Drom's basic, or ultimate duality, possession of the essence of which is the one thing to be obtained.

V: Is this why in Tibetan Buddhism there is so much symbolism based on things like bows and arrows and ...

S: In a way, it's again a reflection of the same basic duality [287] at different levels and in different aspects.

V: I find it very difficult to see this as a duality. I don't see how the absolute can be something you can have something opposed to, to make a duality.

S: This is in fact what you do have at least in your present experience. By unifying the duality is meant overcoming the duality, not experiencing things dualistically. This is how we do experience them at present, we have to think of the unconditioned as something other something that we haven't yet realized. But the essence of that is to be unified with the essence of this. It's not that even this is totally abandoned. Because one has to possess the essence of Compassion as well as the essence of Voidness.

You say, why does one say essence of Voidness and essence of Compassion?

V: To indicate what one is really getting at, that it lies beyond the word or idea of which it is merely an indicator.

S: That too, because first of all you think of, say, the unconditioned as distinct from the conditioned. But it isn't really like that, you cannot but think of the unconditioned as distinct from conditioned, Nirvana as distinct from Samsara but in reality it is not distinct in that way. So the essence of Voidness is Voidness as it is in reality as non-distinct from Compassion or from Samsara. That is what is meant by the essence of Voidness, not the Voidness out there which you think of as something different, the unconditioned as opposed to the conditioned but Voidness as it really is, the unconditioned as it really is, unopposed to what you think of as its opposite. That is the essence of Voidness.

And why do you speak of the essence of Compassion or the essence of Samsara or the essence of Conditioned? Because it is not the conditioned as you experience at present, but it also says that the essence of the unconditioned and the essence of conditioned is one essence.

So what you are trying to realize, what you want to possess is the essence of Voidness and Compassion, which is a common essence. Which is not the unconditioned as it appears to you now, or as you think of it, nor is it the conditioned as you actually experience it. But it is not the unconditioned as opposed to the conditioned, much less still is it the conditioned as opposed to the unconditioned, but the common essence of both; though not of both as you at present conceive of both, both as they really are.

V: This is why if you really strive for wisdom, say, you will inevitably reach compassion, or the essence of...

S: Yes, though of course as a matter of actual practice you may have to make a definite effort to cultivate compassion so long as you think of Voidness as something distinct from Compassion.

That is why it says, towards the end, 'you must at this same moment of perceiving Voidness generate special Compassion toward all living beings'.

V: I suppose in a very mundane way this expresses itself in the fact that one, well I find it difficult to..., [288] as the sort of inward turning energy, personal practice, then there is working outwards and ... You wrote about this once, the two great phases of the spiritual life retreat and working in the world and that gradually one does both and then gradually brings it together.

S: Yes.

V: This connects with a problem I've always had with the metta, apart from not being able to actually contact any really feeling of metta for a long time, I have always been... , the idea that if you really see the suffering of beings, if you have real insight into the nature of Samsara, metta will arise naturally, if you really see in depth, a sort of vision - the fact that all beings are in the state of suffering and how they continue this way. The logical response to that, the natural response to that is the feeling of metta.

S: And the feeling of compassion. Which suggests that you have the metta already. Because if you don't have the basis of emotional positivity it is highly unlikely that you will develop any insight worthy of the name. I think the idea that one could develop insight into people's suffering and then develop metta, it being assumed that you were devoid of metta beforehand, I think this is only a theoretical possibility. Because unless there was already in you a very positive emotional basis and the sort of psychic wholeness that it represents, then there wouldn't be any development of insight. Insight develops only on the basis of a well developed samatha, which means a very highly concentrated, skilful state of mind, which included various emotive factors. As we went through in the course of the positive Nidanās, there's faith, delight, rapture, calm, there is also, though they are not specifically mentioned love and compassion and so on.

So unless one has that positive emotional basis you are not likely to be able to develop any insight. The difference is that before the development of insight you have a mundane love or a mundane compassion and after you have experienced insight the insight transforms the mundane love and compassion into the Bodhicitta. But the idea that if you don't have any love or compassion or if you don't feel love and compassion, then you can develop insight and through insight develop love and compassion, this might sound theoretically plausible but actually it doesn't work. Just because for the actual development of insight you need that positive emotional basis.

V: Energy.

S: Energy, yes it mustn't be a cold neutral energy, but you need the psychic wholeness, as it were, and psychic healthiness which suggests love and compassion in a quite high degree.

V: Maybe I'm using the term not very accurately, ... because I have had for quite a number of years a difficulty with metta, developing any sort of feeling whatsoever and I only go to the point of being able to develop some kind of positive feeling through seeing in a sort of ...

S: That's reflection, that's not insight in the strict sense, this is reflection, trying to stir up one's positive [289] emotion just by means of reflection. Because when you are reflecting at least your energy is involved, it is an activity and this can help if it is rightly directed in stirring up positive emotional states.

V: This was in fact the only way I could approach that problem of metta.

S: You can sort of talk yourself into positivity. Yes, this is what it amounts to, by holding a dialogue with yourself. "Look at all the suffering that there is in the world, how sad it is", and so on and in that way you work yourself up into a positive emotional state. This is quite valid, but it is not insight which is involved here.

V: Is this what is meant by the necessary foundation for practice, which he says at the beginning. 'Although there are an inconceivable number of precepts, each of which is an entrance to the path of Enlightenment, there is, for one who has the necessary foundation for practice, only one thing to be obtained'.

S: I think he's referring to quite ordinary things by the necessary foundations for practice, that is that you have a human body, that you have leisure, that you have the opportunity of hearing the Dharma, you have a place in which to practise, you have a teacher. I think he is referring to basic things of this sort.

V: You have said, Bhante, if you haven't developed your positive emotions far enough and you have an experience of insight it's shattering, you can't sustain it. It does seem to be that you can have a partial insight or a partial ...

S: Yes, it is very difficult to talk about insight in this sort of way because you have to use the expression like a 'partial insight', or 'weak insight', or something which is not quite an insight or things of that sort. One has to remember that the expressions are only approximate. Sometimes you can't really separate, almost, the samatha and vipassana aspects even though they are distinct, at least in their fully developed forms.

V: Someone came to see me recently and said that during the Puja she'd felt that she had experienced the fact that she wasn't a permanent self but she found that very very depressing. That things didn't actually have any solid existence and she couldn't see the point of ... or metta because there was nothing to ...

S: It could have been an experience of alienation. It sounds more like that to me. It does seem to me, just to touch on something that I have been stressing a lot lately, that the basis of positive emotion seems more and more important and it is as though, for most people, this is the immediate task in hand. To develop love, compassion, faith, joy, delight, rapture and all the rest of it. That people won't get very far in a very genuine sort of way unless they have got this emotional positivity.

Not that one should be hilarious or silly or giggly or anything of that sort but there must be this firm, solid, albeit quiet basis of positive emotion all the time. This is after [290] all, or should be the normal human state. There is nothing extraordinary about it, nothing particularly spiritual. It is just that we happen to have sunk, much of the time, rather below that level

V: Going back to what Ananda was saying, when one is trying to cultivate positive feeling towards somebody in particular, like in the early stages of the metta, that one does need to see that person before one can really feel metta.

S: You mean seeing in the sense of really understanding?

V: Well I'm asking in fact, does one have to? I feel personally that you really have to see the person, you really have to understand the person to have feelings of metta and compassion.

S: Yes and no.

V: Is it then valid to have feelings of metta to a projection, or an idea of the person?

S: The actual fact is that you don't have feelings of metta for anyone, really, you just have feelings of metta. But what happens at the beginning is that you don't have any feelings of metta, actually, so how are you going to develop them? So you, as it were, fool yourself in a positive, skilful sort of way and you think, actually you experience that you are having feelings of metta towards somebody, because that's the way we usually think, that is the way we usually experience things. "I'm experiencing metta towards him", so when you are trying to get the metta going in that way, to make a start, then obviously you have to know that particular person and on the basis of your knowledge of them you can develop metta.

But as you get into the metta and you actually feel it the experience of metta becomes, as it were dissociated from any particular object. It is just metta existing by itself, so that if you just happen to think of anyone, even if you don't know them at all the metta goes towards them. But the metta can exist without an object and you can just be experiencing metta without anybody consciously in mind. And this is, in fact, what should develop.

V: I understand that and I think in the early stages, I mean, what is the point of choosing personal friend, then neutral person then enemy, why not just stick with a friend or something that conjures up your metta more? Why bother with ...?

S: Well that's right, you can stick for the time being but then you have got to expand your metta, you have got to get it away from a particular person otherwise you are stuck, as it were, it has to some extent the nature of attachment. It must depend less and less upon the nature of the object and depend more and more upon itself. It must be more purely creative not reactive. When you are feeling metta just for friend, not for a so called enemy, to some extent the metta is reactive. But if it is purely creative and non-reactive it is the same towards all. You have the same metta, the same "reaction" towards the so-called enemy [291] as towards the so-called friend. But you start with your friend because that is easiest for you, but you mustn't remain with the friend, remain just as long as is necessary to get a very definite feeling of metta. Then practice extending your metta, you take up the neutral person because that is next easiest. And eventually your metta becomes detached from particular persons so therefore it is capable of being directed towards anybody. Whoever happens to fall across it, as it were, just as the sun shines upon whatever happens to come in the way, whether it is the heap of jewels or the dung heap.

So this is what is meant by saying metta is impersonal ultimately. Not that it is less of an emotion, but that it is less dependent upon particular persons, or upon any person.

V: Do you think it is possible to choose the Buddha as your friend, use him as your friend?

S: You could do I suppose, the Buddha is no doubt ones best friend, but I think you have to be rather careful here. The more appropriate emotion is faith or reverence, which is good, surely. Just as in the same way metta becomes karuna, love becomes compassion when it encounters those who are less fortunate than you are, in the same way the metta becomes faith and reverence and devotion when it encounters those who are more developed than you are. You still have to develop metta first.

But if you have great difficulty with a human friend, or can't think of any human friend, maybe you don't have one, you can take the Buddha but I think one should be careful that isn't an escape from facing up to ones actual feelings about people. I think it probably would be

better if one had a human friend and kept the Buddha for the Puja and so on.

You can always put a little note in Shabda, 'Friend wanted', (laughter)

V: 'Friend wanted for metta exercise'!!

V: It seems that metta isn't something one creates. You jiggle around with yourself until you slip into something that is already there.

S: Yes, that's right, you have to find something to latch on to. And it usually is there somewhere.

V: The key.

S: Yes, the key, and with regard to someone.

V: Or perhaps some situation in which one has not felt that but one has been part of that feeling.

S: Yes one can certainly imaginatively reconstruct that sort of situation in ones mind from the past, so that one re-experiences, recreates that feeling and in this way gets started again, and this is a quite legitimate procedure.

But it really does seem that without positive emotion in one form or another nothing can be done.

What about these methods of seeking samadhi. The first one can understand, to maintain perfect moral practice, this is clearly suggestive of the path of regular steps. 'To pray to the Lamas of the lineage'. This is typically Tibetan and [292] in a sense Tantric.

(End side 1)

To make oneself receptive to the spiritual influences that are supposed or believed to emanate from the Lamas, the Enlightened spiritual teachers who have contributed to the tradition to which you belong. In the broadest sense, of course, one can think of all the great teachers of Buddhism itself, and how they all contributed to the great stream of Buddhism which has come right down to you. You can think not only of the Buddha himself but of Sariputta, Moggallana, Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Vasubhandu, Asanga, Milarepa, Padmasambhava, Dogen, Hui Neng, you can think of all or feel all of them as having contributed to the tradition of which you are one of the latest and one of the least advanced members. And feel something coming from all of them to you.

'And to maintain continual solitude', obviously this refers to intensive meditation. 'Abide in tranquillity and intense insight' refer to samatha and vipassana.

V: Isn't there an actual practice where one contemplates on all the Buddhas and the teachers?

S: Yes, this is called Guru Yoga, and this comes immediately after the four foundation yogas. This relates to the Lamas of ones particular Tantric lineage. The lineage of the Tantric practice that ones doing.

Any further points on this precept?

V: What does it mean by the distinction inner and outer phenomena?

S: Inner phenomena are those of ones own personality and outer phenomena are objectively existing things. Inner meaning belonging to ones own body or mind and outer everything else.



V: The section about, 'to maintain continuous solitude', does this mean maintaining a constant state of not flopping all over people or over things and situations and trying to derive some sort of comfort in the...?

S: There is that too but I think here it means literal solitude.

V: What does it mean by, 'whatever you have done previously will be for their benefit also'?

S: 'Because you have achieved Bodhi-mind whatever you have done previously will be for their benefit also'. Well, indirectly because your achieving Bodhi mind is for their benefit and whatever you have done previously has helped you to achieve Bodhi mind so even what you have done previously is for their benefit now. In the long run it has contributed to the way in which you are helping them, having realized the Bodhi mind.

V: Transference of merits.

V: Though we can't really take that literally, because there are obviously a lot of things you've done which don't help people, which haven't contributed to ...

S: I think the context is to be understood as someone who [293] has gone all out to realize the Bodhi mind and if he hadn't done that he wouldn't have realized it.

Perhaps the suggestion is all the pains and the sufferings that you have to endure for the sake of realizing the Bodhi-mind, all those pains and sufferings have not been wasted in as much as now you are benefiting so many people.

V: It could also mean, just like the skills etc. that you had to develop to attain it, you are now in a position to transfer and use for their benefit.

S: Yes, that's also true. In other words there's no aspect of your life, or nothing that you have ever done which will have been wasted, it has all served some useful purpose. Possibly even including your mistakes, but it doesn't actually say that and we shouldn't be too ready to assume that.

V: (Unclear)

S: Well, not too ready to assume it. Because otherwise you might think, never mind about committing mistakes now they will benefit people after I become a Bodhisattva.

V: May as well enjoy your mistakes!

V: I think when Bodhicitta has arisen you realize that you've never made a mistake.

S: Wait and see (laughter)

V: Is a complete Bodhi mind the same as Enlightenment.

S: In a sense yes, at this level you have to be very careful not to take things too literally or distinctions too literally, but in a sense yes. Though again is the relative and the absolute Bodhicitta combined, as it were. There's the absolute Bodhicitta as distinct from the relative Bodhicitta and there is the true absolute Bodhicitta which is the unity of the two Bodhicittas as distinguished from each other.

I mean, we have to distinguish them now and think of the absolute Bodhicitta as distinct from the relative. But the true absolute Bodhicitta is that which is the union of the relative Bodhicitta and the relative absolute Bodhicitta. And that Bodhicitta could be called the absolute absolute Bodhicitta.

You can understand why the Theravadins were reluctant to go very much into these matters and just suggested, well, Nirvana - there, and that's what we're working towards and that's all you need say about it at present. It's a quite healthy attitude.

V: I sometimes can't help feeling, it has occurred to me several times that the Hinayana, perhaps, is superior to the Vajrayana, in the respect that it doesn't present you with an awful lot of things that you can't deal with in reality, until you are ready for them.

V: But you get stuck in the Abhidharma, that's just as complex as anything you're likely to encounter in the Vajrayana.

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V: Sounds like a traffic jam. (laughter)

V: But I suppose it's just a question of, as you said, Nirvana there, us here, just do your practice, certain things will happen on route which you may give labels to if you want to.

S: Yes. But it certainly is true that one needs to preoccupy oneself more with the basic and fundamental issues. Like the Going for Refuge, what is Going for Refuge, one goes thoroughly into that one when you have got quite a long way, or applies that.

V: In a sense this is the problem which has come up a lot in our study group ... in a sense of dealing with an awful lot of material which frankly just doesn't concern most of the people.

S: But why are you dealing with it then?

V: Because it's in the book.

S: Who chose the book? I don't think I did. I wrote it but I didn't say it has got to be studied in every study group.

V: Apart from that there is the point that, what is the merit in dealing with such a very high ideal, like the concept of the Bodhicitta? Is there really any need to have even any mention of it, to think of the Bodhicitta?

S: Ahh, but the thing is when you are taking a study group you must be able to turn it into a precept. This is the point. The text is only your raw material, that is why you are there. You are the person who produces or creates the precept, which is link between what is said in the text and where they are now. This is why you have study groups, to produce precepts out of texts which are only very general and abstract things, really, whatever they may be or whoever they might have been written by. You just have to manufacture precepts as you go along.

V: For me, probably for quite a long time to come the Bodhicitta will remain a metaphysical doctrine. I have no conception of it or any experience of it whatsoever, I don't...

S: In that case one can only just try to help people understand the words of the text.

V: But then people say what is the use of all these words?

S: Well quite rightly. Because what they are really saying is we are not getting any precepts. Please give us some precepts. So in that case you should select a work or parts of a work which are near enough to your own experience and which you can use as raw material to produce precepts for the people you are studying with.

But one can say, as an axiom, that unless one can provide people with precepts you shouldn't take a study group. There is no point in just going through it with them on a purely rational basis, no point in that at all.

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V: This is something that has been occurring to me quite frequently in the last few months.

S: It's like for instance reading poetry with people, unless you can throw some light on it and make them feel the beauties of it in a way they wouldn't have been able to do by themselves, what's the point of just reading it through and not contributing anything which they could not have discovered or experienced by themselves.

So the person who takes a study group is really a manufacturer of precepts, or a giver of precepts. Because there is always this gap between the generalities of the text and the specific situation of the student. And you're the bridge between the two, you're the link between the two. You're the owner of the cow, at least the minder of the cow and you have to produce butter out of the milk, the butter meaning the precept.

V: And you would go so far as to say that if one has not got the experience to do this then it's better not even to study the text in a rational way?

S: I wouldn't like to generalize. But certainly the study group is concerned with, in these terms, providing precepts. It doesn't mean all the time, but at least few precepts. In the course of the evening, in the course of the session, at least two or three precepts distilled from the text in the light of your own experience and directed really concretely to the actual needs of those people. So that they really get something from the study, from the discussion.

Otherwise it all falls flat and goes dead. Study is not a collective reading, a study group is a situation within which precepts can emerge or be developed or laid down. Otherwise as one particular person who had been attending a study said, I am not going to give any details, he said "it's just like going to Sunday school", and you can probably guess what he meant.

V: It sounds like there's no, even initial intellectual understanding of that material. Because it seems to me that if you have a general intellectual appreciation, or conceptual appreciation of what the Bodhicitta is, then you can communicate that. For instance, I didn't have any idea what the Bodhicitta was when I first went on the first seminar but I had a pretty strong impression of it towards the end and I found it very inspiring to grasp that and sort of wrestle with it. And even communicate my own limited understanding of that to other people. I don't think it's necessarily the material that you are dealing with but your own understanding which you have got to...

S: There's also that point that in your endeavour to communicate to others what may so far be a purely intellectual understanding or predominantly intellectual understanding, you will yourself develop a new insight and be able to communicate a precept, as it were. But unless you have that sort of struggle then nothing may happen. You might not have developed it just sitting at home browsing through the text on your own. But if that capacity is in you and you are working in that direction and if the discussion group situation or study group situation is very stimulating and people are very eager and interested, you may produce something which surprises yourself.

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V: Because you are being spurred on by people's questions ... your own understanding and deepen your understanding.

S: Mmm, so it's not that you've got your precept already, even.

V: It sound to me though, that what you are suggesting, Ananda, is almost of giving up before you even attempted that.

Ananda: Well I have attempted it and I'm feeling unhappy with the result, if you like. Because I feel that I'm not in touch, or I haven't been in touch with that sort of level of the precepts. Surely things may come out of that situation and a precept itself, unpremeditated, but can one

run a group on that basis on the assumption that things will come out of it?

S: I don't know the group concerned but it does occur to me that maybe the group itself is not demanding enough. That is they do not demand enough of you, quite possibly don't challenge you enough, as it were. This is only a guess because I don't know who they are.

V: In my own limited experience of study groups I found that a useful approach was to go in with a feeling of complete innocence, complete relaxation and with no preconceptions whatsoever and just relax. And must be very concentrated and have no ideas about what you are going to study or what you are going to say to the people or about what you are expecting or what they are expecting or anything. And it's not one produces something, but things emerge from the general situation.

V: On the other hand you can read the text beforehand and you can certainly in it, be inspired by it which you can then bring out in the study group. In a way you haven't got, actually got all your precepts word for word but you have got the feeling for something and you've been inspired by something and that can come out in the study group.

V: You've made a connection between something in the text and the situation that you are going into, the time and the people.

S: And yourself, the text and yourself.

V: It seems that one has really go to be in touch with quite a deep level of one's own being and experience in order to be able to give that level of communication. The text doesn't give it, you've got to transform it.

S: Yes, the text, in a sense, doesn't give anything. Though some texts, again, are more helpful than others in the sense that they provide a better point of departure.

V: But I know in study groups in which just a few informal friends were there and there hasn't been a leader, amazing things have emerged and it hasn't come out of any one person it's sort of come out from the space in the middle. And depending on the atmosphere or the energy of the group [297] things emerge, so if it's flat nothing happens, and it is very uninspiring. Although the individuals concerned might be very sharp in other situations. Just something can happen and suddenly things come up.

V: I think that also connects in with, perhaps before having a study group of actually putting some effort into doing something, like putting some energy into reading through the text that you are going to study, or to reading other texts that are related and that sort of effort you put in can produce the energy in the study group.

S: Perhaps you liberate your energies first and then they are available.

Let's go on then.

"Again the three brothers questioned the teacher Drom: "In order to work perfectly for oneself and others, which is more important, wisdom (Ita-ba) or deeds (spyod-pa)?"

S: I think this is vidya and carana, as we have in the salutation of the Buddha, 'vijja carana sampanno', the one endowed with wisdom, or knowledge it is usually translated and deeds. Or theory and practice if you like.

V: Would you repeat those two again?

S: Vijja, that's the Pali version, and carana. The Sanskrit would be vidya.

"The teacher Drom replied, "One who has obtained the necessary foundation for practice and

has entered the gate of the Mahayana must unify pure wisdom and pure deeds so that he may do perfect work for self and others. Wisdom alone or deeds alone is not enough."

"What, then, is pure wisdom, and what are pure deeds?"

"Pure wisdom consists in the realization that all existents are fundamentally free from the two extremes - eternalism, the extreme of existence, and nihilism, the extreme of non-existence. All phenomena have no actual existence; whether appearing inside or outside, their existence is merely relative. They are like dreams, illusions, and apparitions. Furthermore, pure wisdom is the understanding that all things are but a projection of your own mind. Understanding this, you do not seek out or have attachment to anything.

"Pure deeds are understanding the infallible effects of good and bad actions in this relative existence which is illusory and dreamlike. Further, they are striving with deep compassion, while being careful of the cause and effect of karma, for the benefit of all living beings who do not understand the nature of existence.

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"One who produces in himself the two aspects of Bodhi-mind will naturally produce pure wisdom and pure deeds."

"The disciples then asked, "Is it wrong to have pure wisdom alone or pure deeds alone?"

"Geshe Drom replied, "If you have pure wisdom but do not have pure deeds and lose yourself in impetuous behaviour, not being careful of the cause and effect of karma, you will be of no benefit to yourself and others, and even your pure wisdom will go wrong. Should you have pure deeds but lack the perception of the fundamental Voidness of all things, you will not be able to benefit yourself and others and your pure deeds will begin to go wrong. If you do not unify pure wisdom and pure deeds, you will inevitably fall into mistaken paths. Therefore, you must learn both."

S: So again wisdom and deeds can be subsumed under the other various dualities in that list.

V: You already have wisdom and merit.

S: It's not quite the same.

V: Deeds, you couldn't translate as means, skilful means?

S: No that's another term, upaya which is ...

V: Is it more like actions?

S: It's more like actions, behaviour, behaviour is a fairly good translation. You notice that Drom say, 'if you have pure wisdom but do not have pure deeds and lose yourself in impetuous behaviour', this seems a bit odd isn't it? That if you have only wisdom without pure deeds you may lose yourself in impetuous behaviour. What do you think this means?

V: You get reckless, you think you know it all. And you fling yourself into situations that you think you can now deal with.

S: Yes, intellectual overconfidence.

V: Presumably wisdom here isn't the very highest state.

S: No.

V: It's a bit reminiscent of the imbalance in the five spiritual faculties, actually. Lack of

samatha...

S: Right, samatha provides the steadying, the stabilizing factor. Sometimes highly intellectual, very clever people are very reckless.

V: When you think you have got an understanding of something it can give you a lot of energy and you think [299] "ahh great, I can do anything".

S: Yes, really quite unstable, like George Brown, he was a good example of this in the political sphere. I hope I'm not putting my foot in it.

V: You're on tape.

V: I'll censor that bit.

S: And 'Pure wisdom consists of the realization that all existences are fundamentally free from the two extremes, eternalism, the extreme of existence and nihilism the extreme of non existence' One shouldn't take this in a metaphysical sort of way, on a theoretical sort of way. What it really means is one should approach existence, approach life if you like without Preconceptions, without trying to categorize it or make it fit into your ideas about it, which of course are usually in terms of the pairs of opposites. You shouldn't try to impose your categories on existence, impose your intellectual pattern on life itself.

V: Which is alienation. (S: Mmm.)

V: I think there's a lot of association with intellectualism and alienation which is really wrong. I think its something that is starting out, you seem to be starting it off in particular. You mention it quite a few times and I want to stop it before it goes any further.

V: It's gone far enough, but that's not quite what I meant.

V: Well think about what you mean before you say it.

V: Touche.

V: It seems to come to the Yogacara point of view.

S: He does, just in that one sentence.

'Furthermore pure wisdom is the understanding that all things are but a projection of your own mind, understanding this you do not seek out or have attachment to anything'.

V: I'm getting a bit confused at this point because of all these different interpretations of wisdom that we seem to have come across, there seems to be hundreds. On the one hand wisdom is the freedom from the extremes of eternalism and nihilism, then we've got ...

S: But one mustn't look at that as a doctrinal sort of proposition. It is not a piece of philosophy, it means, as it were, being open and concept free in ones approach to reality, in ones approach to life. Not categorizing, not labelling in a one sided fashion and regarding those categories and labels as absolute. Almost determining the nature of existence. Using them if necessary, maybe but not being misled by them not, not misusing them.

It is quite straightforward if you ask yourself what is the practical attitude that this teaching is trying to [300] inculcate. It is not laying down abstract philosophy.

V: It's almost like trying to get an important point and drive it home by appealing to different facets of ones nature, emphasizing personality.

S: One can look at it like that, though it wasn't exactly that that I was getting at. The confusion only arises when one loses touch with the actual concrete attitude that the teaching is trying to encourage.

V: Maybe also because of a limited way of looking at wisdom, just seeing one aspect of it rather than seeing it as being a many faceted thing.

S: After all wisdom isn't a thing, it is just a way of behaving, it is just an attitude that you have.

V: A faculty.

S: A faculty, although in this sense it is more than a faculty because a faculty suggests a particular faculty, like the eye or the ear or the nose. But wisdom is more like the attitude of your total being.

V: That attitude will find many different modes of expression.

S: Right, yes. There is no limit to the modes of expression.

V: Faculty also seems to suggest something that one possesses oneself whereas wisdom suggests something that also has an aspect beyond oneself.

S: Yes.

V: If wisdom is an attitude of your total being then I don't quite understand the bit about, 'you will lose yourself in impetuous behaviour.'

S: When I said that about wisdom I meant wisdom more in the sense of Prajna. Though the same term has been used here in English, unfortunately it is not quite the same thing. Here it is more like, as I said, theory and practice. You can't have a truly one sided wisdom, it can't be one sided and be truly wisdom. It is more like theory or understanding.

V: Wisdom is used as Prajna when it comes to the two extremes, at that point in the page but in a different sense further down.

S: It seems like that. You can't strictly speaking have pure wisdom and lose yourself in impetuous behaviour, so obviously wisdom is not being used here in the full sense or in the true sense even.

How will your pure deeds begin to go wrong if you lack the perception of the fundamental Voidness of all things?

V: You get attached.

S: You get attached, you get carried away by activity for its own sake.

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V: Where it says, 'pure deeds are understanding the infallible effects', pure deeds are understanding and, 'the bad actions in this relative existence which is illusory and dreamlike'. And then he links this to 'being careful of the cause and effect of karma'.

S: Well this is a different approach to the total situation. This is more like the Madhyamika approach. The Voidness and conditioned co-production. Conditioned co-production is not the ultimate reality from the Mahayana point of view, it's only relatively real. But it is not to be separated from the absolute reality, you realize the absolute truth by observing and acting upon the relative truth. So the fact that you realize the Voidness doesn't mean that you discard the law of cause and effect. The realization of the Voidness is wisdom and the observance of

the law of cause and effect is deeds and you have these two together, you don't take a one sided view.

V: Can you say that again.

S: The realization of Voidness is wisdom and the observance of the law of cause and effect, of conditioned co-production or karma is the pure deeds and these two are inseparable. There is not a principle of Voidness separate from a principle of relativity.

V: ... going back to the same point again.

S: Yes.

V: Most of these precepts seem to be about this balance between doing and realizing.

S: Yes.

V: Just another matter, Drom is referred to Geshe Drom, does that mean he's more than an Upasaka or just a good Geshe?

S: At this time there were no large monasteries, no organized courses. It's more like at this stage an honorific title, suggestive of Drom's great learning and insight, more like pandit.

All right let's carry on then.

"At another time, the three brothers asked Drom, 'Which is more important, to help living beings by means of the Teaching, or to practise in an isolated place?'"

"The teacher answered, "A beginner who has no internal realization cannot help living beings with the Teaching. His blessing is like pouring from an empty jar - nothing will come out. His advice is like unfermented beer - it has no essence."

S: No body. Just carry straight on and then we will discuss it.

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"The person of admirable deeds who has not yet obtained the Firmness of Warmth' does not have the ability to act for the benefit of living beings. His blessing is like pouring from a full vessel - when it has filled another, it itself is empty. His advice is like a butter lamp held in the hand it may illuminate others, but the holder remains in the shadows.

"However, when a person has entered the stages of the Aryas, whatever he does brings benefit to living beings. His blessing is like a magic vessel - though it fills countless vessels, it does not empty itself. His advice is like a butter lamp held by the base - it illuminates others and the one who holds it as well.

"Therefore, this kaliyuga is not the time for an individual to be of help to living beings unless he has cultivated love, compassion, and Bodhi-mind in isolation. It is the time to guard against fettering passions. It is not the time to cut down the seedling of the magical medicine tree, but the time to cultivate it."

S: So what is meant by 'The firmness of Warmth'?

V: It's the foundation of metta.

S: It's more than that, it's a technical term, sometimes simply translated as heat, which is what it literally is.

V: Does it mean energy, spiritual vigour?



S: It's sort of spiritual energy and vigour which has reached the point of radiation, as it were. It is more like that, it's a sort of natural energy, positive energy which has reached such a pitch of intensity that it starts radiating. So that when you speak it is not just your words, there is a certain radiant energy behind what you say.

V: Would this apply to someone who has reached, in samatha practice, the fourth absorption?

S: There's certainly an analogy with that. There isn't an exact correspondence but there is an analogy.

V: Sorry, can you just give the definition here?

S: It is called the stage or the point of heat but obviously it isn't heat in the literal sense but it may be associated with that in some cases, you might feel a bodily heat. But the characteristic of heat or fire is that it radiates, so by heat in this sense is meant the point which energy reaches when it develops to such a degree that it starts, as it were radiating. So that others can feel it just like others can feel heat. So when as a result of your practice, especially your meditation, your energies reach such a point of refinement and intensity that they start as it were radiating, as heat starts radiating when it reaches a certain temperature; [303] then this is the stage of firmness of warmth.

V: Surely though it doesn't [say] here that one should not even have the intention to act for the benefit of beings until one has developed that stage?

S: No, one should have always have the intention, from the Mahayana point of view.

V: He says, 'he does not have the ability to act for the benefit of beings'.

S: Well ability is different from intention. You can cultivate the intention even though [you] don't have the ability.

V: Presumably you won't have the ability unless you have the intention.

S: The intensity of the intention is the capacity, is the ability.

V: Sorry, can you repeat that?

S: The intensity of the intention is the ability. If you really want to you can. So to wait until you have got the intention before you have the capacity is self defeating. It is just lack of self confidence. If you really want to you always can, sooner or later.

Mahatma Gandhi used to say, "the end is the extreme of means", you go on developing the means and you will have the end. You go on developing the intention, you will have the capacity. But if you are so convinced that you haven't got the capacity you will doubt your ability even to develop the intention. You will think, "what's the use of me developing the intention because I won't be able to do it anyway? And you're dead right! (laughter)

V: What was actually specifically meant by internal realization? 'Should a beginner who has no internal realization'.

S: Presumably no experience of that warmth. The warmth has also got another implication. When there is warmth everything melts, doesn't it?

(end tape 14)

So when everything melts, or when anything melts, what is the difference? What is melting?

V: It's freer, it's more ...

S: It's freer, it's from a solid to a liquid state. So when you reach this stage of intense radiant energy, of heat, your stiffness, your rigidity, your solidity - in a negative sense - is melted. You loosen up, you relax, you flow more.

V: Could you say that in the terms of Confucius used, this would be equivalent to reaching a point where you had used the discipline and now you could trust your own feelings a bit more to be your guide.

S: Yes, in a sense. But of course you haven't yet reached [304] insight, so you can't just rely upon those feelings or those energies, you still have to be careful you still have to be mindful.

V: Could you very briefly recap the five Bodhisattva paths that he mentions here, one is the ...?

S: No it isn't quite like that. No I think I won't this is rather a complicated matter, the first path is the path of practice and the third is the path of Insight. In a way that corresponds to the Hinayana, the accumulation of merits and then the actual practice of meditation and then the development of insight. These are the ...

V: Nothing to do with the different levels of the Bodhisattva, like the irreversible Bodhisattva and the Bodhisattva...

S: No, it's a different classification, though it includes that.

This is a quite important teaching, I have never given a lecture on it but I have several times thought I should give a lecture on these five paths. The five stages of the path, really.

V: The Bodhisattva Bhumis are sort of beyond ...

S: No, they are included in this.

V: In the five paths, but it is beyond, presumably, the first and second path.

S: Yes, right.

V: Because I understood that for second bhumi, actually.

S: No, no.

Ahh, there is a note at the end, you can look at that, they are tabulated there.

Five Paths: To attain either Nirvana or Buddhahood one must progress through five graded paths of realization. These are: 1. The accumulation path (Tibetan, tshogs-lam; Sanskrit Sambhara-marga) 2. The application path (Tibetan, sbyor-lam; Sanskrit, prayoga-marga) 3. The insight path (Tibetan, mthong-lam; Sanskrit, darsanamarga) 4. The cultivation path (Tibetan, sgom-lam Sanskrit, bhavana-marga) 5. The path with no more to learn (Tibetan, mislob-lam; Sanskrit, asaiksamarga). One can pass through these five stages either as a Sravaka or a Pratyeka Buddha to attain a final goal of Arhantship, or as a Bodhisattva seeking the final attainment of Buddhahood.

V: How does this apply to our own movement? A beginner comes in ...

S: Well it depends what one means by help. I mean, the mere fact for instance that you are working on yourself and are known to be working on yourself, this helps other people. In other words you can't help helping other people once you are helping yourself and practising yourself. In a sense this is a false [305] antithesis. But certainly it can be said that you shouldn't be reckless or rash even, or over-eager to help others in an external sense, in a very specific way, unless you have achieved a definite measure of experience yourself. It doesn't

mean that you should refrain from saying anything and refuse to answer a question, that would be going to the other extreme. But you can't completely divorce helping yourself from helping others, you can help yourself by helping others. It is just a question of respecting the limits of one's own capacities. But one can always do something, even if it is only setting a good example or even if it is only helping provide facilities for people to help themselves. Even if you just tidy up the centre you are helping others and you can certainly do that without necessarily having developed insight.

V: I think it's a very frustrating thing to accept the limits of your own capacities in this area and I think a lot of people actually experience this. I know I feel it a lot myself and I've heard other people talk about it. That you feel that you should be doing certain things and you see that certain other members are doing certain things that you are, in a sense, you don't feel capable of yourself.

S: One of the things you can do is to give very solid support to those who are doing the things that you, as yet, can't do. Even if it is only making them a cup of tea when they come in tired after their lecture or whatever.

V: There's not enough of that, actually.

S: Mmm. You can be very supportive and very helpful, therefore in that way. Or for instance if you know that someone has got to give a lecture in the evening say, "can I do anything for you, would you like me to make you a snack before the meeting." You can help in that way, you may not be able to give the lecture but you can help the person who is going to give the lecture, in that way you share the merit of his activity. You, in a way participate in his activity, you are helping to make it possible or to make it more easy, more successful. And too many people, I think, I'm not thinking so much at the moment of our own movement but in a more general way, so many people want to be in the limelight and in the forefront and do it all themselves. Whereas more often they would be more qualified for supporting roles. And one should be just content to help, or just help the helpers.

V: I think, maybe there's an extreme reluctance, in many ways to accept a supporting role because it is considered quite inferior and perhaps not really ...

S: This is because one is not thinking in terms of the functioning of the whole set up. One is thinking in much too personal, even egocentric terms. Of course if you can give the lecture it would be foolish if you didn't, but if you can't well it would be foolish not simply to give your support to those who can. There's no point in playing a secondary role when you can play the primary role but those who play a primary role will be comparatively few. The rest will be supporting. Every pyramid has to have a base.

So this needs stressing much more than it has been, that you can help by helping those who are doing the helping, the real helping, as it were.

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V: I think, actually, that could have been one of the reasons why there was such a feeling of resentment developed at Archway. I think it could have been partly that.

S: You mean the failure to develop this supportive attitude.

V: Yes, because it's an unacceptable position.

S: Why do you think that is, or is it so? Let's be quite sure that it is in fact so.

V: Well, no I think from their point of view it is looked upon as...

S: That's what I mean, do you really feel that people think and feel that?

V: Yes.

S: You do, they think that being in a supportive role is being ... and inferior. This suggests a certain ambition, almost, doesn't it? Or ambitiousness.

V: It's a bit like ... correlation of the idea of irregular steps. You want to get to the end before you've laid the foundations and the same happens on a very practical level of doing.

S: Right, yes. You're not capable of taking a lead and you are unwilling to act in a supportive capacity. Perhaps it is best to remember that all that we do is only supporting the more general activity of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas everywhere. That even those who are taking a leading part, in a wider sense are only playing a supportive role. Or short of the Buddha himself everybody is playing a supportive role.

V: Isn't that generally lack of perspective, isn't it? Seeing the whole movement.

V: But I think also, one of the things that is underneath it is that it is not seen to be, or it is not regarded as, and I know I have suffered from this myself, as being spiritually as worthy as the leading role. I think there is an element of that. (S: Mmm)

V: It does seem as though sometimes, people lead in different situations, people who are able to lead in one situation are a very good support in another.

S: But the trouble arises with, perhaps those who are not able to lead in any situation.

V: Yes, that's what I'm trying to say.

S: I must say that in some of the Eastern countries it is very pleasant to see the way in which many lay people accept their supportive role as regards the Sangha. This is where there is that..., in those countries where there is this hard and fast line of distinction. But this is certainly a positive side of it, that they don't envy the bhikkhus or compete with them but they are very happy to provide the facilities. And [307] they feel that if they provide the facilities and if they for instance pay the bhikkhus fare somewhere to go and preach the Dharma, well they are also helping to preach the Dharma. They feel this very strongly, that if they help pay for the publication of a book they are contributing just as much as the writer of the book. There is this very strong feeling among the laity in many parts of the Buddhist world in the East which is very healthy. They don't feel envy or resentment or jealousy. They feel that they are doing their bit and that the bhikkhus, in fact, couldn't function without their support, which is very often quite true.

So there is that way of looking at it too, he may be there out front actually giving the lecture or taking the class but unless we were getting it all together so that there was a place in which to take the class and someone doing the advertising and someone taking the money at the door and all that sort of thing, he wouldn't be able to give his lecture. We are functioning in a supportive capacity, we are also helping to make it possible, we are contributing to that total situation. Admittedly he is the most prominent factor, if you like even the key factor, but certainly not the only one, and it all hangs together, everybody plays a part. Just as in a business firm, even the office boy who makes the tea and runs messages, he also plays a part, though it may be a comparatively humble one, but he is part of the whole. So it should be even more like that in a spiritual movement, there should be even more of that spirit, you are doing what you can and it all helps.

V: I think this is where the distinction between the spiritual community and the group, which we looked at previously. Because the group very much does support the spiritual community, and is important.

S: Right.

V: Sorry I've lost that. Could you define what you mean by group and spiritual community in that sense, because that conflicts with my understanding of group and spiritual community.

S: Are you thinking Upasaka as more like the group, and the monks as more like the spiritual community?

V: I was thinking of.., my understanding of the way it has been used within the Order is the Order being the spiritual community and those who are not yet members of the Order being the group. And then sometimes even Order members get into groups or group things or that we must avoid setting up communities that just become a group thing and not spiritual communities.

V: But you said that in fact the group does support the community.

V: It seems to me that you are suggesting that to be in a supportive role sort of denies that you are part of the spiritual community ...

V: Denies that you are developing (?)

V: ... and I don't think that is true.

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S: Well to that extent even the group is part of the spiritual community, in a sense. And this is more what I call the positive group.

V: That isn't the point that I was trying to make. I just had, perhaps not so much from London but I've felt this in Glasgow that there has been a distinction made between the spiritual community and the group. And not seeing that they do mesh together at a point.

S: There is a distinction but again, as you say, they do mesh together. I think the word mesh is the correct one here, they interlink.

Though I think the context of the discussion was more within the Order itself, that perhaps there are even some Order members who are not too happy, not as happy as they ought to be about playing what appears to be a secondary or simply supportive role when they are not in a position, or don't have the capacity, at least not in certain circumstances or situations to take a leading role, or play a leading part.

V: I think it helps if one looks upon the activities of individuals within the Order as like the functioning of an organ within the body, without which the body could not function, but one organ has a particular job to do. It might appear to be only a subsidiary function but in fact it's vital. And it is the whole body that acts to function not a single organ, any particular organ only supports the functioning.

S: And again it ties up with this question of rejoicing in merits. You should be happy and pleased that others [are] able to do better than you, and rejoice in that, which is very often the attitude of lay people in the East. They are happy that the bhikkhus or the Lamas can do what they can't do, they really rejoice and they feel that they are participating just by providing them with the facilities and the material requisites that they need to fulfil their special function.

V: It is also a case of seeing where you are at, too. When you come to terms with that, then that is the sort of basis of really being able to progress.

S: Accept your objective limitations, work on what has to be worked on, do what you can. Who can do more? And be very happy if others are doing more than you, feel happy that others are able to do more., that not everybody is not on your wretched level! Thank heavens that some people can do better or can do more, or different things even, not even necessarily

better things, different things, things that you are not equipped to do.

V: I find it extraordinarily difficult to rejoice simply in the fact that people are doing..., how shall I say, doing things that are apparently more important than me because I have had such a competitive education. One is taught that one has to be the best, one has to try to be the best, the most prominent, the one who is out the front. It is very good practice being down in Brighton with Buddhadasa.

V: That may be the basis of a lot of this, something quite simple like that.

S: One could have a go at being the most humble Order member! (laughter)

V: What about someone who has got a capacity which isn't being used and wants to participate but doesn't seem to find ...

S: I think if they have got the capacity it will be used, sooner or later.

V: There's frustration, in a sense.

S: But then you shouldn't feel frustrated, if the situation doesn't permit the exercise of your capacity, "they also serve who only stand and wait".

I may have a capacity to give a lecture but suppose lectures are not needed, there is no point in my getting all frustrated because I can't give lectures. It is not just a question of exercising a capacity but exercising it in a certain situation, when the time is right and the place is right and the people are right.

V: Could be looked upon as the development of forbearance?

S: Yes, indeed. Your capacity isn't a sort of neurotic urge to do something at all costs it is just a capacity to function in a certain way in a certain situation, when the situation requires it.

V: I think it's seen like a race, you see somebody running and you think they're running off from you and you haven't even started yet and are still waiting for your starting orders.

S: But nobody can do more than they are able to do, but at least they should do that. Also there's a variety of talents.

V: (Unclear)

V: That's a sort of competitive thing, just a race, there is still that attitude. You see people, the competitors still running, still trying to get to this point and you are afraid that you won't make it.

S: It's all right to run but you must run in the right way. If you are also acting in a supporting capacity, you are running, because that is your spiritual practice then. You are running just as much as those whom you are supporting. It's not that they are running and you are not. They are running by doing what they can do and you are running by doing what you can do.

V: Maybe just standing on one spot.

S: Maybe. Though again I emphasize this rejoicing in merits. There should be, I feel, much more of this, and feeling happy that others have got talents that perhaps you haven't. How poor a situation it would be if nobody had any more talents than you had. Thank heavens there are people who can do all these wonderful things that you can't.

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V: You can always look on the positive side if you can't do much and think "I've got much

more time to get on with meditation".

S: Right. And I'll direct my metta towards all those who are getting on with it and perhaps having a rather difficult time. I'll back them up at least psychologically and spiritually. I say 'at least' but this in a way is the most important way in which you can back them up.

V: It's also that the other man's grass is greener. That quite often I wouldn't be surprised if the man up front from time to time would be thinking "why do I have to be doing it all the time, why can't I be making the tea" or whatever. (S: Yes) (laughter)

V: To what extent should one cultivate an all-rounder. (S: Ohh.) Because I've heard it said by people that if you develop one particular talent say, it's like a man with one leg that's about eight feet long.

S: I think you should be an all-rounder as a human being but not in terms of specialized talents that don't have any necessary connection with your being a human being.

V: Can you elaborate on that? I find that ...

S: Well, you mustn't, for instance just take the arts. You could say to be an all-rounder you have got to be able to paint teachers and sculpt; and also sing and dance and act and play the guitar and the piano and the violin and the organ - otherwise you are not an all-rounder. (laughter) But this is not being an all-rounder. As a human being you should have some aesthetic sense and at least be able to appreciate music when you hear it, but no more than that from the point of your all-round development as a human being. As a human being you ought to be able to get on with people, to be able to speak your mind, even to speak in public occasionally, if necessary. Organize your own life, earn your own living if necessary, look after those who are younger than yourself. If you are a developed human being, an all-rounder you should be able to do all these things.

You should be able to cook, able to meditate, able to take charge of something within your province, able to work with other people. This is what being an all-rounder in ordinary human terms means. Write a decent letter, spell moderately well (laughter) possibly even typing - in these modern days - possibly. (V: Write legibly) Write legibly, yes.

(Break in tape)

And also I was going to add, you should be able to cook, an all-round human being should be able to cook whether male or female.

V: Grow your own food?

S: I'm not sure about that, I think that's a bit in between.

V: Sew

S: I'm not sure about that.

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V: That's a talent, that's definitely a talent!

S: Cooking, definitely.

V: Washing up. (Laughter)

S: But one should aim at being an all rounder but an all round human being, in terms of normal human capacities. That doesn't mean being a virtuoso.

V: Like somebody who shuts himself away from the world and is brilliant at one thing but just can't get on with anybody.

V: If the world was full of virtuosos there would be no virtuosos, and that would be terrible.

S: Anyway let's stop here and have our tea or coffee or whatever.

Tea Break discussion:-

V: I sometimes feel that they don't have enough power for me because of being male and ... confused.

S: There are many Bodhisattvas in female forms, some mild others wrathful. There is quite a few, there are all the twenty one forms of Tara.

V: Dakinis (S: Yes)

V: Hasn't each deity got its own female counterpart anyway?

S: In the Anuttara Yoga Tantra, yes. All the deities that occur there do have, yes.

V: But couldn't this be argued the same, that, say if the horse isn't a symbol to the Finns, could you say also that religious paintings might be symbols for some people and not for others?

S: This is true. This is one of the end results of our secular culture. So we have to be quite careful how we choose our symbols even. Most people will respond, I think, quite positively to very simple, natural things, like a flower. But not everybody would respond positively to a Buddha image any more than not everybody would respond positively, say to a crucifix.

V: I wonder whether anybody actually responds positively ...

S: Hmm, I was just thinking that, a mental reservation, really.

V: To a crucifix?

S: Certainly not to one of the bloodier versions. Some of the medieval versions are very discrete, or even some of the Renaissance versions, they don't emphasize the pain and suffering and torture.

V: Or even just in the sense of the cross. I [312] personally don't respond but I have known people that have.

S: When I say positive response I mean, for instance, a response which contains no element of guilt. For instance a lot of Christians feel or have been trained to feel "it is all my fault, it is because of my sins that Jesus is being tortured like that, I am responsible, I am guilty, how wicked I am, Jesus is having to die for me, Jesus is having to suffer for me." So you feel guilt, "so I ought to love Jesus because of all the things he is doing for me, he is being crucified for me, I ought to love him", though maybe you don't. So very often there are these sorts of elements in one's response in the Christians response, so to that extent even though it is a response it isn't a completely positive response.

Whereas I think we can say that in the case of the Buddha figure a normal person's response will be positive whether or not he knows anything about the Buddha. There is just this calm figure seated there, meditatively. So at least you respond positively in the sense of feeling a bit peaceful yourself.

V: That's if that is what the person actually sees. But I think too often they would just half see



it and say "oh it's some religious deity" and just react without really looking at it. (S: Yes)

V: A lot of people keep them just as ornaments, some of them really get into it. They don't know much about it, I think it's more so of the laughing Buddha.

V: Although quite often that's because they are bits of Oriental, they are an Oriental knick knack, they look Oriental and that is the first association, that it is something from the East.

V: And it might be worth something.

V: ... he was really very positive towards them... just a peace emanating from them, he said if you have one of them in your room you really feel it.

V: There's a shop near Baker Street with quite a number of Buddha images and the atmosphere is quite incredible, really powerful. Just the images there.

S: All right, let's go on.

"A teacher from the district of Kham asked the teacher Drom, "What are the individual meanings of the twofold egolessness?"

Drom replied, "From the crown of your head to the soles of your feet, you cannot find anything which is 'I', even though you search and make minute inquiry with your mind. This is the egolessness of person. Understand also that the mind of the seeker is without natural existence - that is the egolessness of phenomena."

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S: This is not, by the way, the usual explanation, though obviously it has a validity of its own. Have you come across this teaching of the twofold egolessness? (V's: Yes) You should have done because it is a very basic, very standard Mahayana general teaching.

You have, to begin with, the *nairatmya*, or *anatma* teaching of the Hinayana. That is to say that within the so called individual there is no unchanging element. That the so called individual consists of a series of events at different levels, a flow of phenomena, a stream of consciousness, but not any element that doesn't change. There is no unchanging element enucleating all the rest, it is stream that flows on from instant to instant. So this is the teaching of egolessness in the Hinayana. What happened was that there was a Hinayana school, the Sarvastivadins that took this rather literally, not to say literalistically. They recognized that the so called individual consisted of effervescent dharmas or psychophysical events but they tended to regard these events themselves as something real. So they ended up with a plurality of reals, they regarded the dharmas as actual existence.

Then the Mahayana made the point that they were not, that just in the same way as the individual was just pure flux so the dharmas themselves were also, at their level, pure flux. So they expressed this in their technical language by saying that the dharmas were also *Sunyata*. They referred, therefore, to the emptiness of things, things in the sense of *dharma*, *dharmasunyata*. And the Hinayana view of emptiness or egolessness they called *pudgalanairatmya*, or *pudgalasunyata*, the emptiness of the person. So they regarded the Hinayana teaching in its more developed form as a limited teaching. That recognized only the egolessness of the person but the Mahayana recognized the egolessness of the so called constituent elements of personality.

So just as the Hinayana resolved the person, the *pudgala* into the void, in the same way the Mahayana resolved the constituent elements of the person into the void. In other words they did not stop, they pushed on with the process. So this is called the two fold egolessness. But Geshe Drom gives a rather different interpretation, though a very good one, a teaching which is, as it were valid in its own right.

He is saying, as it were, everything that you look at, everything that you see in yourself is egoless. It is changing all the time, it just consists of process without any subject of the process which exists apart from the process itself. But he is saying don't go on to make the mistake of thinking that the mind that sees all this is unchanging, that mind too is egoless. In other words don't alienate the perceiving consciousness from what it perceives, don't regard it as an entity in its own right.

V: So that could be the Vajrayana approach?

S: No really it is the general Buddhist approach, you do find it in the Hinayana too, as when Buddhagosa says that there is rebirth but nobody who is reborn, there is attainment of Nirvana but nobody who attains. In other words no separate subject of the rebirth or subject of the attainment apart from the rebirth process, apart from the attaining of Nirvana process itself. It is just what we were discussing the other day when I gave the analogy of the hand, the hand moving.

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V: Is it the sort of standing back or the separation from the perceived that is the process of alienation, generally speaking.

S: One could put it like that, yes. You could say egotism is simply alienation from what you are doing or thinking. Probably that is a gross over-simplification but this is broadly what it is.

V: Would that be a last stage, if you like, in practical terms? Because I am sure when one starts off one is in a state of perceiving, maybe analysing ones thoughts. Or mindfulness and the idea of mindfulness, the practice takes on first of all that there is somebody to be mindful of something...

S: Mmm. I think for the average person who takes up individual development there cannot but be an element of alienation at first, as he practices mindfulness. You have in a way to step back, you can't help doing that. But you shouldn't be in a position of having permanently stepped back or unable to get in contact with your feelings and thoughts.

V: I suppose you can separate, as you do in your lecture, awareness and experience. It seems like we start off probably as children with experience but no awareness, and then we develop awareness but no experience and then ...

S: Not to speak of children, I have described this process as going on retreats. That when people come on retreat, I am speaking, of course, more of the ordinary, open beginners retreat, especially in the old days. When people come on retreat at first they are a bit withdrawn, a bit stiff, a bit unsociable a bit shy. Then they start loosening up and a lot of energy comes out, they start to become more free and more active and more talkative, more communicative. But they also become quite unmindful, so then you have to start, as it were, clamping down a bit, having more of silence and more of meditation and sometimes it happens that they just go to the other extreme, become quite withdrawn. Or everything goes a bit dull and a bit dead, especially if there is too much silence. If the person who is leading the retreat is a bit skilful and a bit sensitive he can bring things to a central point, where there is energy but at the same time mindfulness and awareness. That the energy is not unmindful and the awareness is not alienated.

This is what one should aim at, broadly speaking, when one is leading a retreat. That there should be plenty of energy, people should feel their energy 'out', as it were and should be emotionally very positive, buoyant and communicative, but with awareness and mindfulness the whole time. It's not easy to maintain that balance and the larger the number of people that you have the more difficult it becomes.

V: Is the commentator, that goes on in the mind, saying "I'm now doing this, I'm now doing

that, I'm angry" and so on, is that the alienation?

S: Very often, if it's just going on in a slightly neurotic way, but if it is just a mindful observance, well look, this is what I am doing", then it isn't quite like that. But the commentator is more alienated, I think.

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V: What causes that, how do you get rid of it?

S: You just have to get more completely into what you are doing, make a conscious effort to do that. It means there is some energy left over from what you are doing which is not involved with what you are doing.

Anyway, let's go on.

"Lo-tso-mo, from the Drom family of Pen-yul-bay, once gave forty bushels of barley to the Ra-dreng monastery. As she was in the presence of the teacher Drom, she said, "Geshe-la, I would like to talk with you. These monks are assembled for the purpose of attaining omniscient Buddhahood. We lay people are also here for that purpose. As you have been filled with the precept of the venerable Atisa as one vessel fills another, I would now like to ask you to give, with nothing unmentioned, the true precept of obtaining Buddhahood."

The teacher Drom told them, "First, meditate on the cause and effect of karma and on the imminence of death. Keep pure all the vows that you have taken. Meditate on love and compassion, and make firm your Bodhi-mind. To do these things, use the methods to accumulate merit and wisdom and to purify sinful deeds. Integrate non-objectification with the Three Aspects of Everything, so that your mind no longer discriminates between the perceiver, the object perceived, and the act of perceiving. Then dedicate all the roots of virtue for the attainment of perfect enlightenment with all living beings.

"When you have done this you will have no cause to regret that you did not meet the venerable Atisa, for there is no other teaching than this. Nor, in the future, will anyone need be disheartened that they did not meet old Drom, for there is no higher teaching than this for the accomplishment of Buddhahood."

S: It's a very short summary indeed. You notice that she says, 'these monks are assembled for the purpose of attaining omniscient Buddhahood, we lay people are also here for that purpose'. This is very much the Mahayana spirit, that the Bodhisattva Ideal and Bodhisattva life is common to all. Everybody makes an effort from where they actually are, and Drom himself of course is technically a lay teacher.

What he tells here is again very standard Tibetan Buddhist teaching. The sort of things that the Tibetans always emphasize, 'meditate on the cause and effect of karma and on the imminence of death. Keep pure all the vows that you have taken, meditate on love and compassion and make firm your Bodhi-mind.' 'Use the methods to accumulate merit and wisdom and to purify sinful deeds. Integrate non-objectification with the three aspects of everything, so that your mind no longer discriminates between the perceiver, the object perceived and the act of perceiving.' These three, of course, are the three aspects of everything.

In other words it suggests a state of total integration of your experience. A state of complete non-alienation. [316] It doesn't mean that you don't see an object, of course you see objects, Buddha sees objects but he's not alienated from objects.

V: So when you are completely free of alienation is this integration?

S: Yes. I am using the word alienation, by the way, very freely. If it is so, as I've said, that egotism is really alienation, when you get rid of egotism you get rid of alienation and you, in

a sense, experience things, you see a tree as a tree and you see that the sky is blue and you see that the people are there, as it were. But it is not against a background of a sort of separated self as we usually do experience it.

The best analogy I can give is one when you are completely into something that you are doing. Supposing you are completely into cooking, you could say that you are at one with the pots and pans and the vegetables that you are chopping up. Not that you don't perceive them but you are completely one with it all, there is no separated you, as it were, there any more. In the same way when you are having a heart to heart talk with someone you forget all about yourself. But it is not as though you are not perceiving them, you are, and you know how you feel but not in a separated, alienated way.

So it's more this sort thing carried to the highest possible level. When everything becomes completely flowing and free and you are in complete harmony with your surroundings and in unison with what you are doing and the people to whom you are talking. You get that when people are working together sometimes. I imagine you get it in the theatre when you are acting.

V: Sometimes. I think it is possible to experience alienated awareness a lot as well.

S: Yes, well perhaps a better example might be a small group of people who are playing and improvising together, musically.

V: Yes, very much so.

S: When you are in touch with one another and you are aware of what you are all doing but you are completely absorbed in it, though you are responding to one another and all moving along together. Even though sometimes somebody takes the lead and goes off at a tangent everybody responds to that without thinking.

So it's more like that. That your Bodhisattva life becomes, or your spiritual life at least becomes a sort of constant free improvisation with your separate self totally immersed or absorbed in what you are actually doing and no longer existing separately. It is more like that. And people do get glimpses of this even in their ordinary experience, otherwise we shouldn't be able to understand the idea of it at all, it would be just words. But there is something analogous in our ordinary experience at its best moments.

V: Do you speak in terms of integration in two levels, because I sometimes get a bit confused about this. Integrating sort of psychologically and the integration you have been talking about just now?

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S: They are a bit different.

V: They are different, could you explain the difference.

S: What I am talking about now seems something much more total, much more advanced, even.

V: What then is the psychological integration, how can one ...?

S: It's more like an integration, a bringing together of opposite aspects. Like, for instance, the emotional and the intellectual.

V: That's the psychological integration?

S: Yes.

V: And without this integration no spiritual growth or integration in a higher sense is possible?

S: One wouldn't say that. It depends whether you're on a path of regular steps or a path of irregular steps. But certainly no very serious progress is possible without a very large measure of even psychological integration.

V: It comes back again to positive feeling, that that's not possible ...

S: Positive feeling, this seems to be the key, it seems to be the link, the bridge if you like. So the positive feeling at its climax melts all the hardnesses and the rigidities so that everything starts flowing.

V: So then on this level, when you talk, I think you've talked at least about integrating the, as it were, darker side of yourself, how ...

S: I think this is all at a lower level. I'm afraid I must sit down sometime and think it all out systematically. But I think this is at a lower level, that's what I feel anyway when you ask and then when I start considering that, I feel as though I have come down to a lower level at once.

V: It's just that the distinction in my own mind is very unclear and I just wanted to clarify it.

V: You talk about integration quite thoroughly in that middle lecture that you gave in Auckland.

S: That's right. I want to write up that and expand it, in fact all those three. I won't say I talked about it quite thoroughly but I talked about it more clearly and systematically than I have done anywhere else. But it is integration in this, as it were, psychological sense.

V: So integration in a psychological sense is bringing together opposites, and the other sort of integration that you have been talking about is...

S: Is more like integration with reality.

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V: (unclear)

S: Yes. Perhaps it is more like an analogy than a real similarity. There's an alienation from oneself or parts of oneself on the purely empirical level and then there is an alienation from reality which means also an alienation from your own, sort of, true way of functioning.

V: So, I think... final merger into.

S: I'd be suspicious of this language of merging into though I have used it a little bit. What were you going to say?

V: I was just going to say, are you referring to the higher level of integration as..., when you are using the word spiritual integration? How could one ...

S: I've not actually used that but one could use that. Meaning by that integration, as it were, with reality. A state of non-alienation from reality and you are alienated from reality when you split it up into subject and object and an actually existing, real relationship between the two.

Perhaps you could say, and I've only just started thinking about this, perhaps you could say that psychological integration is the overcoming, or the resolving of an alienation of different parts of oneself, or within oneself. Of bringing together of those. But then that is done only within a context of overall alienation. You are integrating something which is itself alienated

from reality. It is more like that.

So having integrated what is alienated within yourself you have to integrate that alienated self itself with the reality from which it is alienated.

V: Well then could you have an integrated self that is alienated from reality?

S: Yes. Again one mustn't press it too hard. If you were integrated within yourself you would stand a much better chance of integrating with reality. You would in a sense be a little bit in that direction.

V: I suppose that's what it's like in the higher evolution, becoming firstly a human being and then going on...

S: Yes, you could say it was a healthy alienation in the sense that it was open to the possibility of reintegration with reality. It didn't offer any active obstruction to it, it was just a limitation, or a lack of development, you could say that. But as I say, I have to sit down sometimes and think about it systematically, but this is just what I see at the moment.

V: Is it then impossible to have a dis-integrated self in integration with reality?

S: Yes and no. Again one is discussing in terms of parts and whole which is really quite inadequate. But one could say that yes, it is possible to have an alienated part of yourself somewhat, or very slightly integrated with reality. This is what happens when you get the very weak vipassana, which is hardly more than an intellectual understanding. But it is [319] something more, very weak vipassana which you can't sustain because of your own dis-integrated state, your own disrupted state.

So it becomes a bit complicated and one is discussing the whole subject in very crude terms, really.

V: At the same time I can see then, the object, on this level anyway, of things like Mindfulness of Breathing practice, Metta, etc. as a preparation.

S: You can have a very healthy integrated person, a well balanced person with no internal divisions or schisms but not at all in contact with reality. And you can have a very tortured, divided, difficult person who has got some contact with reality, at least with a part of themselves even though it is very tenuous and very weak.

V: This is why you get the very successful business man, or when I say business man - man of the world, quite successful, integrated?

S: He's the example of the first kind (V: of the first kind) he might be, yes he might be.

V: Is this where you get the neurotic composer who is very inspired occasionally and he goes for month on...

S: Possibly, it is analogous at least.

You also get the robust, healthy, creative type who is producing all the time and never stops, who is healthy and happy and cheerful and robust and hard-working and all the rest of it. Rubens seems to have been of this kind (laughter) regardless of the actual quality of his work which is, I understand disputed by some people.

V: Bach was one of those persons.

S: Bach was like that, very definitely. Shakespeare was like that apparently, so far as we know.

V: It seems up to a certain point that a very subtle stage of historical development...

S: Sometimes it is very difficult to know what to do, or what attitude to take. Because you might have two people, one is so nice and healthy and balanced and easy to get on with but there is nothing spiritually in common; but there is another person who is really difficult to get on with, tortured and neurotic and all the rest of it, but there is some sort of spiritual spark or spiritual contact. But ideally, one should have someone who is like the Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana scriptures, the ordinary Bodhisattva, not the archetypal one, who is healthy, balanced, cheerful, robust and capable but also with a very definite contact with reality as well. That is the ideal, the Greek ideal if you like at a much higher level.

V: Bach is a very good example of this actually (S: I think Bach is) In a way he was very highly creative throughout his whole career but he was completely integrated into society in a social..., totally accepted.

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S: Yes, worked hard, totally accepted, had an enormous family, had twenty children many of whom were musicians and some of them very good ones ... composers.

V: In fact every aspect of his life and career was integrated and related to a whole, even in a religious sense.

S: Yes, he was a faithful devout Lutheran, he believed in his religion and he was happy to serve it even in a very humble capacity. He not only composed music but he rehearsed choirs of small boys and produced music for special occasions. He did things like kept the church accounts and all sorts of things like that.

V: He's almost a supreme example, if you like, of that, I hate to use that word mundane, but in a very earthly sense he was very integrated.

S: Bach was a very good example, I think, in that sort of way. Although I must add I have not studied his life in detail, but at first sight it does seem that he was very much of this kind.

V: ... only when you get back to the Seventeenth Century you get this split, this alienation of the artist and the composer from society. Maybe that's a bit of a generalization, but there is this historical division.

V: When you think of the Greek ideal or ideals, take Socrates for instance, although in a sense one could say he was integrated, in another sense

S: Nietzsche thinks he was neurotic.

V: ... yes, he was neurotic or completely cut off from society.

S: I get that impression too.

V: Well Nietzsche can talk!

S: Maybe it takes a thief to catch a thief. He's very suspicious about Socrates' voice. The voice that used to say "don't don't".

V: The daemon

S: The daemon And also he is very suspicious of his over - I won't say intellectualism, that's the wrong word - the over importance he attached to bare reason.

V: It comes down to a sort of polarity... written a very good representative of the Dionysian spirit and the Apollonian spirit; two opposites.

S: I couldn't regard the Apollonian as the opposite of the Dionysian. I think that's a complete misrepresentation. The opposite of the dionysian is the academic with the apollonian standing in between.

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V: (Unclear)

V: If one is not integrated on the lower level, would it necessitate giving the lower level the attention or could you, as it were, overcome that by taking the higher level of integration as your aim and, as you mentioned before, working with positive emotion? Doing it in that way, is that possible do you think?

S: If you were working with positive emotion you would be gradually integrating yourself psychologically. Wouldn't you?

V: I don't know.

S: Well what else is it? It's just the freeness and the abundance of your positive emotion that makes you a psychologically healthy person.

V: (Unclear)

V: It cleans you out.

V: Could you just say that again?

S: Sorry I've forgotten it. (Laughter)

V: The freeness and abundance of your positive emotions makes you a healthy individual.

S: Ahh.

V: That's marvellous!

S: Do you do shorthand?

V: No, it's long hand.

V: ... people stop taking notes the conversation flows so freely...

S: No, if some are taking notes it's all right.

V: It also stops..., if you take notes it stops you trying to think about and remember things too much. You've got it down and you can free yourself to carry on.

V: Or greedily trying to...

S: There's also in this connection the symbolism of the endless knot. Which is one of the lucky signs isn't it, one of the eight auspicious signs. It has no beginning and no end, it is always flowing out from itself and flowing back into itself. This is also, I thought of this the other day when we were discussing the subject but didn't get a chance actually to say it, it's like the transference of merits. It's always flowing out from you, that is the merit, and it's always being received back, and then always being given away again.

You have some merits and you give them away, you share your merits but that is meritorious, so you gain more merit. But the more you gain the more you can give away, the more you give away the more you gain, in this way it is the endless knot. It just goes on flowing and flowing without beginning, without end.



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V: Very cleansing sort of idea.

S: It's just like Chintamani's pipe cleaner, like an endless pipe cleaner. A positive pipe cleaner.

V: More like a stream that's fed into a lake that then evaporates and goes back to the stream and ...

V: So ... preoccupying and integrating oneself psychologically because that becomes negative, you just try and cultivate positive emotions.

S: Yes. And of course this raises the question of how. But one of the most important things is being in a positive environment and association with positive people. It's a real drag associating with negative people. People who are unenthusiastic, always look on the gloomy side of things, who are certain that nothing is going to succeed. One should avoid the company of such people. It is much better to be in the company of cheerful sinners rather than the company of the gloomily virtuous. (laughter) Or the miserably pious. Or the dourly virtuous. What is it the Scots call it, I can't say it - the unco-good. It's the uncommonly good, but they abbreviate the uncommon. You get it in Burns as exemplified by Holy Willie. You should really read Holy Willie's prayer.

Have we finished that precept? I think it does summarize material that we've already encountered so perhaps we don't need to linger over it any longer.

It is also interesting what he says about, 'When you will have done this you will have no cause to regret that you did not meet the Venerable Atisa. For there is no other teaching higher than this.' Even if you had met him you couldn't have got more teaching than this. 'Nor in the future will anyone need to be disheartened that they did not meet old Drom, for there is no higher teaching than this for the accomplishment of Buddhahood'. If you meet with the teaching, if you meet with the precept, the right precept for you, then it doesn't matter that you couldn't meet the person from whom it originally came. Within the wider historical perspective, never mind that we couldn't meet the Buddha we've got the Dharma. The Dharma at least has come down.

V: The Buddha himself ... that by saying those who have seen the historical body don't ...

S: Yes, those who see the Dharma see me.

All right let's go on then.

"An Upasaka asked the teacher Drom, "Is it not true that abiding in love, compassion, and Bodhi-mind is always the cause, whether by direct or indirect means, of accomplishing the purpose of others?"

Geshe Drom answered, "It is, without a doubt, the cause of accomplishing the perfect purpose of others, and thus becomes the cause of your own perfected purpose. From the moment of abiding in love, compassion, and Bodhi-mind, you can call yourself a 'non-returned,' [323] for there is meagre possibility of your being born among the three lower states of being. At this point, it is only by the influence of very strong and sudden circumstances or very bad former activities that you can enter the lower states of being. Should this happen, by merely remembering for a fraction of an instant love, compassion, and Bodhi-mind, you will immediately free yourself from the lower states of being and certainly obtain the uplifted state of a man or god.

"Furthermore, as Santideva stated in the Bodhicaryavatara:

All happiness in the world Comes from wishing others happiness; All misery in the world

Comes from wishing your own happiness.

What need to say many things? Children do things for themselves, Buddha Sakyamuni does things for others - Look at the difference.

"Therefore, love, compassion, and Bodhi-mind cause the accomplishment of the great purpose of self and others."

S: So what is the difference between love and compassion on the one hand and Bodhi mind on the other?

V: One is the basis, the other is the result.

S: Mmm. We did go into this the other day, when on the basis of love and compassion or the positive emotional state at a very high level insight has arisen, then the love and compassion are retroactively transformed into the Bodhicitta. You notice that Drom is combining the two frames of reference, that is to say the Hinayana and the Mahayana in a quite interesting way. He says, 'from the moment of abiding in love, compassion and Bodhi-mind, you can call yourself a non-returner.' In other words he is equating the arising of the Bodhicitta with stream entry.

The arising of the Bodhicitta, you could say, is a more positive way of looking upon entering the stream. Within the context of the Hinayana, entering the stream is defined in terms of the number of fetters that you have broken. In a way it is a negative way of looking at it.

V: Isn't a non-returner a stream entrant?

S: Oh, a non-returner, that's much more isn't it. Sorry I thought it said stream entrant.

V: That suggests stream entry is before the arising of Bodhicitta.

V: The non-returner, he has broken, what, five fetters?

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S: The non-returner has broken five fetters.

No, I would say actually the arising of the Bodhicitta is synonymous with or equivalent to stream entry. I wouldn't agree that Bodhicitta goes as far as non-returning, unless one is thinking of a quite preliminary development of that.

V: You wouldn't say the arising of Bodhicitta is equivalent to stream entry?

S: Yes, I would.

It's also significant that Drom says, 'you can call yourself a non-returner for there is a meagre possibility of your being born among the three lower states of being'. If you were really a non-returner there wouldn't be any possibility at all, you wouldn't even return to this earth, not to speak of the lower states of being, so Drom can't be using non-returner in the strict sense.

V: He says later on that you could get knocked back.

S: Yes.

V: You said that you wouldn't return to this earth..., that you can have the choice.

S: The question of choice isn't being considered here, only in the context of karma. But the standard teaching is the non-returner does not return. This is what it means, he gains Enlightenment directly from a higher world without returning to this earth, not to speak of the

lower realms. That is to say the pretas, the animals and the beings in states of torment. So Drom can't be using the word non-returner at all strictly here, because if you were a non-returner there wouldn't be any possibility at all of returning even to this earth.

But apart from that one can say that the arising of the Bodhicitta within the framework of the Mahayana is equivalent, it's a more positive equivalent of the stream entry within the Hinayana.

V: Is that not as far as you would want to go if you wanted to remain, if you had taken the vow of a Bodhisattva because a non-returner means that you have no chance of ...

S: No, it only means that you do not return under compulsion, under the law of karma. But normally, according to the Mahayana sutras the Bodhisattva will avoid being reborn in higher planes, he doesn't want to spend any time there at all. From his point of view it is all time wasted, he wants to get on with his job of helping people on earth.

V: But you could say that the gods need as much help.

S: You could say but then the gods don't usually listen, we are told. They are so immersed in divine pleasures it is almost time wasted preaching to them. Unless you are a special kind of Bodhisattva with that kind of special mission, as it were.

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V: Is the non-returner actually reborn in the world of the gods or somewhere like Sukhavati?

S: No, it's not Sukhavati, the term is Suddhavaśa; the three worlds, it is said, at the summit of the world of form, and it is there that the non-returner is born.

V: And that's higher than the Devaloka.

S: Well they are all devalokas so you can say that the non-returner is reborn with the body of a god, as it were, but with the mental state of an anagami, that is to say with a consciousness which is mainly transcendental. So as regards his body he belongs to the world of the gods but his consciousness does not belong to the world of the gods. Though again you could say that his body is consciousness because this is a quite subtle level.

In other words there is a mundane body, call it consciousness if you like, within it or associated with it a transcendental or mainly transcendental higher consciousness. Again we are trying to express something which can't be very easily expressed in ordinary human terms. You could say that he has a subtle body, a subtle divine body and his consciousness is unchanged from what it was on earth. From his point of view, in a sense he has not gone anywhere. His consciousness remains the same, just as a Buddha's remains the same at the time of his Parinirvana, so the Anagamas consciousness remains the same but his gross physical body has been replaced by a very subtle divine body.

There is quite a lot about this on tape from one of the previous retreats, so I'm not going into it in great detail now.

V: The Udana.

S: The Udana, is it?

V: There's one point here that I've been thinking about a lot actually, for a long time and I still haven't got it clear. It seems to be suggested here that if you are equating stream entry now with the arising of the Bodhicitta, in a sense the stream entrant can't fall back from the path. Is that not so?

S: No, he can't fall back.

V: And yet, a Bodhisattva isn't irreversible until the eighth bhumi.

S: Ahh, not irreversible from being a Bodhisattva.

V: I'm sorry I'm lost.

S: He's irreversible from complete Buddhahood, not irreversible from Arhantship. In other words in what does his irreversibility consist. That he can no longer leave the Bodhisattva path, so if he falls from the Bodhisattva path he doesn't fall back into the lower realms he falls back into the Arhant path.

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V: So there is a limit to the distance you can, as it were, fall back.

S: Yes.

V: Or a stream winner isn't necessarily a Bodhisattva.

V: Well if the Bodhicitta has arisen he must be.

V: An Arhant is also a stream winner.

S: But of course from the point of view of the Mahayana the stream entrant and so on are also Bodhisattvas. The Mahayana states this.

V: They are not irreversible?

S: They have not even thought of attaining Buddhahood as Bodhisattvas, they do not think of themselves as Bodhisattvas though that possibility is there. So they cannot fall back into lower states, there is no question of them falling back from complete Buddhahood because they haven't yet made the aspiration, but they can develop the aspiration.

V: But if the Bodhicitta has arisen one is a Bodhisattva, is that so? (S: Yes) And if one isn't a stream entrant unless the Bodhicitta has arisen ...

S: No, I didn't say that, I said that they were equivalent within their respective frames of reference.

V: But they are not dependent on it. They are not ...

S: Not identical.

V: ... so one can be a stream entrant without the Bodhicitta having arisen.

S: From the Hinayana point of view you can be but from the Mahayana point of view when you become a stream entrant you are a Bodhisattva. They term such Bodhisattvas Hinayana Bodhisattvas.

So if then you consciously develop the aspiration for complete Enlightenment for the benefit of all then you become a Bodhisattva in the strict sense, or if you like a Mahayana Bodhisattva.

V: It seems as though a lot of confusion arises because people try to see it in terms of what actually happens which is like looking at in absolute terms. Like looking from the front backwards, whereas all we can do is look towards the goal. (S: Yes) In actual fact nothing happens, in a way because it's partly illusion.

S: Or partly, in a sense, a question of perspective. For some reason or another in Auckland, in

the Auckland centre among the Friends there is very special interest in this particular question of the relationship between the arising of the Bodhicitta and stream entry.

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Without trying to make out an absolute identification, certainly there is an inter-relationship between the two. I think the best way of putting it is to say that within their respective frames of reference they are equivalent. Which almost amounts to saying, though I don't quite say it, that they are different aspects of the same thing. One more negative the other more positive. But as regards the Bodhisattvas irreversibility, when he becomes irreversible it is not meant that before becoming irreversible he could fall away from the spiritual path altogether, but only that he could fall away from the specifically Bodhisattva path. He would fall back, if he did fall back, from wanting to gain Enlightenment for the sake of all to wanting to gain Enlightenment simply for his own sake, without thinking about other people.

V: Somebody had said to me over the arising of the Bodhicitta was that..., because of that question of going off one way, going off thinking "right I'm going to attain Enlightenment for the sake of myself and others ... there was this conflict coming.

S: Well you see that there is not that sort of absolute division. There is not really a real choice that is confronting you. It appears as a choice because you think of self and others as mutually exclusive, but once you realize that it is not see you have attained a higher point of view, and that is represented by the Bodhicitta.

V: Presumably one can't have such definite insight until the eighth bhumi, otherwise you are acting in accordance with that?

S: Well not fully, again it is a question of degrees. As when we speak of the weaker and the stronger vipassana, one cannot but use this language.

V: Is it possible that having become a stream entrant one can then fall back from that into..., from the path of Enlightenment altogether, from the path in general terms.

S: No, this is absolutely impossible.

V: The point of no return. (S: Yes)

V: You also said, I think, somewhere, once you've gained the Bodhicitta you can also lose it.

S: Hmm, let's think about that. You can lose the intentional Bodhicitta but you can't lose the actual Bodhicitta. I must check up on that, whether that was made clear on that seminar.

V: ... sounds a bit of a contradiction in terms.

S: Well, I am using the terms that have occurred here and elsewhere.

V: You can lose the intention or the desire. I mean, once you've got the absolute Bodhicitta, well then that can't be lost.

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S: The relative Bodhicitta is that love and compassion that you have, that aspiration that you have towards the Enlightenment for the benefit of all, before you have actually any glimpse of insight. So it is purely mundane and therefore it can be lost like any other mundane thing.

V: Coming back to what Uttara [said] about the Bodhicitta arising from the conflict of self and other. So then the Bodhicitta becomes something like the transcendence of those views?

S: The unification of a pair of opposites, yes.

It's as though Drom is saying, not that you really are a non-returner when you abide for a moment in love, compassion and Bodhi-mind, but that you have had a sort of glimpse of what it is like to be a non-returner. It seems more like that. If one takes his language literally it is quite self-contradictory. Because a non-returner can't possibly return. (end tape 15)

And perhaps he's also trying to emphasize the very great importance and consequence of metta, karuna and the Bodhicitta.

Maybe I ought to write to Geshe Wangyal and ask him how he clarifies that, that a non-returner can return, and ask him, maybe, to check the translation.

V: I think that fact that he puts it here in quotation marks indicates that it is not usually...

S: Possibly, 'you can call yourself a 'non-returner'.

V: But if anything should happen, coming from previous bad karma if you can remember even an instant of having, of having experienced something like that.

S: Yes, but something coming from past bad karma would not affect your status as a non-returner. It might make you suffer but it wouldn't effect your inner state, your inner transcendental consciousness.

V: Would that be true of mental suffering too?

S: There is no mental suffering in the strict sense at higher levels of being.

V: So anything that would come from past karma would presumably be only on a physical level?

S: Yes. Past bad karma couldn't bring you grief or sorrow or anything like that but it might cause you to physical disturbance and such.

V: Who would not experience the mental suffering, but only the physical - a non-returner, a stream winner?

S: Anyone who had attained insight. Even someone who had attained Dhyana states provided he was able to keep his mind in those states regardless of the pain. He would feel the pain as a physical experience but his mind would not be affected. In that sense he would not feel it mentally. He wouldn't be thrown into a state of grief or remorse or hatred or anything like that. [329] It's rather like for instance, to give you an analogy, supposing you're fighting, you are boxing or even doing karate, you might get quite badly hurt, but while you are actually fighting you don't even notice it, you don't even feel it because your mind is so absorbed, you are so intent on what you are doing. So it is a little bit like that.

V: It says here that it's the path of no more learning.

S: This is the path of the Arhants, because the Arhant has nothing more to learn. Anyway if one takes language literally it doesn't quite square with the general Buddhist tradition, so no doubt one must take it that what he says is not to be taken in the strict, literal, traditional Buddhist sense. Perhaps we can paraphrase it by saying that 'abiding even for a moment in love, compassion and Bodhicitta has tremendous consequences of a very positive and powerful nature

It could be that that is, in fact, a mistake for stream entrant, yes? Because the stream entrant is reborn on earth but he cannot be reborn in the three lower states of being, the three states of suffering.

V: It says here, 'there is a meagre possibility'.

S: Well, perhaps there is a slight contradiction in the text itself, again one would have to examine the expression 'meagre possibility'. Perhaps it is just a polite Tibetan way of saying no possibility at all. Like we say, "not much chance", when we really mean no chance at all.

V: But when it goes on to say if this happens and you fall into a lower state, if you merely remember for a fraction of an instant, I would have thought that if the Bodhicitta had arisen you wouldn't have ever forgot.

S: Hmm. It may be that it is talking about the intention of Bodhicitta, which you have lost, but even if you recollect it and remember that you had it once, even that is itself very meritorious and will help you on the spot.

You could say that from the moment of abiding in love, compassion and Bodhi-mind you can call yourself a non-returner in the sense that it is now very easy for you actually to become that, you are as good as they are, you have come so far that it's just a few steps further.

Anyway let's move on to the next story.

"One day an old gentleman was circumambulating the Ra-dreng monastery. Geshe Drom said to him, "Sir, I am happy to see you circumambulating, but wouldn't you rather be practising the Dharma?"

Thinking this over, the old gentleman felt it might be better to read Mahayana sutras. While he was reading in the temple courtyard, Geshe Drom said, "I am happy to see you reciting sutras, but wouldn't you rather be practising Dharma?"

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At this, the old gentleman thought that perhaps he should meditate. He sat cross-legged on a cushion, with his eyes half-closed. The teacher Drom said again, "I am so happy to see you meditating, but wouldn't it be better to practise the Dharma?"

Now totally confused, the old gentleman asked, "Geshe-la, please tell me what I should do to practise the Dharma."

The teacher Drom replied, "Renounce attraction to this life. Renounce it now. For if you do not renounce attraction to this life, whatever you do will not be the practice of Dharma, as you have not passed beyond the eight worldly concerns. Once you have renounced this life's habitual thoughts and are no longer distracted by the eight worldly concerns, whatever you do will advance you on the path of liberation."

S: What do you think Drom is getting at, what do you think he is really saying?

V: That it is the spirit of renunciation which is of central importance.

S: Yes, which renders fruitful all the actual religious practices, otherwise they are not really wholehearted, you are not really doing them. It says, 'if you do not renounce attraction to this life whatever you do will not be the practice of Dharma. Once you have renounced life's habitual thoughts,' etc. 'whatever you do will advance you on the path of liberation'.

So it is the spirit of renunciation, for want of a better term, that is important. Renunciation in the sense of withdrawal of one of those twelve positive Nidanas. Withdrawal isn't a very good rendering, it's 'sarana', it's more like I rendered it the other week - disentanglement - though that isn't literal. It's the opposite of refuge, it's 'nissarana', not 'sarana' but 'nissarana', disengagement, you could also say in the existentialist sense. Not taking refuge in something, here not taking refuge any more in the world, not regarding the world or worldly things as your refuge. Not taking refuge in the conditioned. It also suggests non-reliance because you see you can't rely on conditioned things.

V: What arises in dependence on that?

S: Dispassion, 'viraga', which is a state of calmness and freedom from unskilful mental states. Once you've given [them] up then you are free from what you have given up, you are no longer troubled [by] them. It's a state of undisturbedness. 'Raga' is passion, 'viraga' is dispassion, but again it has a very positive sound in Pali. It's also sometimes the word for renunciation, 'viragi' in Sanskrit is usually translated as renunciation. The renunciant is a viragi, one who has renounced, a wandering mendicant, it's one of the terms for him. The viragi, one who has given up everything, the one who doesn't own anything.

V: Would one say that it is insight that is the main factor in making a spirit of renunciation?

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S: Well in dependence on insight has arisen the withdrawal, and in dependence on the withdrawal has arisen the dispassion or renunciation, or whatever you call it.

V: Insight, withdrawal, renunciation?

S: Well, translating in that way, otherwise insight, disentanglement, dispassion - dispassion, as it were the state of standing aloof, not being moved by, not involved with any more. But again in a positive way, these are negative terms grammatically but we mustn't read them negatively or give them a negative connotation, that's quite important.

V: What was the next one?

S: After viraga, vimutti, freedom.

V: These are all descriptive of spiritual states and not psychological states.

S: Exactly, yes. Transcendental states.

V: Though one could put the opposite view that no matter how much one practices outwardly renunciation, that in itself, the ... the observance of it will never bring about the spirit of renunciation, unless there is insight there.

S: I don't think we should interpret withdrawal here in terms of insight but certainly a sincere detachment from worldly things.

V: What I'm getting at is the actual practice in an outward way of renunciation by itself can never bring about the spirit.

S: Well it can certainly help.

V: But by itself?

S: Well what do you mean by 'by itself', again this is an artificial distinction, is it ever really just by itself. Is there any completely external or completely mechanical action? I doubt that.

V: You'd have to have some basis.

S: Yes, however slight, however small.

V: Also the action can produce the mental state so that if you renounce something, like giving up something...

S: Well, meat.

V: ... something you are craving, that after a while you no longer mentally ...



V: Well that was what I was asking, does this actually happen?

S: Does what actually happen?

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V: The outward observance, in time, if you practice enough will actually produce the renunciation.

S: Certainly the outward action will have an effect on the inner attitude. One mustn't say only the outer action because it is never just an outer action. But for the actual development of insight there must be a positive, very genuine effort and that won't come by any amount of external activity even though that is connected with a relatively sincere inner attitude.

Also, Drom suggests that if you've got this right attitude this inner spirit of renunciation well it doesn't matter very much what you do, whatever you do will help you. This again brings us back to these subordinate roles, or the supportive activity. If you have got the right spirit of renunciation then it will do you just as much good making cups of tea and clearing up after other people more capable than you, do you just as much good as giving the lectures or leading the meditation classes or going off and starting new centres etc.

V: Even do more good than a whole day of sitting.

S: Yes.

All right, let's go on then.

"What is the difference between Dharma and non-Dharma?" the teacher Drom was asked by Po-to-wa.

"If something is in opposition to fettering passions, it is Dharma. If it is not, it is not Dharma. If it does not accord with worldly people, it is Dharma. If it does accord, it is not Dharma. If it accords with the Teachings of Buddha, it is Dharma. If it does not accord, it is not Dharma. If good follows, it is Dharma. If bad follows, it is not Dharma."

S: What does this remind you of?

V: (Unclear)

S: Right, it's very similar.

V: Sorry I missed that, what is it similar to?

S: The teaching that the Buddha gave to Mahaprajapati Gotami in the Pali Canon as to how she could recognize what really was his teaching, what really was his Dharma. It is very similar to what he said to her.

V: It's interesting too that the similarity here with the Udana text. It's like, that's very very old Buddhist material and this is early Buddhist material from Tibet. It's like it's a similar state of development.

S: Yes, but there is a sort of parallel because here is Atisa coming from India. He is coming into a new situation, he is coming into a country in which there is very little Buddhism. There was Buddhism before but it has been destroyed as a result of persecution and there is very little Buddhism and even less [333] real Buddhism, pure Buddhism. He is coming into a country into a culture that is not predominantly Buddhist. But he is coming into that situation with his wealth of knowledge and experience and so on and he is relating that directly to the actual situation in hand. He is giving precepts. Just as the Buddha, 'emerged' into the contemporary Indian situation with his Enlightenment which was quite incommensurable

with anything else that was known at that time and he just taught people out [of] his personal experience. He gave them precepts, which afterwards were collected together in scriptures.

So there is a sort of analogy between the beginnings of Buddhism in India and the re-beginnings of Buddhism in Tibet at the time of Atisa, as a result of the work of Atisa. No doubt he knew lots and lots of things that he didn't talk about at all. We know, in fact that there were certain things that Drom suggested he did not talk about and did not teach, for instance the Anuttarayoga Tantra teaching with its sexual symbolism and so on. Drom was very strongly of the opinion that this could not but be misunderstood by the Tibetans and he strongly advised Atisa not to teach that, not to make it known. Though Atisa was very well versed in it indeed. So Atisa respected that advice of Drom and did not give that teaching.

V: It seems to me that the spirit of the Dharma is far more accessible to us through this kind of material though. I feel..., speaking personally from the material in the earlier half of this book. (S: Mmm)

V: Again it's expressed in quite negative terms isn't it?

S: This is? (V: Yes) It really means if people are in a very worldly state of mind, a worldly situation the Dharma cannot but appear negative to them. Because it opposes whatever they are and wherever they are at, at the moment. Even the positive things of the Dharma assume a negative aspect, as it were.

V: ... anything which is secure ... static and which can stay still, security, something to hold on to ... You no longer have any hold anywhere, you can't rest anywhere.

S: Yes, you've no support. You can't take refuge anywhere, this is what it means.

V: But surely even worldly people would appreciate positive thinking again ...

S: I think the difficulty is when you hear positive terms and you take them in your worldly way. For instance you read that the Buddha says that you must develop love and you think it is love as you understand love.

In any case..., if you are really immersed in, attached to some particular state and the Dharma says that that state is devoid of any meaning, you can't help but react emotionally negatively. Even though maybe another part of your mind, your intellect may think, "yes this is true."

S: Yes, so you could paraphrase Drom as saying that if you are reacting to it then it must be Dharma. If you don't like the sound of it then it must be Dharma. (laughter) This is [334] why I did once say that some people take up Buddhism because they are very instinctively attracted to it and feel they have got something in common with it or feel an affinity for it, but sometimes, I said, it would be much better if they were to take up what they felt they didn't have any affinity for, and didn't feel attracted to, that would probably be safer.

V: Because?

S: Because it's as though you are attracted to something because you take it, or you experience it as an extension of something which is in you or with you already, but which in fact you ought to be getting beyond. In other words, you take to something because it seems to confirm your existing attitudes, even though those attitudes need to be undermined.

V: Quite often it seems..., I've felt myself that it seems that I have been doing everything that I don't want to do.

S: Well that's really good.

V: Well that's what I said but I'm beginning to question it. If I didn't want to do it, I'd do it and

if I wanted to do it I wouldn't.

S: All right let's go on to the next one. Here's another Kadampa teacher now, Geshe Gon-pa-pa. Let's see what he has to say.

"Geshe Gon-pa-pa said, "Omniscience is founded on merit and wisdom. Merit and wisdom are founded on Bodhi-mind. Bodhi-mind is founded on love and compassion. The precepts of all these are founded on the Six Transcendences.

"Further, Giving is founded on nonattachment. Moral practice is founded on reliance on spiritual friends. Patience is founded on humility. Effort is founded on meditation on death. Meditation is founded on dwelling in isolation. Wisdom is founded on mindfulness. Blessings are founded on your faith and respect for the Lama and the Three Jewels. Siddhis are founded on vows and obligations. Excellence is founded on hearing, thinking, and meditating. Being of service to others is founded on desirelessness. The progress of self and others is founded on meditation and devotion."

S: There's quite a lot in a few words there. 'Omniscience', that is to say Enlightenment, Buddhahood, 'is founded on merit and wisdom'. I think that is quite straightforward because we've gone into that already.

'Merit and wisdom are founded on Bodhi-mind', Bodhicitta. That seems quite straightforward.

'Bodhi-mind is founded on love and compassion. The precepts of all these are founded on the Six Transcendences.' In other words you develop these by way of the general practice of the Six Paramitas.

But then further, 'giving is founded on non-attachment', [335] that's pretty obvious. Unless you are not attached to things you can hardly give them away.

'Moral practice is founded on reliance on spiritual friends'. How is this so, do you think? Moral practice meaning sila, the second of the Six Paramitas.

V: That one derives inspiration from ...

S: Yes, right, you are influenced by the company that you keep.

V: Can I just go back to the beginning for a second. In the sense that, could the opposite be true that giving is founded on attachment? In the sense that one only really ... benefit if one is attached to something therefore it's an effort to give it up.

S: Well why does it have to be an effort? Can't you enjoy your spiritual practice, even giving things away?

V: It depends, I suppose if you look at it as a means of developing that giving attitude or as...

S: But there has to be a little non-attachment to begin with, just a grain of it before you can even give as a sort of disciplinary measure, to get rid of your non-attachment.

V: So giving oneself is non-attachment to oneself.

V: I think there is a great enjoyment to be derived from giving something that one is attached to.

S: Well I suppose the enjoyment arises from the element of non-attachment which has made the giving possible.

V: It's like banging your head against a brick wall, it's really nice when you stop!

S: Right, what about, 'Patience is founded on humility'?

V: That means there isn't a, sort of ... of being kept waiting, which is a sort of over evaluation of oneself, ones importance, "why am I being kept waiting?"

S: Why should I have to put up with him?

V: Yes, but if you just accept it you are not... (S: Yes)

V: Why should he ...

S: No. I think that's rather going to the opposite extreme Ananda.

Humility here doesn't mean the rather self conscious, self abasement that sometimes goes under this name, but just a quite objective appraisal of oneself and ones importance. Neither overvaluing oneself nor undervaluing oneself.

What about 'Effort being founded on meditation on death'. You think you've not much time, probably, no time to lose, no time to waste, better get on with it. Don't let death catch you napping, do it now, you may not live to do it tomorrow.

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V: That's probably one of the few negative attitudes that perhaps ought to be encouraged in the West. Do you agree with that?

S: I'm not quite sure, because some people might feel, "well if we might die tomorrow, what is the use of doing anything today, we can't do very much".

V: You can refer them to Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress". (S: Yes) He uses death, the call of death as an excuse for ...

S: A hedonistic argument, eat drink and be merry for tomorrow we die, it can work that way round too, if you are not careful. So you have to be careful to whom you address this sort of reflection, or this sort of exhortation.

V: At least you'll put a wholehearted effort into what you are doing.

S: That's true! (laughter) That's something in this half hearted world. At least you will be royally drunk.

V: It think, was it in Don Juan, I haven't read it but I've heard people mention it that he gives the teaching that death is always waiting over your left shoulder and if you don't believe me take a glimpse now and again. And you can actually, just by doing it get a sort of feeling that there is something lurking behind you, spurring you on.

S: There's a cold bony hand already on your shoulder.

V: It could stop you from doing anything couldn't it, if you felt like that?

S: Yes, it depends on your temperament.

V: It frees.

S: Perhaps you should sometimes ask yourself, "well supposing I did know I was going to die tomorrow, how would I spend today?" Some people would spend in turning out draws and putting everything in order, some would have a glorious party, others would spend it meditating, no doubt. Some would spend it writing letters, others would spend it doing nothing at all.

V: I'd spend it worrying.

V: (Unclear)

S: Others would spend it getting out of their winter underwear.

V: I wonder if anyone would actually meditate on death.

V: Others would die of the shock.

S: It might be an interesting question to ask oneself. How would I spend the next twenty four hours if I knew definitely that I was going to die at the end of it.

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V: Gotami once did this in Glasgow in the meditation centre... the mindfulness of breathing, trying to cultivate that attitude, that at the end of the meditation, if you were going to die at the end of the meditation. Trying to get more of an effort into our meditation.

S: Though as I said we shouldn't use this sort of exhortation to everybody because some people might feel, "well if I am going to die at the end of the meditation I don't want to meditate, I want to do something else."

V: Actually, when you said that it occurred to me that what a lot of people do in that situation is start reflecting [on] their life, I don't think they particularly get on with concentrating on watching the breath going in and out.

V: You might get rid of a lot of hang-ups that way ...

S: 'Meditation is founded on dwelling in isolation'. That's pretty obvious isn't it, at least a measure of isolation, even when you sit in a room by yourself and meditate, you are isolated for the time being at least. You need a certain amount of separation. I also think, I've been thinking about this a little bit the last few months, that you need more actual space for meditation than you usually get. I think quite often we are much too crowded when we meditate together, whether we are in a shrine room or wherever we happen to be. I think if possible we have to bear this in mind at the new London Centre.

If necessary have more classes for fewer people and more space. I don't think it is at all good to have people too close together.

V: Because each one affects each other?

S: In a way, but it's just the feeling of having people too close and too much on top of you, not enough room, no space for your aura to expand, as it were.

V: I used to find this very difficult at Albermarle when there was six of us in the shrine room. I just couldn't get into it at all, didn't want to be there, crowded out.

V: I find that even doing yoga, even my room even though objectively I have enough space I just notice the occasion that I do go into a much bigger room how much easier it is, even though I have actually got enough room in the smaller room.

S: You need space for your aura too. Not just your physical body.

V: It's strange, when I was ill a few weeks ago and I tried to do some meditation, just in my room with nobody else there - a solitary situation. I tried to but I was overcome by feelings of panic, almost, because I couldn't get out of the room. And I almost had this real terror that I was almost being imprisoned, and I just had to walk out, I just couldn't handle it.

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S: I remember when we had our big retreat in New Zealand, we had it in a Scout camp, and the room we turned into the shrine was a very big one, like a hall. Though there were thirty we had plenty of space and some people remarked on this afterwards, that it had helped them very much and they had much better meditations because there was always so much room. There were plenty of windows also, plenty of light and plenty of air, though sometimes it would get a bit hot, I must say, in the hot weather. But certainly there was space and light, I think this is quite important.

V: You don't think it's valuable, or could be valuable to some people to use that feeling of being in prison to overcome the oppression. If you feel the restriction you could meditate on the feeling that it brings up.

S: I don't think that is very useful. It's like saying you could get yourself infected with a certain disease so that you can meditate the effect of what it is like to have that, but it seems pointless.

V: Do you think your aura has got a coefficient of thermal expansion.

S: What's a coefficient of thermal expansion.

V: Well as things get hot they tend to expand very few thing contract. I was wondering when you are feeling hot and meditating you do definitely need, it seems, a lot more room around you. If you are sitting in a cold room, wrapped up in a blanket you seem much, perhaps smaller. All material things have a coefficient ...

V: One of the things I've noticed being here ... the feeling of more space in amongst people, I've noticed that quite strongly even though it being close, it feels like there's more space.

S: Well people are together but there is no one neurotically hanging around anybody else, as it were. Or they are not neurotically huddling together in little groups to escape their own isolation. People who are quite happy with other people but they are quite happy to wander off on their own too.

V: I often [do] this in the morning over breakfast, I really can't sit at that table ..., I really feel that I need to go outside and have room.

S: This maybe [is] because you have spent the night in a room with other people, so that you haven't, for the previous ten or twelve hours, been on your own. And I think it is really necessary for practically everybody to be on their own, completely, for some part of the day. If you have spent the night on your own then you don't mind so much being with people during the day but if all night you are in the same room with other people, even though you are dreaming, although you are asleep, you are still, subliminally aware of that. But if you are with other people all night and also with other people all day, if you are a healthy person there will be an element of strain. You need to be on your own completely, physically for part of the day, preferably for several hours at least.

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So if you have spend the night in a room with other people even though you have been asleep, it is a quite healthy tendency to want to be on your own, you are restoring the balance, as it were.

V: But in primitive societies you don't get very much of this do you? You get whole families, in some societies, sleeping in one room and then in the day they are, either the men go off together hunting, everyone is together for most of the time.

S: I don't know how much you can generalize, I'm not sure about that. In any case, one is dealing with primitive communities, perhaps with not a very high degree of development of

individuality in any sense. I did say a healthy person, meaning also a psychologically healthy person, someone who was to some extent an individual could not bear to be all the time with other people and only with other people. They quite objectively need to be on their own for part of the day. It is a very unhealthy, stuffy sort of situation if you have to be with other people all the time, day and night, and never get a chance to be on your own.

V: I noticed this the other evening, at the end of the day, everybody had gone to bed, I went downstairs into the kitchen and just pulled up a chair and sat down. It was like undoing bands, something just went ... (breaking sound)

S: Do people in general find this, or have they noticed it?

V's: Yes.

V: Especially sleeping. I haven't noticed it so much on this retreat, but previously very much affected by other people sleeping ...

S: On retreats (V: Yes). But sometimes it's partly that one isn't used to it and also sometimes simply that the room is quite small or there is a low ceiling.

V: Could it depend on the type of person?

S: Of course partly that. Some people that you may have to share room with you might in fact be feeling very negative towards but you have to sort of suppress it in the interest of general politeness and that sort of thing.

V: Ratnapani and I at Albermarle shared the same bedroom for four months because it seemed the most practical arrangement and I've never slept continuously in the same room with anybody else before. It was quite interesting, my behaviour was deliberately more restrained in that situation but I don't think that it had a negative effect, just for a period.

S: Yes, and also you were able to be on your own during the day and work on your own and go out for walks on your own, so you can balance. (V: Yes, true) I say, that if you can get away on your own during the day it doesn't matter that you share a room with one or even more other people. And at the same time if you can be on your own at night it doesn't matter [340] that you are with other people the greater part of the day. I think you shouldn't be twenty four hours with other people. This is partly why I think the usual domestic arrangement, especially marriage arrangements are quite unhealthy, that two people are always together. Especially if they go out to work as well, that they never have the chance of being on their own, they are with other people all day and they are with at least one other person all night, maybe there are children, too, in the same room. This is quite oppressive and unhealthy.

V: I found this very very strongly living in Cambridge, when I was working at home and also sleeping in the same room as ... And sometimes, well near enough every day I had an urge to go off, just walk off, go out for a walk on my own.

S: This is a quite healthy human tendency, that you need some time to yourself, some time completely on your own or on your own with your work, or just on your own doing nothing. I think it's absolutely essential, it is a sort of mental hygiene that you should have that time and space to yourself. I think if you can't get it pressure builds up. I think this is one of the reasons why pressure builds up in the nuclear family situation, where husband and wife are always together and they must get on one another's nerves, it is impossible that they shouldn't. At the same time there is no socially acceptable provision, apparently for their spending some time on their own. They are not supposed to go off on separate holidays, or not even supposed to go off on a walk without taking the other one with them apparently, in some cases.

V: If you have been a child who has been at a boarding school and who have never even had a

room to yourself then you value it even more.

V: I find it very important to do my own practice on my own, I just couldn't sit and do a good practice at the centre because I spend most of the day with other people doing classes and so on.

S: Yes. So even if your being with other people is very positive and for excellent reasons and thoroughly worthy reasons, you still do need time for yourself. Unless you are an absolute Bodhisattva, that's another matter and out of the question for most people for the time being.

But even a healthy, and perhaps all the more a healthy human being needs time to himself or herself. If you haven't got that need you probably have not yet really reached the human level. You are just living in a heap with other people, it is a nest or a sty, not a human habitation.

V: I've felt this urge for physical space as well as mental space. Living and working in the city for a long period of time I kept finding myself drawn to large buildings, art galleries and libraries and just enjoying the space.

S: Ahh, yes. (laughing) - you could even try churches!

V: I must say I noticed that when I moved to Abhirati. The first morning I woke up, after living nearly two years in a small cottage. I felt as though I expanded, [341] somehow, and not having any buildings immediately around, just gardens all way around. I was a bit worried about moving into Nelson (?)

S: You just have to go out for long walks under the open sky.

V: Also in Cambridge we lived in, there was a lot of traffic rolling right past the front door.

S: Norfolk is very good in that way generally, because you feel that you have plenty of space around you, you can see a long way in different directions. I remember when I was in Finland recently, I went out for a drive with Vajrabodhi and Bodhisri, the one drive that we did have the day before I came back and it was beautiful countryside not unlike this but with beautiful little pine woods and groves and lovely red rocks and the odd cabin. I thought a very spacious landscape. So Bodhisri said to me, "Vajrabodhi doesn't like this sort of landscape", so I asked why. She said, "he says it's too stuffy, he's used to Lapland." And he said then that in Lapland you can see thirty miles and you hear a dog barking twelve miles away distinctly, and he liked that feeling of openness and space.

So even a landscape like this is a bit stuffy, a bit narrow for him. He says he really enjoys his annual visit to Lapland, he's probably there at the moment in fact.

V: It seems quite natural then, fourteen million people living in London, we've got a lot of people with problems.

V: I noticed when I was travelling East, going through the deserts, I was just travelling with two other people in the middle of the Afghani desert, just three of us, there was an incredible sort of freedom. Indescribable in any other way, the isolation was very powerful and very positive.

S: Perhaps we have to face up to the fact that there are too many human beings in the world. They can't go on increasing indefinitely anyway, they'll all go crazy. They'll get so much on one another's nerves. For hundreds of thousands of years human beings have lived in very small tribal groups with plenty of space around, in the midst of nature, and hardly impinging on other such groups, other such tribes. Maybe seeing them occasionally in the distance.

V: Actually, Bhante, you will be pleased to know that the rate of increase of population is now perceptively slowing down.



S: Is this throughout the world?

V: Yes, official statistics show this ... to slow the rate of increase.

S: Oh, that's quite interesting. Well, I'm sure we've made our own very positive contribution to that!

V: It's still increasing at an alarming rate but the rate of increase is reducing.

S: That's quite interesting. It's no longer what Surata calls an exponential growth rate.

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V: It's interesting to see if you go to parks, I've noticed this a lot over Hampstead Heath. If you walk over Hampstead Heath, you see a few people, on a sunny day, a few people wandering here and there and people sitting down and then you get into Kenwood and there is suddenly a great concentration of people. I notice this in other places, with some people there is a tendency to collect together, and they don't like, they feel a bit (well I'm not sure that they feel) but they like to be all close together rather than spreading themselves out.

V: Herd instinct.

V: On beaches and things like this this happens.

S: Some people go straight for the crowded beach.

V: You get this at Richmond Park, you walk through the gates and there is this vast great park, you can go anywhere you want and be on your own and there are these little huddles of people in the car park, round their car with their camp tables and the picnic.

Something I noticed when I came back from Norfolk, having been used to all that space and the facility of being able to go out for walks; when I got back to London I had to spend quite often three or four hours just walking out in London because I couldn't stand being inside.

In that light would you say that it is a desirable thing to meditate outside rather than in a shrine room?

S: Weather permitting. We did used to have it sometimes at ... though we were badly bitten by midges and things like that, even wasps, stung by wasps.

V: I think it can be quite distracting, if there are insects around.

S: Yes, quite a few people didn't like it at all because it was such a nuisance in a way, keeping away the midges and all that kind of thing and they couldn't get comfortably seated. And the noise of the insects, all those grasshoppers and things, to say nothing of wretched birds! (laughter) So you wanted to get back into a nice quiet house. And it was very hot outside, sometimes. So in the end we more or less abandoned it, but meditation outside can be very good. In New Zealand we had study outside on the banks of the river and even private ordinations outside, which was very good.

Anyway I think we have gone over time, well over, so we'll leave the rest until tomorrow.

V: Would you say it would be a good idea for Order members living and working in London to spend more time ...

S: Well, those who feel the need. Some people quite like the city and they are quite happy there and it doesn't bother them.

V: Subhuti seems to be like that.

S: Well, luckily, yes. Though he really enjoyed his last visit to Norfolk.

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V: ... and that's really very useful to him.

V: I think it can be inspiring if you've got something to do.

S: I think it's finer if you've got nothing to do!

V: Well, you know what I mean (laughter) you do know what I mean, providing you've a creative thing to do.

S: Well not necessarily. I think one should be able to be quite happy just doing nothing at all. Not even anything creative.

V: You can stagnate.

S: You can but stagnation is one extreme and artificial restlessness is the other, you are certainly more prone to stagnate in the country and you are more prone to restlessness in the city and over stimulation. I think a dumb and sluggish person needs to live more in the city and maybe a very restless and susceptible sort of person in the country.

(Confused voices) - Maybe you will have to start swapping!

V: ... and I are going to swap, aren't I want to go and live with ...

S: And are you going to get behind Dhammadinna's typewriter.

V: I wouldn't mind actually but Dhammadinna says I have to support them all at the same time.

S: I think it would be much better if they got together and both supported you! (laughter)

V: I suppose we could do ...

S: Assert your rights and support him.

V: You could ... take in washing.

Day seven.

S: Right, page 143.

"Yer-bay-shang-tsun said, "When we desire liberation from the depths of our hearts, we should, through continuous contemplation of the imminence of death, always abide in thoughts and deeds in the four qualities of the Aryas.

"These four qualities of the Aryas are: to be satisfied with simple religious dress, to be satisfied with meagre food, to be satisfied with a poor cushion, and to be satisfied with the minimum of medicine.

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"Said in another way, these four are: to be desireless, to be content, to be easily sustained, and to be easily satisfied. To be desireless is to be unattached to all possessions and not to desire many or good things to maintain oneself. Contentment is to be happy with simple things. To be easily sustained means to subsist with meagre and poor food, a poor cushion, and simple dress. To be easily satisfied means to be content with scant alms and recognition.

A person who lives in this way is said to be abiding in the four qualities of the Aryas, as all his practice of Dharma is directed toward enlightenment. A person who is completely taken up with worldly desires is not abiding in the four qualities of the Aryas. Instead he is said to be abiding in the qualities of the devil, for abiding in nonvirtuous activities is the cause of rebirth in samsara's lower states.

"If we do not give up the desires of this life now, we will come under the influence of attachment again in future lifetimes. To give up the desires of this life, the most potent counter measure is continual meditation on impermanence. If you do not meditate on impermanence in the early morning, by midday you will have many desires."

S: First of all this word 'Aryas'. In what sense do you think it is being used here?

V: Monks.

S: Not really. It is not being used in its original racial sense, obviously and it is probably not being used in its highest sense, that is to say the stream entrant and so on up to the Arhant. But certainly those who are spiritually noble, those who are spiritually sincere or even advanced. But it is true that the first explanation of the four qualities of the Aryas, which is probably the original one seems to apply more to monks, to Bhikkhus and the other way in which it is said, the other interpretation other explanation seems to be of more general applicability. As though it is an attempt to widen the interpretation, to get the spirit of the teaching so as to include everybody, regardless of whether they are monks or lay people.

So in the case of the first interpretation, 'to be satisfied with simple religious dress' this means ones three robes as a monk. 'To be satisfied with meagre food', even one meal a day. 'To be satisfied with a poor cushion, cushion is probably the Tibetan way of looking at it, it is just seat in Sanskrit and Pali, it's just the comforts and conveniences of living, a sort of bedding roll for all purposes. And, 'to be satisfied with a minimum of medicine'.

But the broader interpretation is 'to be desireless, to be content, to be easily sustained and to be easily satisfied.' Contentment is to be happy with simple things, so clearly it is the simple that is intended here.

'A person who lives in this way is said to be abiding [345] in the four qualities of the Aryas, as all his practice of Dharma is directly towards Enlightenment'. What do you think this teaching, on the whole, is stressing?

V: Simplicity

S: It's stressing simplicity, yes. It is also stressing the importance of the recollection of impermanence in order to limit or restrict or discourage the inordinate desires which otherwise would spring up and prevent one leading a simple life. You can only lead a simple life if you remember what life is really for.

How do you think this applies to people now days, leading a simple life? What would it involve in present day terms?

V: A revolution (laughter)

S: Well that we know, but more specifically?

V: Not having too many things.

S: Not having too many things, which usually means of course not staying in any one place too long. If you stay in one place too long you automatically accumulate. Otherwise you should have frequent jumble sales and get rid of all your surplus possessions. Trouble is you would probably have an enormous stock of things just circulating in the Movement itself,

going from one person to another.

V: I tried to get rid of my briefcase a few years ago and I couldn't do it. I kept finding it coming back Buddhadasa's got it now.

S: Buddhadasa needs it.

V: It's true though, you've got certain things it's very hard to get rid of.

V: There's always a jumble sale.

V: That's what I did with it, I gave it to a jumble sale!

V: I'm sure it was a nice present for you.

S: At the same time perhaps it should be insisted on that a simple life should not mean a squalid life, there is a middle way.

V: Do you think it is a good idea in these days to continually meditate upon impermanence?

S: Why do you say these days?

V: Well you could get a bit gloomy!

S: Well as we said the other day it depends upon the effect it has on one's own mind. If you find it exhilarating and inspiring to meditate on impermanence and death, well that's good, that's the practice for you. If you merely get depressed you shouldn't do it. Or you should do it after doing the Metta Bhavana.

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V: What is the correct way to do it, to meditate on impermanence?

S: What, do you mean the actual method or do you mean the state of mind?

V: The actual method.

S: Just to remember it, not to forget it and to turn over in one's mind, as it were, just as one repeats the mantra the different formulas or verses which embody this teaching and to reflect on them as one repeats them.

For instance the Theravadin would be Anitya vata sankhara over and over again. Impermanent are all compounded things indeed, anitya vata sankhara, anitya vata sankhara.

V: Bhante, would you think that it would be a skilful thing to encourage someone who leads a very complex life, like a business man or something, who is obviously anxious worrying about himself, to encourage him to get rid of these things? Do you think that is a skilful attitude?

S: If the business man will listen to you yes. But I was thinking more in terms of our own selves. When the business man comes along, I don't know how many business men are coming along to the movement at the moment.

V: Well, I use that symbolically to represent someone who leads a very involved, complex, worldly life.

S: What is the motive for such a person leading a simple life, why should you simplify your life? You only simplify your life when you want to get on with something which is very important to you. If you don't have anything that is very important to do there is no reason

why you should simplify or streamline your life. But if there is something that you very much want to do, well you want the business of living to get as little in the way as possible.

But if you think in terms of the accumulation of objects as the great thing in life then there is no motif for leading a simple life. So you have to give people the motivation first. There has to be something for the sake of which they are living, other than material things.

V: I think in a way, probably less likely, you could be just as attached to austerity.

S: Well, you get detached from riches, you get attached to austerity and then you give [up] being attached to austerity. This would seem to be the normal procedure.

I think we must beware of this sort of reasoning, it seems to come up fairly often that when is sceptical of the advisability of doing skilful things in case you get attached to them. This seems to crop up every now and again. Of course you will in a sense, as long as there is an ego, but you get rid of the unskilful by means of the skilful and you get rid of the skilful, or transcend the skilful, but means of that which is neither skilful or unskilful, i.e. the transcendental or the spontaneous.

V: Would you say that there is general lacking of austerity within the Movement? I mean austerity in ...

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S: I think squalor rather than austerity seems to be the rule in certain areas. I mean what is austerity? If you have got say a bare simple room with just the very few things that you need and they are all of decent quality, though simple, and if they are kept tidily, not to say aesthetically; then that is austerity. But just living in the midst of dirt and confusion, however few things you may possess is not exactly austerity.

You could say austerity is a form of elegance.

V: You get this in the architecture, the two main medieval Christian schools, there's the Cluniacs (?) and Cistercians and the Cistercians have nothing but beautiful proportions.

S: Right. Well clutter offends your taste, yes?

So I don't think there is austerity, in that sense, anywhere in the Friends, as far as I have observed.

V: Buddhadasa has very few things.

S: Yes, I was just thinking of Brighton and wondering whether that might not be an exception, probably it is.

V: ... is very simple.

S: It is very simple, Vajrabodhi, I must confess, tends to be bare rather than austere, if you know what I mean. Bodhisri does tend to the elegant. I think it was on my previous visit, not the last one, that Vajrabodhi happened to be thinking aloud and he said one day, referring to his room, "I don't think a carpet is really necessary". (laughter) And this last visit, I noticed it wasn't there.

V: He must have got over the carpet beating stage.

S: Anyway perhaps there isn't very much to be said about that.

V: What do you think of this sentence, "if you do not meditate on impermanence in the early morning, by midday you will have many desires"?

S: It draws attention to the fact of how quickly desires do spring up. And also to the fact that you can't lead a simple life unless you restrain those desires. Therefore you should constantly reflect upon impermanence. Not impermanence for its own sake, as it were, but so as to remind you of what your life is really all about and what you are really trying to do. That you have got quite a lot to do in quite a short time, you have no time to waste on unessentials. You want to simplify everything, make it, in a sense, as business like as possible.

Perhaps it suggests that when you wake up in the morning, or at least when you get up in the morning, you should just reflect, "well how am I going to spend this day, what part does this day play in my overall plan, my overall scheme? What contribution is this day going to make? Am I going to fritter it away or am I going to employ it usefully? Am I going to waste it or am I going to make the best use of it?" Because making the best use of it doesn't necessarily imply that you should be very busy in an external sense. You can decide to do nothing at all that day in a quite positive manner, and [348] that would be a very useful way of passing the day.

Also, there is the point that when you wake up in the morning, there is the danger that in as much as the conscious mind has been in abeyance, in as much as mindfulness has been in abeyance, in as much as the more instinctual side of one's nature will have taken over in the course of the night, that when you wake up in the morning, if you are not careful you will just start acting, just start behaving in a reactive sort of way. A slightly mechanical way because your mindfulness isn't fully functional, so you have to be extra careful at the beginning of the day, after your nights sleep. There could be a suggestion to that effect.

V: I found it very useful to start a mantra as soon as I wake up.

S: Some people, of course, do wake up very bright and mindful, but I think this isn't very general. You have passed a period of relative unconsciousness, you are emerging from that so you must be careful to regain your mindfulness. Reflecting on impermanence is one way of doing that, "now I have woken up, now another day is before me, what is the meaning of, the purpose of my life? What was I trying to do before I fell asleep?" Otherwise you can forget.

So the recollection of impermanence would tend to undo that unaware state which had interrupted the continuity of your recollection of the continuity of your mindfulness during the night. You have to get back to where you were before you fell asleep. You might have spent the whole of the previous evening having a beautiful meditation and puja and felt very uplifted and felt like meditating half the night, but then you go to bed and you sleep and you dream. In the course of your dream all sorts of things come up and you are in the end in a quite different sort of mental state and you wake up very, maybe drowsy and heavy and dull and not very mindful. You have got to [go] back, as it were, to where you were the evening before. You have got to become mindful, got to become bright, got to become clear. Otherwise you will just go drifting into all sorts of unnecessary activities, unskilful activities even.

One of the best ways of preventing that and reminding oneself of what the day is really for, what ones life is really for, is recollecting impermanence in one form or another, one way or another. Every time you go to sleep, in a sense, from a certain point of view, there is a great set back. You drift off into unconsciousness, your mindfulness is interrupted. You take a moral holiday.

There is a point of view from which this is quite necessary and quite healthy but even so one has to be quite careful. This is why in the precepts of the Gurus, no it was the Root Verses of the Bardo, there was this important statement about blending the state of waking and the state of dream, so that there would not be that sort of alternation between them. So it means, if possible, continuing the state of awareness into the dream state and also blending the energy and the creativity of the dream state with the waking consciousness.

V: Presumably though this isn't something that one can practice..., until one is quite advanced?

S: In a sense one doesn't need to think of it as a deliberate practice but if you are persistently aware and mindful during the day, something of that will percolate through. You will [349] carry something of that even into the dream state and you will find that you are aware in the midst of dreams, you know that you are dreaming. Sometimes you can even control or guide or direct your dreaming. So that mindfulness or awareness will not be completely lost even in dreams.

V: Aren't there certain practices you can do when you are just going to sleep?

S: Actually there are, but these need to be gone into quite carefully.

V: Dreams aren't karma forming though, are they? I mean ... actions when you are fast asleep surely don't...?

S: When you are dreaming you are not fast asleep. In a way responsibility continues even in dreams, you are responsible for that sort of general state of dullness. You are responsible eventually for, not exactly getting rid of it but of transcending it in that form. You are responsible for blending those sort of blind energies with the forces of the conscious mind and the higher awareness.

V: If the dream stated can be characterized by dullness why do you say it should be blended with the waking state? You say that the waking state should be blended with the dream state but then the dream state should be ...

S: Well you see the dream state is a very creative state. Dreaming is very active, it is sort of imagination, it has a certain richness, a certain vitality so you don't want to lose that. But what you want to do is blend the richness and vitality of the dream state with the clarity of the waking state.

V: Have you got any general advice to give on perhaps reflecting on something just as you are about to go to sleep?

S: Any form of practice just before you go to sleep is good, especially the mantra recitation. If you can, for instance, sit for your last meditation fairly late, provided you are not tired and if you can go to bed almost immediately afterwards and perhaps when you get up from your practice carry on chanting the mantra or at least reciting it to yourself, and fall asleep reciting it to yourself. This will, with a bit of practice, ensure that there is a sort of prolongation of mindfulness into the dream state, or into the sleeping state and will also help you have positive dreams and wake up feeling refreshed.

V: I did this once on a men's retreat at Court Lodge before I was Ordained. I was chanting the Padmasambhava mantra and I kept waking up in the night chanting it. Sagaramati was in the same room and he was doing the same thing and we couldn't sleep properly, there was a very funny atmosphere in the room, in the night. We certainly didn't feel, I didn't feel dull in my sleep; I felt quite terrified.

S: You were probably doing it a bit too forcibly, you should allow it to sort of sink down or sink in. Not staying awake and doing it in the ordinary sense, you should be sleeping physically, the senses all asleep but there should be some inner recollection. Mind consciousness rather than sense consciousness.

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I think very often people don't realize the extent to which their consciousness, their awareness and their general mental state goes up and down, not only in the course of the day but as from day to night time, and from night time to day time. You may go to bed in a very positive state but you may wake up feeling very negative, what has happened in between? Or you may even go to bed feeling very negative and wake up feeling very positive, again what has happened in between? You may go to bed feeling very meditative and calm and wake up feeling very

restless, go to bed feeling loving and wishing well to all then wake up in a very bad temper.

V: Even the different parts of the day that happens, I find. My state of mind goes up to great peaks to great depths within a few minutes and the cause if you reflect on it is very very tiny. A very small thing sort of triggers off a whole chain reaction.

S: Anyway generally we can say that the influence of the sleep state as a whole, so far as the level of awareness is concerned, is more likely to be negative than positive. If you've had a good nights rest of course you will wake up refreshed, if you are healthy. But if you are not careful you will wake up somewhat less mindful. So you need, at the beginning of the day, to make sure that you bring your mindfulness back to the level you had achieved in the course of the previous day. So the recollection of impermanence can help this.

V: ... a mantra, or can a mantra become mechanical? With the repetition of it.

S: What do you mean by mechanical?

V: I've heard it, seen it in some books, don't let it become mechanical.

S: Well what do you think is meant by that?

V: Unmindfully repeating it.

S: But can you do that? Do you think you can repeat it unmindfully?

V: I don't think so but I've seen it somewhere and that causes quite a lot of confusion.

S: But surely one can't repeat it with total lack of mindfulness, but obviously there are degrees. From doing it with just a little mindfulness and awareness and doing it with a very strong mindfulness and awareness. And obviously one should do it as mindfully as possible. I don't think there is any completely mechanical repetition, otherwise you wouldn't be repeating at all, you'd stop. The only sort of mechanical repetition is maybe when you record it and play the recording over and over again and maybe don't listen to it, just go out of the room, that would be mechanical.

Again this is an instance of the sort of thing I commented on a little while ago. "You want to be very careful about repeating mantras, don't let it become mechanical", almost as if to scare you off it. Even if it is a bit mechanical at first or very mechanical, never mind, go on repeating it and try to increase your awareness.

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V: Because I have had this hanging over me when I have been doing it, not really given myself really to it because..., am I doing it mechanically.

S: I just wonder, in a very general way, why there is this sort of self defeating attitude always. Because it is very widespread and you get it in all sorts of books, you are warned off meditation because if you do too much meditation you might become egoistic. You are warned off austerity because you might fall into the extreme of torturing yourself, you are warned off too much reading because it might make you too intellectual.

(End tape 16)

V: It's just that, the point I was trying to make earlier was that I think sometimes you do become aware, you do realize that a lot of things that you're perhaps doing are rather mechanical and you do seem to be doing them rather compulsively out of, just in a kind of blind mechanical kind of way. One does sometimes wonder, "well perhaps it would be better just to stop it all together", do you see what I mean?



S: Hmm, no, what I said wasn't necessarily any specific reference to what you said it was more of a generalization from many such statements that I have encountered. There seems to be this attitude with regards to spiritual practices in general, of always warning you against the danger of taking them to extremes in such a way that you are put off even getting started on that particular practice. Do you see what I am getting at?

V: It sounds like, whoever writes or ... these ideas, there is a lack of commitment, or a lack of willing to commit in that way. A really extreme example of this, I don't know whether it is true, I only heard it second hand, or even third hand, but I heard at Throssel Hole for instance occasionally that people there were given meat, people who had been there for a long time, to counteract getting attached to vegetarianism. (laughter) I don't know whether that is true but...

S: Well, whether true or not it is the kind of thing that I have in mind.

V: It could be true because I also heard someone else say that they eat meat because of their level of non-discrimination (?)

V: (Unclear) ... Chinese restaurant ...

V: I think this is verging on gossip. (laughter)

V: I don't know, I heard this from someone who has gone to Throssel Hole and has ... to Throssel Hole.

V: But the point's taken.

S: Whether true or not the story illustrates what I am getting at. I find it very very common, I keep encountering this. Sometimes in conversation with people and sometimes in [352] the books and articles and so on that I read. It seems very very negative and essentially destructive of the spiritual life.

V: I was talking to Dhammadinna about this, some beginners seem 'to find it difficult to accept this sort of idea of shutting off the gates of the senses. That if you find something that stimulates your craving it would be better to avoid looking at it or listening, or running away from that situation, whereas some people say you have to be able to go through it, accept it and not let it affect you. That sort of thing.

S: Well it depends on the nature of the thing. If it represents a certain of existence which is normally unavoidable, well obviously that is the attitude eventually you want to develop. But the question is how do you develop it here and now if in fact it does disturb you quite badly so that you can't get on with your practice. It's just as in the case of the baby, you hope later on the baby will be able to take solid food but in the meantime you give it milk. It just seems straight forward common sense.

V: It seems to me this ... , it occurred to me a while ago when I was reading a book by Trungpa, "Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism", this book really is about this whole situation of getting into the practice for the wrong reasons and ...

S: I think one need not bother about that.

V: ... this is what I was going on to say. I think there are two levels of application of the teaching. One for people who have not really contacted the spirit, obviously don't need to be warned about all this, they just have to get into the practice, the concentration and positive feeling and so on. But I think there comes a point when you really have done a certain amount of practice there is a danger then of this spiritual materialism creeping in.

S: Right, but then, well, what does that presuppose. OK., you've done a certain amount of practice or you are doing a certain amount of practice, that means, surely, you have a teacher,

so he will tell you about it personally. You don't want to write books about this sort of thing for the benefit of the general public that's only too anxious to have an excuse for not practising at all. So, "I'm not going to meditate and I'm not going to practise dana" they are going to say, "I don't want to get into spiritual materialism". This is a point that I was making just the other day when I wrote a little review of a book on Zen, with Zen stories and one of these stories was this famous one that you always get with the Great Master burning the image of the Buddha for fuel. What is the purpose of that story? No doubt the original context was, we are not told, though I imagine, it was something like this; that the keeper of that temple was a very good devout man who spent years looking after the temple and worshipping the images, had great faith and devotion but he had got a bit stuck in that and he was a bit, perhaps, narrow and a bit attached to all his images so the Master wanted to shake him out of that. So he deliberately burned the image for fuel and gave him a tremendous shock.

But how is that story taken in the West? People who have no devotion and reverence to begin with and they are given stories of this sort which seem to justify their lack of [353] reverence. It's just the same thing with this teaching of cutting through spiritual materialism, let's have spiritual materialism first, and then we can think about cutting through it. (laughter)

V: I think that's the conclusion a lot of people came to after reading that book, they were affected by it for a while quite strongly and then thought about it ...

S: But certainly you can fully understand Atisa telling these things to a disciple who has been on the path for some years but why tell the general public, especially the book reading general public?

V: Maybe he felt that the problem was so acute in that particular environment that it needed ...

S: Well it suggests that he had thousands and thousands of people who had been practising for years and years, which I doubt.

V: They were taken from lectures actually, weren't they, the book was taking from lectures.

S: Mmm, but no doubt thousands of copies have been printed and maybe it does do good to some who had got stuck in spiritual materialism but it provides lots of other people, I'm sure, with an excuse for not practising. "Trungpa's says we must cut through spiritual materialism", well so you have if you've got any spiritual materialism.

V: Often what we have is just materialism, not even spiritual.

S: Yes, right.

V: I don't know where I got it from but I heard a Japanese story, a Zen story or some bit of history about somebody who was taken to a temple and was shown around by the Roshi, and each time they walked into a particular shrine the Roshi politely bowed to the shrine, very humbly. And the man said, "what's this? I thought you Zen people stood on the Buddha's head and kicked it and spat at the Buddha". And he said, "you spit, I prefer to bow".

S: Anyway let's go on, having made those points.

"Again Yer-bay-shang-tsun said, "If you wish to obtain omniscient Buddhahood, you must be free of three entanglements. You must not entangle virtue with prejudice. You must not entangle activities of body and speech with fettering passions. You must not entangle meditation with inclination toward your own liberation. In short, you must practice the path of transcendent realization.

"What is the definition of transcendent realization? Widening what should be widened, it is the widening of wisdom. Constraining what should be constrained, it is constraint in activities. Heroic when heroism is needed, it is heroic opposition to fettering passions. Cautious where caution is needed, it is the caution which gives patience in times of adversity."

S: What do you think is meant by not entangling virtue with prejudice?

V: Just because one feels virtuous one shouldn't lord it around and say you are better than somebody else, or imagine that you are.

V: Could mean to idealize it (?)

V: Being dogmatic.

S: It could, of course, mean confusing matters of natural morality with matters of conventional morality. Are you familiar with this distinction? It came up on a previous retreat. Conventional morality and natural morality, this is a traditional Buddhist distinction which we find in the Theravada, in fact we find it right at the beginning of Buddhism.

Natural morality is that moral behaviour which is directly related to mental states. Conventional moral behaviour is that which is merely a matter of custom and tradition, or convention, and has no basis in psychology. Which is not necessarily related to a particular mental state. For instance, the example I gave was that you should eliminate craving, this is a matter of natural morality but whether you have one wife or two wives this is a matter of conventional morality.

V: Although the number of wives you have may be said to mirror your natural inner state of craving or desire.

S: It could do, it could do but not necessarily. You could be more attached to one wife than to four, yes?

V: I'm not quite sure what ...

S: For instance, under the heading of conventional morality are also included matters of etiquette and behaviour, for instance whether you take off your hat in a holy place or you keep it on, this is a matter of conventional morality. There is no necessary connection between keeping on your hat and a feeling of reverence, and no necessary connection between taking off your hat and feeling reverence. It is simply customary in one society or culture to show your reverence by keeping it on and in another culture to show your reverence by taking it off.

V: But is that to say, necessarily, that it is not accompanied by feeling? I seem to remember ...

S: Well, it may be accompanied by feeling but it is not the necessary expression of that feeling. You can just as easily express that same feeling in the opposite behaviour. So therefore it is considered very important to distinguish between natural morality and conventional morality.

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For instance in the case of the monk, that he wears yellow robes and shaves his head and so on, this is considered to be a matter of conventional morality, having nothing to do with natural or real morality. And it is, of course, only the matters of natural morality that have any direct connection with the question of karma, matters of conventional morality have in themselves not connection with the question of karma. They do not constitute karma.

V: ... it say though that a conventional morality, something that is a conventional morality can become a prejudice?

V: Where does the word prejudice actually come from? (?)

S: Literally prejudice, and I don't know what the original Tibetan word is here, prejudice means judging before - pre-judice. Judging about something before you really know about that thing. That is what prejudice really is.

So you must not entangle a matter of real, substantial virtue, a matter of natural morality with your prejudices about what is right and wrong, which may be based on local custom and convention and have nothing to do with essential morality. Nothing to do with skilful or unskilful mental states as such.

V: Supposing we take something like bowing before the Buddha, is that a natural morality or a conventional morality?

S: The feeling of reverence is a matter of natural morality, but how you show it is a matter, in most cases, of conventional morality unless you can say that there is a necessary psychological connection between certain mental states and certain bodily attitudes. There is that also to be taken into consideration. Otherwise it is just the same as with the illustration of the cultures that show reverence by taking off the hat and the cultures that show reverence by keeping it on. In most cultures, bowing the head is considered a token of submission, therefore respect, and therefore of reverence, because this is what you naturally do. This is what animals do, lower the head in front of the superior force, as it were.

V: There's also this idea that people have, they say that I'm not going to do that because it isn't natural, as if natural implied..., almost equating some kind of inertia ...

S: Well what they really mean when they say that it isn't natural, they mean exactly the opposite, it is not according to what I am used to, not according to my custom to my convention, that's what they really mean by saying it is not natural. It is simply not in accordance with the conventions to which I am accustomed.

It's a bit like the Catholics and their conception of natural morality, which is just the prejudices of the Catholic Church.

V: (Unclear)

S: So it is quite important to be sure within oneself whether you are really leading a moral life or whether you are really respecting the prejudices of your group. Moral life is essentially a matter of skilful mental states expressed in skilful behaviour and skilful speech.

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Perhaps it's the difference, in a sense, between virtue and respectability. Of course sometimes the two coincide but sometimes they don't. In other words you can be virtuous and respectable but you can also be very very respectable but not at all virtuous or quite virtuous and not at all respectable.

V: ... virtuous but not at all respectable.

V: That would mean that you were just a fish out of water as it were.

S: Yes, it would wouldn't it. (laughter) It would also suggest something seriously wrong with the society to which you belonged.

Right, 'You must not entangle activities of body and speech with fettering passions'. I think this is pretty obvious. 'You must not entangle meditation with inclinations towards your own liberation'. That is all your meditations and other spiritual activities should be oriented towards the goal of Enlightenment for the sake of all, in other words the Bodhisattva ideal.

What do you think is meant by, 'the widening of wisdom'? It is obviously a figurative expression but what do you think it is trying to say, the widening of wisdom.

V: A greater depth and richness of understanding.

S: Width of outlook, comprehensiveness of outlook. And it says also, 'constraining what should be constrained, it is constraint in activities'. My personal feeling is probably the translation doesn't quite catch the point. The point being that your philosophy should be broad and all inclusive, your sympathies, your outlook. Whereas your actual practice should be very specific and concrete. Do you see what I mean? Your understanding should be broad but in a sense your practice should be narrow.

V: Directed towards Enlightenment for all.

S: No not just in that sense, but in the sense that you stick to certain things very definitely. I think there is an aphorism to this effect in the sayings of the Gurus, the Golden Rosary of the Precepts of the Gurus, does anyone recollect it? That you can have a very broad outlook, a very broad principle, a very broad, even an all comprehending, philosophy but your practice must be, in a sense, even narrow. For instance take the case of Buddhism itself. One can feel sympathy and have understanding for all forms of Buddhism, you can have a very broad outlook, a very broad understanding, you take in Zen, Theravada, Tibetan Buddhism etc. You see how they all have their place within the total field of Buddhism, they all fit in, you are non-sectarian in your attitude, very broad in your approach. But when it comes to practise you must be narrow, you can't practice the Theravada meditation and also the Zen koan and Tantric rituals, you can't do it all together at the same time, you have to narrow your practice, to limit your practice, to constrain your practice, and just do the Metta bhavana or just do the Mindfulness of breathing.

So the sympathies should be broad, the outlook should be broad, the philosophy but the practice, in a sense restricted, even narrow. So breadth of outlook is appropriate where wisdom is concerned but restraint where activities are concerned.

V: Is it perhaps through constraint in activities that [357] one cultivates a breadth of outlook. The idea that there is freedom in limitation.

S: There's freedom and limitation, yes? It's just like in the realm of art, you could say, you can appreciate the art work of all ages but you have to stick to your own particular style. It would be inappropriate for you to try to carve statues of Greek gods and paint medieval alter pieces and produce some Chinese landscape paintings. No you appreciate them all, your sympathy is broad, but your own particular artistic practice is narrow, has to be narrow, relating to your needs and the needs of your time.

V: Really, does it not come down to understanding the essence, which all those different things grow out of? If you appreciate that then whatever you do will be in sympathy with that essence.

S: Yes, certainly. By being a true artist and following say your own path here and now you are, as it were, in accordance with the spirit of all true artists everywhere, of all times and all places.

But really there is no contradiction between breadth of outlook and narrowness of practice. The confusion arises when people think, "you've got this broad outlook and you must be broad in your practice", which is impossible.

V: Sometimes that means no practice.

S: Means no practice at all.

V: Many people have quite a broad philosophy of life but they don't want to actually ...

S: You can go to two extremes, you could have this sort of pseudo-universalism, this sort of breadth of outlook without this more specific practice and you can also be specific in your practice but with a very narrow outlook. And sometimes people can only be specific in practice if they cherish a narrow outlook, that this is the only way, this is the only method. That is unfortunate. To be able to have a broad outlook but also to have a limited practice, this is best. And probably without some specific limited practice like that he won't be able to get very far in the appreciation of all the other, in this case forms of Buddhism, for instance. Because your practice will bring you into actual personal contact with what all those different forms, all those different methods and practices are essentially about.

V: This is the theme of *The Glass Bead Game*, by Hermann Hesse.

S: Is it?

V: The rider of being relevant to your time and place, in practice, can you enlarge on that a bit?

S: Well I'm thinking not so much in terms of your personal practice but of the extension of that practice when you come to be teaching others. Your precept has to be specific. You may have great sympathy with all the precepts that ever were given, but in your present situation you have to give a [358] specific precept to the people to whom you are speaking and that may be in superficial agreement with some precept of the past and superficial disagreement with others. But in as much as it is oriented to the needs of the person to whom you are speaking, it is in essential agreement with them all, yes? You may urge somebody to go slow, whereas there are so many precepts urging different people to go more quickly. But your precept, though superficially it contradicts those precepts it is essentially in harmony with them. But you have to give a specific precept, you can't just give just very general advice. The more general the advice the less useful it is, it becomes then a sort of holy waffle that might apply to anybody in any circumstances, which doesn't help anybody.

(break in tape)

V: People don't like staying, sticking to a specific..., well very often don't seem to like sticking to a specific practice. They start by doing one thing and then they want something more, something extra, something ...

S: I think very often they are just looking for something interesting. Of course one must also consider it may be that the particular practice that they have started with isn't the best one for them, one must consider that too. They may be feeling a genuine need to experiment with different methods, one must make allowance for that as well. But certainly discourage just hopping from one method to another and just hoping for quick results without really getting down to any actual practice in the sense of giving any one method a chance to do what it is able to do if you stick at it long enough.

Often people tend to think, "some other method might be better, might be easier, might make quicker progress with some other method", but the method is really almost a matter of indifference. In a sense it doesn't matter much which method you take up provided you stick at it. Some may be marginally more suitable than others but the basic methods are good for practically everybody, you might even say for everybody. I mean, things like the Mindfulness of breathing and Metta bhavana, if you can't get on with those you are unlikely to be able to get on with anything.

V: Someone who was doing the Mindfulness on a course said he thought he really wanted a practice that was specific for him. I said I've got one that's just right for you - the Mindfulness of breathing - (laughing).

S: Good, good.

V: I suppose it gets more difficult in areas which are not such direct practice of the Dharma. Like whether one should maybe take up Karate or Yoga. Those sort of disciplines, they are quite confusing.

S: Yes. I think in those cases one will know. Most people if you ask them whether they think it would be good for them to take up Karate, they know. They usually say "no, I don't think it would be." But probably a person who is poised between Karate and Yoga and wasn't sure, could do either, it would just be a question of time, both of them being quite demanding.

V: Do you think one should take some trouble to find [359] out what psychological type one is, to find out which activity would be suitable.

S: I think that's a bit of a red herring. There is some truth in this teaching of psychological types but there are so many ways of classifying psychological types and so many ways of looking at them you can spend your whole life doing research into what psychological type you are.

I think just a very broad understanding is necessary.

V: Your psychological type should change surely if you are practising.

S: I wonder about that. In the more narrow sense, yes.

V: The idea is to balance, when you take a Yoga course the idea is to balance things.

S: Yes. So you're really recognizably the same person even though more balanced.

V: Does psychological type amount to the same thing as temperament?

S: Broadly yes.

V: Could you have different Buddhas, different psychological types of Buddhas?

S: Not Buddhas of certain psychological types but Buddhas who, before they gained Enlightenment, had been of one psychological type rather than another.

V: But would that carry over so that...

S: It wouldn't carry over into their Enlightenment experience but it would persist as part of the psycho-physical structure through which they gave expression to their Enlightenment experience.

V: What about the case of the Dhyana Buddhas who represent different aspects of Enlightenment, could this be regarded as the sort of the extreme, transcendental end of...

S: But, you mustn't really take Dhyana Buddhas as really separate personalities, they are all aspects of the one central Buddha. It is one Buddha, the five Dhyana Buddhas are one Buddha and you have five so that you can see more clearly, by seeing separately, the different aspects of that one Buddha nature. There are not five Buddhas, there is only one.

V: What I am trying to get at though, isn't there some sort of broad correlation between basic psychological human types, like the devotion type and the intellect type and the qualities of Enlightenment, like meditation and action?

S: Well yes. One can say there is a sort of resemblance or correspondence between faith and devotion on the one hand and compassion on the other. Between understanding and

intellectuality on the one hand and wisdom on the other. I think probably the most useful way of looking at the whole question of temperament is that one should use these classifications to help [360] you ascertain, what is it that you lack, and what you need particularly to develop. First of all to be a balanced human being, whether you are deficient in emotion or in understanding whether you are too withdrawn or whether you are too extrovert. Once you have seen this in a very broad way you can set about trying to correct it by taking the appropriate action or even taking up the appropriate method of practice, whether meditation or anything else.

V: So effectively, at the end, if there is an end of one's spiritual training, you would come to the point where you cease to manifest a particular type and you have the choice, let's say.

S: Well certainly you cease to manifest in that one sided way.

V: Because I remember you saying, not too long ago, about the person who had experienced a lot of suffering, in particular, in life, would break through Enlightenment into the non suffering aspect of Enlightenment. Break through that particular impediment.

S: Yes, this certainly is the traditional teaching. But you break into Enlightenment as a totality, it is only your approach which is from a certain side, when you break through into Enlightenment on that particular side, but it is Enlightenment as a total experience that you break through into. Just as you may enter a city from the East or the West, but eventually you find yourself in the midst of the whole city.

What about this, 'heroic when heroism is needed, it is heroic opposition to fettering passions.' That's the real heroism, defeating the five hindrances. Perhaps this is an aspect of the spiritual life that needs to be stressed much more, the heroic aspect. I don't think many people in the movement think of themselves as heroes. Or is this sort of way of thinking of looking at oneself becoming a bit more common. (V's: Yes) It is? Good.

V: I find it difficult, I suppose I should be a heroine because I associate heroines as people who get strapped to railway lines! (laughter) How can one have an association with a heroine figure, someone who in the old silent movies where you lie strapped to a railway line and get saved. It doesn't ...

S: Well don't think of yourself as a heroine, think of yourself as a hero.

V: Be the one who comes along and cuts the ropes.

V: I've been carrying Boadicea around with me for a bit recently.

V: Yes, me too.

V: The heroine in literature and films I've seen is not something I particularly want to associate with.

S: But as I said, that's a heroine, not a hero.

V: ... said she had Boadicea in mind, that's a bit better.

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S: But Boadicea was defeated (laughter).

V: You can't win.

V: Oh well, back to the drawing board.

V: The intrepid female explorer.



S: 'Cautious where caution is needed, it is the caution which gives patience in times of adversity'. Not a cowardly caution but a caution that helps one to practise patience - kshanti.

All right let's go on.

"Geshe Po-to-wa was asked by an Upasaka, "To actually practice the Dharma, what is most important?"

"The most important thing is the meditation of impermanence. Meditate on impermanence, the imminence of death; it will cause you to begin practising the Dharma. This will create conditions impelling you to do virtuous work, which will then assist you in realizing the equality of all things in their nature of existence.

"Meditation on impermanence will also cause you to decide to renounce the enjoyments of this life, which will create the conditions for ridding yourself of all worldly desire, and thus assist you to enter the path of Nirvana.

Meditation on impermanence will cause you to have faith in the Teaching, which creates the conditions for the commencement of effort. This then assists in the production of wisdom.

" When you have meditated on impermanence and have gained some understanding, you will seek the Dharma. This will create the conditions for the achievement of Dharma and thus assist in its final accomplishment.

"Meditating on impermanence and finding some understanding of it will also cause you to commence the effort of armor, which will create the conditions for commencing the effort of religious practice. This will assist you in commencing effort to the stage of non-returning."

S: Do you think that meditation on impermanence, will in all cases, that is to say with all people, have these sort of effects or not? (V's: No.) No, so why do you think that these sorts of meditations did have, as far as we can tell, very much these sort of effects where the Tibetans were concerned.

V: They are happier, a basically happier people.

S: Basically a happier people, yes. Maybe also a people with a stronger faith.

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V: They seem to face death most of the time. Living there in a rocky country. (S: Mmm, yes)

V: You would think they would need less emphasis on impermanence, if you were facing death actually in life.

V: It then becomes an acceptance of situations that you... it also acts as being open to other things in the situation forces (?)

V: It makes a difference.

V: An acceptance of death is also a very sort of healthy thing. It is only in Western society where ...

S: But here it is a question of a recollection of impermanence as an incentive to leading the spiritual life. So what I am saying is that it doesn't seem to be much of an incentive to people in the west, certainly not in this country so why was it able to function as such an incentive for people in Tibet? It seems to me mainly because they had such very strong faith in the Dharma but there were the worldly pulls and attractions, so the meditation on impermanence helped to direct their attention to something in which they did in fact already believe, but from which they could become distracted from time to time. But once their attention was

brought back to the Dharma they were able to get on with it because they did really believe in it.

V: Also I suppose it depends whether, if you have sort of nihilist or eternalist points of view. Like, say for a nihilist it wouldn't really matter very much, it would be the sort of point where 'drink now for tomorrow you die'. Whereas for the eternalist, well that's another extreme.

S: Well in a way in practice the Tibetans were eternalists. Naive eternalists one might say.

(end side 1)

Not doctrinal eternalists, but their attitude was more like that, we do go on after death, there is a punishment for bad actions, there is a reward for good actions; therefore it is very important that we should perform virtuous actions now and avoid the evil actions. All Tibetans firmly believe this. They might forget it from time to time, just being diverted by worldly things, but if their attention is brought back to the Dharma they do have great faith in it. So by meditating on impermanence or reflecting on impermanence they bring their minds back to something in which they do in fact already deeply believe, but from which they have become momentarily distracted just by the affairs of this life. So when they are brought away from the affairs of this life by the recollection of impermanence well they are brought back to something very definite and solid, something very substantial. Not to a sort of void, as many people in the West would be.

V: Because they've also got, they probably had a very rich tradition as well. I think of the images, like Mahakala and so forth being pre-Buddhist, the ideas of death, the imagery and so forth.

V: I suppose the approaching the worst is much more [363] ... encouraging the positive emotions, and trying to ...

S: Yes, I think we really have to do that. This is one of the reasons why I say that if we do practice the recollection of impermanence or death it should be only after a session of Metta bhavana, to make sure that we are in a positive mood, a positive state of mind, otherwise it can just be depressing. I think I have mentioned before that this happened even during the Buddha's own lifetime. That in the early days he gave a teaching about meditation on death to a number of monks and went away leaving them practising and when he came back he found that they had all committed suicide. Because they had got into such a state of depression, apparently. If this happened even with the Buddha, and even in ancient India, well look how careful we have to be.

V: (Unclear)

S: Right.

V: Also it might be a cause of pain, which would make them realize.

V: Could we meditate on the Dharma ... in the unconditioned?

S: One could certainly do that, that is a more positive form. We could even start with, human beings come and go but the Dharma remains, that is there from generation to generation, that doesn't change. It does seem that we have to adapt a great deal of the teaching in this sort of way. It is not adapting in the sense of changing, it is just adapting in the sense of changing the procedure to achieve the same result.

V: One could also mention that in Tibet truthful and honest communication must have been much more important for preservation, for continuing the ordinary affairs of life. Whereas, in a sense, in the West, it is not much now. You can get away with being dishonest.

V: If you can ...

V: Well, apparently.

S: It does also seem that in traditional societies and communities, under normal conditions, there is a much greater sense of security and solidity. You stay in one and the same place, the place where your parents were born and brought up, your grandparents were born and brought up and so on. There is a strong sense of continuity, of eternity in a sense, though in a false sense. And this needs to be broken up a bit, this needs to be disrupted a bit, hence the meditation on impermanence.

I think in modern times we have gone to the opposite extreme. That we are very mobile, very restless. In a sense, we are very aware of impermanence, though not in a very positive, healthy way. We are aware of it more as an instability which makes us, perhaps quite neurotic. So we need perhaps to be reminded more about stability, continuity and permanence.

V: Purpose.

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S: Purpose. Well the purpose of both of these methods is to create a sense of overall purpose.

V: I gave a talk quite recently, and it was just a very short talk but I realized at the end that it must have sounded really grim, in a way. I talked about the Four Noble Truths, and suffering and unfortunately there weren't any questions at the end, there wasn't time, so that I could see what sort of response I would get and counteract any one-sidedness. But I think..., it certainly needs a lot of thinking, I think, to present Buddhism from a positive point of view rather than in terms of suffering and giving up.

V: It is very difficult to talk about the Four Noble Truths if you concentrate on the first one you can feel the atmosphere drop. (S: Yes)

V: Because already people have a rather negative idea, if they know anything of Buddhism at all they know that it is renunciation, that it is rejection of the world ...

V: Ordinarily ... not just Buddhism, that's the general feeling about religion, they don't really want to know.

V: I think it's probably best to avoid the Four Noble Truths ...

S: But also, I think one mustn't forget, and I think most Buddhists do, that they are the Four Noble Truths, the Four Aryan Truths. So what does that mean, they are truths seen in the perspective of the Aryas. The first truth, the truth of dukkha, that in the perspective of those who have attained a higher state of spiritual realization, worldly things, conditioned things seem quite unsatisfactory, or they see that they are unsatisfactory, even pleasant experiences in that perspective. But it doesn't mean that if you are a good Buddhist you feel everything as painful, no. You can have a completely happy experience of life but still, if you are an Arya, see the noble truth of suffering. In other words you don't have to be suffering actual painful feelings in order to appreciate the truth of suffering, the Noble Truth of suffering.

In the same [way] you can be experiencing suffering on the feeling level and have no understanding of the Aryan truth of suffering at all. So therefore you can say that a happy person could have a genuine insight into the Aryan Truth of suffering, a person who had never suffered much in his or her life. Whereas, perhaps somebody else who had suffered a lot could have no insight into that truth at all. Therefore it has got nothing to do, essentially, to actual painful or actual pleasant experience.

So therefore I think it is best to leave it emotionally neutral and speak in such terms as the

limitations of conditioned existence or something like that. But if you say that according to Buddhism the whole of existence is painful, it's suffering, what do they understand - that if you are a good Buddhist you have to be actually experiencing only painful feelings. Which is nonsense, this is how it is taken, that a Buddhist is one who has painful experiences all the time. Where other people normally experience pleasure he experiences only pain. He looks at a tree and he says, "It's painful" (laughter), he eats a sweetmeat and says that it is painful, that everything is [365] painful, everything is suffering. But this is a gross distortion of the actual teaching, though it may be, in a way, true to the letter. So if you start off by saying that according to Buddhism everything is painful, the whole of existence is painful, well, what a way to start. It's the best way of putting them off Buddhism, but this is how some people do start. The only people that you will appeal to are the confirmed pessimists and masochists. This is what I found at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara these were the people who were being attracted by the straightforward, so called Theravada type teaching.

V: I suppose the Order in 1968 (?)

S: So what is the positive version?

V: ... the truth of Nirvana.

S: The truth of Nirvana, one could say, and what leads up to that?

V: The twelve positive links.

S: The twelve positive links.

V: And the whole development of creativity ...

S: Creativity, the development of the creative mind.

V: These things go down very well.

V: I think the word 'unsatisfactory' seems to be quite acceptable.

S: Mmm, well that is fairly neutral isn't it. But even that isn't really right, because you can thoroughly enjoy something, with a genuine healthy enjoyment but see, genuinely see in the perspective of the Four Noble Truths, as an Aryan, that this is dukkha. Which can be translated as painful.

V: We really don't have a proper word, do we, for ...

S: Well we do, painful is quite all right but you have got to put it in the right context. In the context of the Aryan vision it is painful, even though it is a pleasant experience. Pleasant feeling, mundane pleasant feeling is painful in the perspective of the Aryan.

V: How can you possibly convey that to a complete non-Buddhist, in the West, who has no conception of higher aspects of ...

S: This is what I say, you start with a neutral term, you just speak in terms of human existence being limited or certain things being limited. You could say unsatisfactory but even that doesn't help very much.

V: Changeable.

V: Not tending towards the aim which you are ...

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S: Don't forget that it is a statement of our existence as a whole, that is all conditioned

existence is dukkha. So sooner or later one has to explain that if one is going to talk in terms of Buddhism at all. You can explain it more positively by saying there is always something higher. Whatever your experience there is always something higher which will give you more happiness and more satisfaction.

So you can say that Buddhism says that you should have more and more happiness, more and more joy, more and more bliss, more and more positive emotion. What you have at present, yes it's fine but you can have even more if you follow the Buddhist path, if you experience higher and more skilful mental states through meditation, you will have more of joy, more of happiness, more of positivity, more of creativity. You can put it in this way perhaps.

V: That might put people off!

S: Well it will put off the pessimists and the gloom mongers.

V: You might also be accused of just being a pleasure seeker.

S: You have to beware of that too, there are pitfalls on every side, you know that. (laughter)

But certainly, to an audience of beginners, convey the impression, by what you are as well as by what you say, that Buddhism is something positive and healthy and happy and creative and progressive. Not in the modern pseudo-liberal sense of progressive but in the true sense.

V: We had a Dharma study group recently at ... where we based the discussion on your book, *Where Buddhism Begins and Why it Begins*. There was a really good atmosphere. People really happy, laughing and smiling, the whole life is suffering but there is Buddhism!

S: Good. But we do seem to be coming back to this again and again. The need for the positive approach and the need for the development and cultivation of positive mental states especially positive emotional states. This seems to be half the battle, and no doubt it is a battle very often.

V: It seems to me it very much depends on whether one is addressing or trying to teach the preta realm or the deva realm. (S: Right, yes.) They both need opposite teachings.

S: It is rather difficult sometimes when you have a mixed audience of pretas, devas, hell beings and animals. To say nothing of asuras, they usually ask the questions at the end. (laughter)

V: They ... go wrong (?)

S: The pretas hang around afterwards and ask you privately if you really think there is any hope for them. The devas tell you how much they have enjoyed the lecture, which they have and they go straight off to a wild party. (laughter)

V: At least it's positive.

S: Well there are parties and parties, I gather.

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Anyway, let's go on to the next precept.

"Kyang-cha-do-tsul petitioned Geshe Po-to-wa for a precept.

Geshe Po-to-wa answered, ""When you frequently contemplate impermanence and become conscious of the certainty of death, you will have no difficulty in abandoning sinful activities and doing virtuous work.

"In addition to that, when you frequently meditate on love and compassion and produce them in yourself, you will have no difficulty in working for the benefit of living beings.

"Finally, when you frequently meditate on Voidness and produce some realization of it, you will have no difficulty in liquidating delusion."

S: So three short, simple teachings. Perhaps the first doesn't really quite apply to us, unfortunately. That 'when you frequently contemplate impermanence and becomes conscious of the certainty of death you will have no difficulty in abandoning sinful activities and doing virtuous works'. No, it looks as though we need a more positive incentive.

V: Do you think that applies to most Order members as well, when you say 'we'?

S: I think it does, I am thinking of the majority of Order members, yes. It think it is only the really happy and healthy and positive by nature, as it were, who can usefully ponder the truth of impermanence, very much. Certainly at the beginning of Buddhist life.

'In addition to that when you frequently meditate on love and compassion and produce them in yourself, you will have no difficulty in working for the benefit of living beings.' You are working for others should be a natural outflow, a natural overflow of or from your feelings of love and compassion. It shouldn't be something that you have to force yourself into. Just have those feelings of love and compassion naturally you will work for the benefit of others.

'When you frequently meditate on Voidness', sunyata, 'and produce some realization of it, you will have no difficulty in liquidating delusion'. You can't just liquidate delusions, you can't just get rid of miccha ditthis. There has to be a positive apprehension or realization of the truth, of the ultimate, of reality, of which the getting rid of delusion is simply the incidental side effect, it's the negative aspect.

V: Maybe one should meditate on deathless state rather than death.

S: Well, on the immortal, the eternal. This is why, for instance it occurs to me that the true pure land school, all the pure land schools, they meditate on the pure land the happy land of Amitabha. Which is an ideal, perfect world. This naturally draws their interest, draws their attention. Rather than meditating on the imperfections of this world so as to become unattached to it you meditate upon the Perfections of a [368] higher realm so as to draw your energies towards that. And that of course, ultimately, is a symbol for the whole Enlightened state.

All right there is a very long precept coming so lets stop and have our tea or coffee.

"Another time Geshe Po-to-wa spoke to a gathering of his students: "The blessed Buddha, knowing that the legacy of sentient beings is constituted of eighty-four thousand aspects of fettering passions, proclaimed the eighty-four thousand aggregates of Dharma as counter-measures. In short form, their content has been recorded in the Three Precious Baskets (Tripitaka). Their subject matter is included in the Three Precious Precepts: Exceptional Moral Practice, Exceptional Meditation, and Exceptional Wisdom."

S: There is a very important point arising here that we might as well discuss before we go on. That is that Dharma, all eighty four thousand aggregates of Dharma have been proclaimed as counter measures. You could also say antidotes. The figure of eighty four thousand is arrived at in this way, the whole of the Tripitika is traditionally divided into eighty four thousand sections, presumably originally sections for recitation, Sometimes the question was raised in the past, why eighty four thousand and the answer was that there were eighty four thousand fettering passions of one kind or another. So that each section of the Dharma was proclaimed as an antidote for one particular passion.

This is perhaps a bit fanciful but it embodies a very important general idea. That the whole of

the Dharma in its different forms, its different aspects is a medicine. That the teaching itself is a medicine and if beings weren't 'sick' then there wouldn't be any medicine. That the Dharma is a means to an end, it's not something that has an abstract existence in its own right. Because people need the teaching the teaching is there. The teaching exists for the sake of the people who need it.

So the whole of the Dharma, in all its aspects, has this sort of practical orientation.

V: Actually the Four Noble Truths were originally formulated ... that underlines that point.

S: Yes, right. And of course the Buddha is called the Great Physician, there is even a medicine or medical Buddha, in fact a whole set of medical Buddhas, again to emphasize this point, as it were, that Dharma is an antidote.

Of course this is a negative way of looking at it, you could say. There is another more positive way, this you get in the Saddharma Pundarika Sutra, that the Dharma is the rain, that the Dharma is the sunshine, the Dharma is the fertile soil. You are the little seed and this rain of Dharma and sunshine of Dharma and this rich soil of Dharma is helping you to grow. This is the more positive way of putting it.

The negative way is that you are a heap of diseases, you need lots of medicines, Doctor Buddha is going to administer [369] those medicines! (laughter)

V: And it might be painful.

S: And sometimes the medicine tastes very nasty but it will do you good. But both approaches are found in the texts. Possibly the more positive one, again, is the more useful for us now. Think in terms more of a seed to be nurtured and be developed than of an illness to be cured. Think of people as seeds rather than as sicknesses, as needing to be developed rather than to be extirpated.

Think more in terms of the cultivation of skilful mental states than in terms of the eradication of the unskilful ones. Of course both have to be done but the emphasis should be on the cultivation of the skilful, I think.

V: Is it possible by concentrating just on one that the other would naturally follow? Would it always work out that way?

S: I think it would but sometimes you might have to take actual practical steps to deal with the negative directly. Suppose you want to give up smoking, well you can get more and more into meditation so that you have fewer neurotic desires and give up, therefore, smoking. As a result of the diminishing of your neurotic desires and because you are so full of metta and karuna and don't feel any need to smoke. But you could approach it, as it were negatively, as well and just give up the smoking, urge yourself, do it as a disciplinary measure, just cut off like that.

You can't completely exclude the negative approach at least incidentally but the overall emphasis, I feel, should always be positive and creative and encouraging. Not always telling people what they have got to give up and what they mustn't do but placing before them a very positive ideal. Something very positive and creative to get involved with.

V: I think possibly, Bhante that the negative approach could only ever be successful, be effective in the wider context of the positive. You can't do it in isolation. (S: Yes) Some awareness of the ...

S: Yes. The positive is always implied at least.

Anyway let's go on.

"Depend on Exceptional Moral Practice and thus produce Exceptional Meditation; by depending on that, produce Exceptional Wisdom. By that Exceptional Wisdom, you will be able to eradicate the fettering passions, and will certainly achieve Buddhahood.

S: It's only wisdom that eradicates the fettering passions, that permanently and completely breaks the fetters. This is of course standard Buddhist teaching. Meditation, in the sense of samatha only temporarily suspends them.

V: Is this wisdom in the higher sense?

S: Yes, in the sense of insight, in the sense of Prajna. Do need to linger over that, as I said it is standard Buddhist teaching?

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"Exceptional Moral Practice is the principal precept for beginners, for it is the basis of everything. Indulgence of desire is completely contradictory to it, and is the root of all fettering passions. When you indulge in desire, you produce fettering passions, and by their influence accumulate bad karma and remain lost in samsara."

S: What is meant by 'indulging in desire'?

V: Neurotic actions.

S: Hmm, neurotic. And even healthy desire beyond a certain point. Sometimes it is very difficult to determine where the healthy passes over into the neurotic. Give an example, well one example is food. You can have a healthy appetite for food but it can be kept within limits and not become a neurotic craving and your eating can just be an objective support for your life, for the leading of your spiritual life and you can enjoy your food even. But at the same time you aren't really attached to it. If, of course you find that you are becoming very attached to food and there is a definite neurotic craving present, then you might have to take more severe measures, even limit your food or fast from time to time or give up certain things that you are particularly fond of. Or even meditate on the repulsiveness of food, or loathsomeness of food, sometimes it's translated. When you just go over in your mind the whole complicated and messy business of preparing the stuff. First you have to work so hard to get the filthy lucre to pay for it, then you need all sorts of elaborate equipment, you need a kitchen, you need a house, you need fuel so that means you have to work even harder to get all those things. You need cups and saucers and plates and then knives and forks and spoons and there is washing up and hot water and soda. All these things just because you need to eat.

And then there is the actual getting of the stuff, maybe you have to cultivate it even, if you are living in a primitive society and it can be eaten by the rats and it can be stolen. But anyway, overcoming all these obstacles you have to cook it and prepare it. Then what do you do? You have to stuff it in to your mouth, which is a very disgusting process and masticate it and you can get indigestion and you can make yourself ill by overeating and some things don't agree with you. Anyway, getting it all down to the stomach. There various disgusting processes (laughing) takes place. It all gets worse and worse, you need not go into all the details.

So all this, well what is it for. You reflect upon this, this whole business is so complicated and so time consuming and so inherently disgusting that the less I have to do with this business of eating the better.

So this is the sort of reflection on the loathsomeness or repulsiveness of food. By the time you've gone through this in great detail, and Buddhagosa in particular gives full medical details, or allegedly medical details. A very horrific account of the whole process of digestion, you would probably like to give up eating altogether and all your neurotic cravings are completely cured.

Anyway, let's go on.



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"As an antidote to desire, Buddha taught the meditation of repulsion."

S: This is not the repulsiveness of food but of the physical body. Especially the physical body of the opposite sex.

In that teaching there are five phases of meditation. The first is the meditation of mother or sister. At the time the figure of a desirable woman appears in your mind, meditate on her as your mother if she is older than you. When you feel desire for one of your own age, meditate on her as your sister. When you feel desire for one younger than yourself, meditate on her as your daughter in order to reverse the desire." [This precept was given to monks; nuns would substitute "father" for "mother", "man" for "woman", etc. Ed.]

S: Do you think this method will still work and if so what is it trying to effect?

V: It's trying to bring about metta rather than desire.

S: Metta rather than pema. But do you think it would still work? (V's No) People don't.

V: Not, some people might get more excited.

V: ... with their mother.

S: But obviously this sort of practice or this sort of method presupposes a healthy society where certain taboos are very rigid. For instance with regard to one's sister, in an Indian household after the age of seven or eight a boy will have very little to do with his sisters, they will be sort of segregated. So certainly there is a warm and friendly feeling but he doesn't have much to do with them, with the women folk in his own family in general. So therefore there is a complete dissociation of any sexual feeling.

So if he starts to think of a woman, say a woman of his own age as his sister it means that he cannot think, in connection with her, any kind of erotic thought. It becomes completely impossible. It can only be a feeling of brotherliness and metta.

So one can also say that this is a technique for ensuring that the reaction to the person of the opposite is not a reaction in exclusively sexual terms, but in more general, broader human terms. But the question is would it work in the same way for people now? In some cases it probably would.

V: In some cases, if you don't particularly like your brothers and sisters.

S: Or perhaps you don't even have any.

V: Well, you have a father and mother.

S: Not always.

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V: You'd be a very strange person without a father and mother.

V: They do die don't they.

S: Also the children of one parent families, where there is one parent missing.

V: But that obviously happened in Tibet and India as well.

S: But then you have got many substitutes there, you have got lots of aunts and uncles and other older people around.

V: I think it would work.

S: I think it would in some cases, and if one was sincere about it. For instance if say the woman in question had the same sort of interests as yourself, especially the same sort of spiritual interest, then you could very easily think she is really more like a sister, because we belong to the same spiritual family. So therefore let me concentrate on developing that aspect of the relationship, think of her more in those terms, as a sister. Someone who has the same interests that I have, who is also a human being. But not immediately have the erotic reaction, or even if it does arise that it is within a framework or context of a more general human attitude. Very often it can't be completely eliminated but it must be scaled down, as it were.

I think this could still work. Mother is maybe a bit more tricky.

V: If you have a dislike for a brother or sister and you see that person then; if it's an actual real hate for them, you might start hating that person as well.

S: No, you are not to think of them as being like that particular person, just as a brother, or as a sister.

V: But I was thinking there maybe some sort of association...

S: Well you can even turn it and reflect that is the sort of brother I would have liked to have had, that is the sort of sister I would have liked to have had.

V: It's a very nice feeling, I think, when I think of that.

S: Or if it is someone very much younger let your more protective feelings come up. Think she is really just like my daughter and I shouldn't take advantage of her, I should just help her or just explain things to her but not react in an exclusively erotic sort of way. Even though you might be quite sensitive to her charms, or even quite susceptible, but just think that she is so much younger, she is really much more like a daughter or, I could have had a daughter of that age, or something like that. In this way, it is not kidding yourself into adopting another attitude but also, in a way, seeing what the position really is, that there is in fact that sort of relationship.

If she is around the same age and she is involved in the same sort of things, well she is a sister, in a broader sense. [373] And if she is much younger than you and she is also interested in the things that you are interested in, then she is like a daughter, she is in fact that. So it shouldn't be, or it isn't necessarily the adoption of an artificial attitude but really seeing that the situation is like that and the relationship is like that, at least to some extent.

V: Why do you think the mother is more difficult?

V: Do you think that about the father thing as well, is it both or just mother?

S: I don't know. I hear much more about difficulties with mothers than about difficulties with father. Maybe because there are just more men around in the movement. The difficulty being, perhaps, more often with the parent of the opposite sex. I am not sure about this.

V: Do you think that happens because there isn't an early dissociation from the mother in Western society like there is in ...

S: Ahh, I think that may well have a lot to do with it. In many so called primitive societies the dissociation from the mother is ritualized in a very healthy way, which means there is a clean break. Usually at the age of seven or eight, ten or eleven, twelve, like that. And the young boy is taken away from mother and the women and he is initiated into the traditions of the tribe and he becomes a young man. In some primitive societies he doesn't even see mother and sisters again until his masculine identity has been definitely established. Then he can relate to

his mother in a completely different way, on a completely different basis. Not as a child but as an adult.

V: One still has the remnants of this in Western society in the way that boys, if they have got the money, are sent off to boys public schools.

S: Ahh, but very often they are sent away too early and that isn't good, too early isn't good.

V: Then it would have to be with people they trusted and who would do things for their welfare and who would protect them and look after them.

V: Which is not always the case.

S: The elder men of the tribe care for the younger men and the boys very carefully.

V: I read in one of the colour supplements about, in the West there not being initiation into manhood there being no real ceremony. Except this writer was picking out one thing, he said the driving test (S: Oh dear!) is about the only thing where there is, where there is a sort of initiation where you have to use all your skills and concentration ...

S: But it can't be really an initiation into manhood because women also take driving tests.

V: Well it was a light heart... He also pointed out that in primitive societies there are definite [374] rituals and definite things that the young man has to go through. Maybe the same for the women, I don't know. Which there doesn't seem to be in [the] West at all.

S: Well in former days sometimes it took the form of apprenticeship. That was a form of initiation because at the end of your apprenticeship you could be admitted to the guild, you became a master craftsman and you took your place as a full member of the guild along with other skilled men. But that also we hardly have now.

Though we have it to some extent, in mining communities you are a man when you go down the mine like your father. You are doing a man's work then, but this is in a rather, well I was going to say crude, primitive sense, but not in the real crude primitive sense. It is just not enough, it doesn't really add up to an initiation in that sense though it has some suggestion of that.

V: I felt that a very long time ago when I, before I went..., I was thinking of these terms, the whole question of manhood and what constitutes manhood. So I went to work on a building site, that was my conception at the time of being a man. But actually it was quite good, I did get a sort of confidence and quite a positive feeling out of it all. Felt that I could be just the same really as them, not so very different.

V: I think even national service.

S: That's true. It is the separation from the home

(End of tape 17)

It is the separation from the home, it is definitely acquiring certain skills and having to, as it were, prove your ability in respect of these skills.

V: ... a bit late ... you said it could happen too early, can it happen too late?

S: In the sense of effecting the separation from mother, which is mainly a psychological separation, probably ten or eleven. Even eight or nine.

V: Would you say that is too early?

S: No that would be about the right time. But then not just snatching the boy away and just herding him with a lot of other boys with just a very minimal supervision, no, it must be actual individual attention and training.

You get a bit of it in the Scouts, even that is good, though it is a derided institution but it is good from that point of view. You get boys being taken away from their homes in small groups when they are the age of eight or ten, or twelve or thirteen, fourteen, for a few weeks at a time. That is quite good and healthy.

V: There would be, I suppose, a right time, wouldn't there, in the development of each person, when it was the right time for that to happen.

S: Yes, I think it's broadly the same, within that sort of spectrum. We are discussing it entirely in masculine terms, I rather suspect there isn't much (V: There's Girl Guides.) [375] Well there is Girl Guides but that isn't really the same kind of thing, I think.

V: The same need isn't there.

S: There is not the same sort of need, because that time for a girl is also the time of puberty, as it is for the boy. But in the case of the girl puberty means something a bit different, she becomes able to bear children, so in a way she becomes more vulnerable. So the tradition has been in primitive societies to keep them more at home after that, and closer to mother. That is certainly the traditional attitude in most, in fact in almost all societies.

V: The male separating from mother is not the same as the female separating from father at all. It's quite different.

S: It seems not, no.

V: Because the father is not such a prominent figure in closeness to the female child anyway.

S: Yes, right. I'm not quite sure how it works out in terms of the life of the young woman, or the feminine psychology.

V: It would be terrible if she was just enclosed with her own mother, surely that would mean other women, older and more experienced

S: In primitive societies there are other women around. But the customary fear is that the young girl shouldn't be left to go off on her own because she could be raped or seduced and so on. That was the main fear. So that resulted in her being always kept much more within the family, especially with mother and older women, than was the case with the boys. To what extent that still applies is very difficult to say.

V: I think it does very much

S: You mean the more you can get them away from mother the easier it is you mean? Yes. (laughter)

V: How long does it take for that psychological break to take place? How many years?

S: Well that is very difficult to say. As far as I remember, thinking back to Red Indian tribes, I think they usually kept the boy away for at least six months and up to two years. I think it varied from tribe to tribe. I think two years would probably be a quite good period for an older boy.

V: So it brings another sort of energy into play. You leave one behind and you start off another one.

S: Mmm, and when you come back you relate to mother in quite a different way. In a mature way, not in a dependent, childish way. They even ritualize certain different modes of behaviour, even different modes of speech. That mother also treats you differently when you come back wearing your warriors feathers or whatever it is. Mother doesn't treat you as a child or [376] address you as a child, she treats you as a young man of the family.

V: It sounds a very healthy attitude.

V: There are so many pseudo-rituals, like young men starting to drink and smoke and they renounce the more positive aspects of being children. (S: Yes.) I think I felt much more resentful of those initiations, than finding it useful.

S: What, the pseudo ones? (V: Yes) Well they aren't even that, you see little boys of five or six smoking, it's lost all significance.

V: Joining the army seems to be quite a good one because it is a step, nowadays at least, that you take by yourself. Although obviously there is a very negative side to it as well.

V: Running away to sea.

V: That's about seventeen isn't it?

S: Or just running away.

V: Yes, that seems in a way the most positive of all, if you run away to something that is seen to be worthwhile.

S: Or just run away, you don't want to be hanging around mother any longer. You feel restless and adventurous and you get fed up with all this talk about domestic things and the domestic atmosphere, you want to see the world for yourself. It's a quite healthy attitude provided it isn't just reactive in a negative sense. In which case you come back after a short while. Tell mother all your troubles, they didn't treat me proper (laughter). Or you find a substitute mother which is even worse.

V: I think that happens in the majority of cases actually.

S: Anyway let's come on to this actual antidote, or back to the actual antidote, the next one.

"If you fail to reverse your desire by this meditation another method is the meditation of shame and self-reproach. When you think improper thoughts, you have shamed and disgraced yourself in front of all the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, who, with their wisdom-eyes, see and know all, and you will not be able to take refuge under them. When you act improperly the gods of the earth and sky will proclaim your activities and you will get a bad reputation in this life and birth in lower realms in future lives. Therefore be mindful of this self-reproach and shame, for by this meditation you can reverse desire."

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S: Do you think this is a useful approach nowadays?

V's: No.

V: If one has developed faith.

S: If one develops faith, yes?

V: Also if you are part of a healthy spiritual community.

S: Yes. And if you are not in danger of developing neurotic feelings of guilt but just a healthy

self-reproach because you have not been able to maintain the standard of the group to which you belong or the community to which you belong to which you have chosen to belong. Supposing you are member of a football team and you have been slack in your training and as a result of being slack in your training you don't play as well as the others. So what will be your natural feeling, well, you will just feel ashamed of yourself, 'I let myself go out of training, I let myself get slack and flabby, I couldn't keep up with the others, I wasn't as good as them, I let down the side and everybody knew it.' This is a quite healthy feeling of self-reproach.

In the same way you can say, 'I am trying to develop skilful mental states but look what has happened, I have developed very unskilful mental states, I was careless.' So you reproach yourself in this sort of way. 'What will my spiritual friends think of me, what will my Kalyana Mitras think of me?' Not in a negative way but in a healthy, supportive, even inspiring sort of way. But not invoking or playing upon neurotic feelings of guilt. That is quite bad and this is of course quite often what happens.

Also this idea of thinking that all the Buddha's and Bodhisattvas see you. To some people this is a bit like 'Big Brother', always watching you. 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good'. I heard a story about a very extreme, puritanical, Christian minister who had this recorded on a gramophone record and used to steal up behind courting couples in the Churchyard at night and suddenly play it. Booming out 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good'. (laughter) This was in Scotland, by the way.

So we don't want to encourage those sort of associations, just a healthy self respect and a healthy regard for what your fellows, in the true sense of the term, think of you. The people who wish you well and want to see you grow, want to see you develop.

V: (Unclear)

S: Well, as regard the Order and the Friends we do have. So as Chintamani said, if you've got faith and if you've got the spiritual community around you this method too can work, but only if.

All right let's go on.

"If this meditation still does not reverse your desire, there is the meditation of filth and stench. Contemplate the body of the desired woman as a leather bag full of the thirty-six aspects of filth, or as a city of eighty thousand [378] worms. Imagine that it is filled with larvae like the inside of a dead dog rotting in the summer heat. Meditate on the figure of the woman as successively bloody and raw, oozing pus, putrid, squirming with vermin, being eaten by maggots. Conceive of it as completely rotten and reverse desire."

S: Do you think this method could still be effective?

V: Yes.

V: Could it have an effect on the woman, couldn't it effect the women adversely?

S: Well you need not tell her, it would be a private meditation.

V: But if you had the meditation with her in mind couldn't it have a bad effect?

S: It's only the body.

V: It's only the truth.

V: It is the truth, you are ...

S: There are these aspects of the actual physical situation that usually one ignores or is blind too, just on account of craving. It is something factual, another side - not the whole truth, admittedly - but another side of the truth that you are trying to see. What is it that you are after, what is it that you want, really?

So this, no doubt, could still be of some use, but you notice it is the third most extreme method, this is when all else fails, as it were, though there is one more method left still.

V: Presumably it is also applicable the other way around, to the man as well.

S: Oh yes, well this is what the Editor says, you change, if you are a nun then you think in terms of father and man, or if you are a woman you think in terms of father and man. Though I don't know, this might be more appropriate to the masculine attitude, in as much as it is said, that the visual affects the man more than the women. That the man is more susceptible through the eye and therefore maybe needs this sort of drastic remedy more than the woman would.

V: ... exceptions ...

S: There again, just think of the concomitance, this is what the author is saying, there are other aspects of the whole situation, the whole business or process that one usually just overlooks, which are there. So just see the total situation.

V: Shantideva goes into all this.

S: Mmm. I think you have to be careful not to go into it in [a] neurotic sort of way but in a healthy, objective, way. And [379] not say that that is all there is too it, that would not be true, but there is that aspect, at least there are those factors. One shouldn't throw a veil of sentiment over it all, a haze of illusion.

I'm afraid the next method is even more extreme, so let's go on and see what that is.

"If even by this method you do not reverse desire, contemplate the woman as enemy and murderer. This woman is the enemy who destroys your religious attitude the killer who slays liberation, the hailstorm which ruins the crop of virtue, the thief who robs you of spiritual pleasure, the devil who saps the root of virtue, the warden who holds you in the prison of samsaric misery, the terrorist who incites all fettering passions, the furnace of hell which spews forth all misery. When you contemplate all this, you will certainly reverse desire."

S: That is pretty extreme isn't it. But don't forget for women the man is exactly the same. But do you think it does work, either for men or women?

V: Yes. I remember seeing a karate class and there was a particularly beautiful young lady in it, and I saw just then, as my desire was coming, I saw her as a scorpion. And I thought scorpions are very beautiful in themselves but incredibly dangerous, and it just conjured up..., just seeing that, the dangerous side of that kind of desire.

S: Though one must remember that the danger exists in relation to ones own weakness (V: Oh, yes, sure) so perhaps that too, must be seen.

V: And that you might be a scorpion to her.

V: Sure, I'm not saying that all women are scorpions, full stop, but in relation to what I was thinking.

V: Yes, it is one's weakness that causes the image of the woman to be dangerous.

S: Well, the woman to be dangerous.

V: The woman as well, yes.

V: This seems to create a certain bitterness, sometimes ...

V: That's when you're seeing it, you falsely identify it with the actual person. (S: Yes)

V: Witch hunting and that sort of thing.

V: In one way craving itself can lead to much more negative feelings towards that person, if you don't have the desire satisfied then you can really start hating them.

S: Yes, right.

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V: All of us are conscious that one can have a, well I wouldn't call it a..., maybe it is a healthy desire which can be satisfied, but for another person that same thing if you actually went into the situation with the idea of being satisfied you'd wreck yourself. Do you see what I mean? It would be far better to contain that and maybe satisfy it in another...

V: I wasn't saying satisfy your craving, I was saying it's better to get rid of your craving altogether.

V: Oh yes, absolutely.

S: And one must also bear in mind that this is the last method, you only try this or even think of trying this when all else fails.

V: I think that it's extraordinarily difficult; supposing you are a married man, I don't think any of these methods would work. I just don't believe that they would, partially from personal experience but partially from the belief, correct or incorrect, that the mind as it were rules the body or that the psyche can take over from the soma. I think there has to be another aspect to it as well.

S: I think probably the only method that the married man can think of employing is the first one, the gentlest one. In other words thinking of his wife more as a sister and trying to put the relationship, at least to some extent on to that basis. Otherwise if he uses these other methods, it is much too extreme for the marriage situation, the married situation couldn't contain it. So the best thing for the married man would be to think of his wife, especially if she shares his interest, more as a sister or more as a friend and companion and place less and less emphasis on the sexual side of the relationship.

V: I still have my doubts.

S: About what?

V: That it would work, that it can work in that way.

S: It would depend on the individuals.

V: Brother and sister can live together quite happily. (V: Yes)

V: What do you mean wouldn't work in the married situation?

V: That it produces the desired result.

V: Rid one of craving, desire etc.

S: Of course the question arises, why are you with that person at all. And usually it was



primarily the sexual attraction that brought you together. So that if you are undermining that you are undermining, in fact, the relationship itself. If it wasn't primarily that, well that is another question. But I think it usually is.

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V: As Buddhadasa said, wrote, you can have mutual attraction without compatibility.

S: Yes, well you have the mutual attraction just because you are animals of the opposite sex.

V: I'm a bit suspicious of that whole attitude that, I know in the majority of marriages it probably is true, but it seems that it is devaluing the whole potential of a relationship. That all there really is in it, all there was in it when you came together, was the sexual level and you take that away and there can be nothing left.

S: Well true this isn't the only thing but I think it is the primary thing, the really operative thing. Supposing for instance just before you get married you say to the person you are going to marry, 'look I really do love you and I want to spend the rest of my life with you but let's live together as brother and sister'. Well, what would they say, do you think?

V: Get knotted (laughter)

V: ... some people can ...

S: So it may not be the only thing but it seems to be the main spring.

V: Actually it's also, say, maybe within our movement we can begin to think in terms of brother and sister like that, but I think in the majority of cases it is just purely sexual attraction.

V: I don't even know that we can even begin to think in terms.

V: I think we can.

V: I'm not so sure, from what is seen within the movement.

V: I can.

S: Well congratulations Aryamitra. One of the first of the few.

V: Begin to think in those terms.

V: I think all of those methods could be reversed into a positive light.

S: All right, let's see. How do you think it could be done? The first is positive anyway, it means that you are thinking of the person of the opposite sex in more human terms and not specifically in sexual terms and you are relating to them by way of an analogy with a blood relationship. They are not a blood relation but you are treating them, you are trying to feel the same sort of affection that you feel for a blood relation of the opposite sex. So that seems quite positive already.

V: With the next method, the filth and stench one.

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S: That's not the next one, 'thinking improper thoughts and shaming yourself in front of all the Buddha's and Bodhisattvas.'

Pause

V: In other words selfish thoughts. How to get something out of the situation for oneself.

V: Tell us what you were going to say about the other one.

V: Well I think with the other ones you could find the positive aspects of the person and be inspired by them, either they are very graceful or whatever.

V: Won't that increase your desire.

S: I think this is the danger or the near enemy.

V: You could question whether it was loving them or not, couldn't you?

V: I think that there is one practice that is not included here that would probably more applicable for most people in the West, and that's meditating on the outcome of satisfying those desires.

S: This is implied in the last one.

V: ... the consequences.

V: One that isn't is metta, and that really... I found this for myself, if you are practising metta towards somebody you have sexual desire towards you quite often find that the feeling is hate rather than metta. It is whatever the opposite of metta is, (V: Pema) pema.

S: No, pema is not the opposite, that is the near enemy, the opposite is aversion. It's as though, if you have got a strong attraction to something you can't immediately reverse it into a positive, healthy attitude, it is as though you have to go through a negative stage of rejection almost.

V: Well you are rejecting those element that you were formerly attracted by.

S: Well it seems as though, and that means virtually rejecting the person himself or herself. You can't go directly, apparently very easily from affection to metta, you have to have an intermediate phase of aversion to get rid of your pema and then you can think in terms of developing metta. But you try to turn the pema itself into metta directly, would seem to be a very risky business. You tend only to reinforce the pema. So you have to go through a phase of at least withdrawal, or dissociation or even a sort of self protective aversion. In other words if you have been very attracted by women as women you almost have to go through a phase of hating women before you can feel metta towards them.

V: I think the trouble is that a lot of people get stuck in the hate stage and never try to get beyond that to forming higher relationships.

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S: That may be. But again, 'higher relationship', one must be so careful that the old thing isn't sort of smuggling itself back. That it is real metta and a real human relationship.

V: Not something idealized ...

V: That can only be done if one has really worked one's own individual practice in the mean time. Purified one's own emotions.

S: Sure, and has really cut off.

It is just as with your mother in what we were talking about earlier. You can only come back to your mother as a grown up person if you have cut off from your mother as a child.

V: Do you think, going back to that - cutting off mother as a child, that would have, you obviously still have desire ... married ... but do you think it would encourage a more healthy attitude towards women in general?

S: I think the more healthy attitude would include recognizing the facts and not getting bogged down in pseudo-idealization and things like that and recognize that much of ones attraction is just sexual attraction and not try to dress it up as something other. Just accept that that is what it is, it is quite healthy, there is nothing abnormal about it but that is in fact what it is and deal with it accordingly, in whichever way you think best. If you are going to satisfy it, well satisfy it, knowing what you are doing. But if you are not going to satisfy it, well take appropriate measures and not play hanky panky.

V: I found a very useful method for getting rid of this over romanticised, sentimentalised version of this is to say, 'look what I want to do and what I am doing is basically what 99.9% of all creatures do and there is nothing particularly special about it so why ... it.

V: ... what I was saying before. This fourth method seems a bit too, I get the feeling, a bit extreme ...

S: Which one is that? (V: one at the bottom of the page) Oh, the contemplating it as enemy and murderer.

V: I think it was done in a more mild form, thinking, from a mans point of view, that the sexual act could lead to a child and the child, you need to provide for etc. etc. I think in that way it has a much more definite effect on people in this society.

S: In other words it is more the consequences of the situation rather than what that other person has brought about, yes.

V: And in that way you don't get any sort of aversion towards that person, it brings it back more to yourself.

V: This ... more actually encourage hatred or aversion.

S: Well in a way it is meant to do that, because there is [384] also a healthy aversion.

V: I meant more a malicious attitude, hatred.

S: There is danger on every side, there is danger whatever you do, there is not any step that is not accompanied by a danger, a possibility of going wrong.

But the main thing, I think, is just not to fool oneself.

V: Have you got anything to say about what part sex should play in most Order members lives?

S: What part it should play?

V: (laughing) Where and when!

S: Well usually when I come to hear about it it is negative. If it fits in and nobody hears about it and nothing happens and everybody is getting on with everything happily that they ought to be getting on with, well fine. But if things are going wrong and people are breaking down and going through traumas and weeping and having scenes and can't meditate and can't take their class that day, well something is wrong.

I don't think you can [say] anything very specific about the where or when, it should be fitted into odd moments rather than be the central occupation.

V: Between classes

S: For instance, I remember there was one occasion after a lecture at Central House a gentleman, an elderly gentleman, well not elderly, about thirty five or forty, came up to me and he was talking about Buddhism and he mentioned among other things that he was a married man, and he said (break in tape) anyway he said that he was a married man but he hurried to assure me that he had no sex life at all. So I sort of raised my eyebrows and said, 'that's odd, why not?'. So then he said, well I haven't got time, believe it or not but he didn't sound very convinced. So I said, 'what do you mean haven't got time, after all it doesn't take more than about five minutes does it?' (laughter) So that's the point, in a way, you mustn't think of it as taking up all your life, hours and hours and days and days, weeks and weeks. But if it is something that can be accommodated and doesn't disturb the overall pattern of ones Buddhist life and spiritual development, well fair enough, who's going to bother.

V: Someone came back from ... seminar and was quoting him as saying, to the extent that you are involved in a sexual you are not an individual, that was one of the ...

S: Well, that's true. That is true. That is also true of quite a number of things which pertain to our biological basis of existence. Obviously one wants to cultivate the individual rather than the collective.

But if one is to say what place sex should have, well if any place a minor place, a subordinate place. If it has that place, well no one can object to it being there, but if it starts getting out of hand and disrupting everything, and the so-called relationship is disrupting everything, then something is seriously wrong. And if you can't keep it within those [385] reasonable limits then you should think seriously about giving it up altogether. I think many people are in that position, they can't cope, they can't manage it; it's best to give it up, at least for the next, say, ten or fifteen years.

V: And by that time it's too late.

S: It's never too late. But therefore, if I don't hear about it and people get on with their meditation and they are happy and cheerful and are making progress well, whether you have any sex or not it doesn't really make any difference. But if your having it means that you get involved in all sorts of hair raising scenes and negative situations and twisted relationships, well you are much better off without it, quite decidedly.

Anyway, let's go on, don't want to spend too much time about a minor matter.

"If by these means you still have not done so, the final method is the meditation of delusion. For example, when the magician manifests a beautiful form of a man, woman, horse, or elephant, most people are fooled. All phenomena are similarly without self-nature, false, delusive, and by attachment and desire for them, sentient beings suffer in samsara. I, for one, have always been deluded by women's bodies, which are so diseased, useless, false, and beguiling. Mindful of this, think: 'Even now she comes to deceive me,' and reverse desire.

"If by all these methods of meditation you still cannot reverse desire, a devil has entered into you. You should then ask your spiritual teacher the method to exorcise this devil."

S: I remember a little story which gives the woman's point of view in these matters, which I read a little while ago, by Katherine Mansfield, it was called *The Little Governess*. The little governess is an inexperienced young woman who goes off from London to Germany to take up a position as a governess and the agency through which she gets the appointment warns her to be very careful on the way, not to speak to anybody, to lock the door of the lavatory when she goes there etc. etc. This is about nineteen hundred and ten or twelve, so she makes the journey and she is very worried and afraid and there are some very rough men look into the railway compartment and she is very afraid. But anyway in the end a very nice old gentleman about ninety gets in. She feels a bit reassured and they make friends during the

journey and he buys her some strawberries and they get chatting and he's nice and fatherly. So she starts naturally trusting him, quite naturally and rightly. So he escorts her to her hotel from which she is going to be collected by her employer in the evening and the old gentleman suggests 'why not let me take you out for a little drive and see a few places before you start work'. She thinks 'he's so nice and he's got this lovely silver hair and this lovely silver moustache and he's just like my grandfather so why shouldn't I?'

So he takes her around and they have a lovely time and he gives her lunch in a lovely restaurant and then they drive past lots of beautiful flats and he says 'would you like to see'. So she thinks, 'can't be any harm, nice old [386] gentleman'. So he takes her up, and she is completely trusting, quite rightly, because after all he is so old. And he entertains her to tea and then says, 'what about a little sip of brandy, have a little sip before you go'. She's not very happy about that, but to cut a rather long and tedious story short, in the end he tries to kiss her. And she realizes that he is just an old scamp, even though he is ninety, and she is really horrified and she flees downstairs and back to the hotel and she finds the lady, her employer has already called and missed her. She doesn't know the address of the place where she was going to work and apparently the lady is not coming back because the waiter said she went out with a gentleman. And apparently that is that, so the moral clearly is don't trust men! They are deceivers, however old they may be, however fatherly or grandfatherly they may look. Don't trust them!

That is the moral clearly, from a woman's point of view, that men are not to be trusted.

Anyway let's go on, we have got quite a lot more ground to cover still. So what about this exorcism then, if the hindrances are so strong in you not only this particular hindrance but any of the hindrances, that all the methods fail, there must be something seriously wrong with you. You need a sort of concentrated attention of your spiritual teacher even to the point of exorcism.

V: Do you actually practice exorcism in Tibet?

S: They do, but not quite in this sort of way, more for just mentally disturbed people.

V: I think, apparently, that worked in the West, I've come across it he actually had practised ... surgery ... people had tumours removed and he showed them ... and they recovered ... and they didn't have one anyway ... Could you say that's an equivalent to exorcism in physical ... ?

S: Well I think the equivalent would be that you actually had a tumour and it actually was taken out.

V: Yes, but if you tell someone that all these hindrances and passions are just a devil in you and you perform a ceremony in which they are released, in order to exorcise the devil, then this whole objective...

S: But what do you do if there really is a devil?

V: What is a devil?

V: A devil is about that big with horns.

S: But sometimes it does seem, and again this is something we have talked about on a previous seminar, that there is something that is not you.

V: But, I mean, they are only psychic forces aren't they?

S: It doesn't seem like that sometimes at least. The experience is as it were that there is an entity there, an evil entity. This is where the exorcism becomes appropriate. [387] It is in fact not that person in any way that we can see or understand or experience. It is something else

which has secured a foothold in them.

V: Surely, doesn't that contradict a fundamental teaching of Buddhism that everything is produced by mind, that there is no objective evil force?

S: Well yes, you are also produced by mind but you still function as a person, are identified as a person, recognized as a person. In that sense, in the sense that you are a person, well there is also a personal Mara.

V: Ultimately that is an illusion, isn't it?

S: Well ultimately, yes. But then just as we deal with persons as persons, on the level of our delusion, we can have an exorcism of a personal Mara on the level of our delusion.

V: That's what I was saying, this devil is also on the level of a delusion.

S: But when you say on the level of delusion it suggests that the being that the devil is inhabiting, as it were, is real but the devil isn't. The point here is that they are both equally real or unreal, as you please. So there is a real exorcism of a real Mara in the sense in which persons are real. The Mara is as real as you are, it is not just a figment of your imagination, as it were, any more than other people are figments of your imagination.

Metaphysically, yes, it may ultimately be the one mind but that's not yet. So sometimes it does seem like that, that there is an actual personal entity there which is as real as the person that it is possessing but different, another personality. Then the question of exorcism arises, how to get rid of it. So we mustn't exclude that possibility, though it is a very extreme one.

It also suggests that this whole question of craving, and neurotic craving and especially in connection with sex is very powerful and needs very drastic treatment. Sometimes one gets the impression that behind peoples movements and activities there is this sort of X factor in the background, exercising far more control than anyone ever admits. It is never spoken about, it is never mentioned openly but it is there and it is exercising a quite powerful control and bringing about all sorts of effects and results. But these are never ascribed to it directly and honestly, some other reason is given or some excuse is made.

V: I think the general policy is to try and be as honest as possible, it's difficult.

S: Even for instance you have got a choice between two different retreats, you can go on this one or you can go on that one. But you decide on that one, why? - because someone you'd like to meet or get to know better is going to be on it. But you never admit that, not even to yourself. You say, 'I'd like to go on it for such a reason or I am more free that week, or it will be easier, I'll have the money by then'. But actually that is the determining factor, if not the main one at least quite an important one for you. And this is happening [388] all the time, at least with some people.

V: Why is it that we don't like to admit that though?

S: Well, why? I think it is partly the mores of our particular milieu. (laughter) Well, what is done and not done in English middle class society. I mean, there is no need to talk about it unnecessarily or even very directly but at least be aware oneself that this factor is present when it is present. And if others ask you about your motivation, certainly your closer friends, just be quite honest about that particular factor being in operation in a certain situation and not attempt to disguise it.

V: Are you talking in terms of consciously hiding something?

S: Well it doesn't usually even reach the level of consciously hiding, we do it semi-consciously, mechanically, automatically, we never do anything else we are just so

completely unaccustomed to being honest in this respect.

V: Yes, also used to covering up.

S: Yes, we unthinkingly cover up all the time.

V: That's what rationalization is.

S: Well rationalization may be said to be a more extreme and systematic form, a more explicit form of the same thing. I quite often get this sort of feeling, as though this X factor is there all the time in the case of many people. But you are never told, it is never brought out into the open, but you are always having to counter, in a way, that X factor.

It's almost like some mysterious secret power behind the throne, that you can get in politics. The person that nobody meets or nobody knows but that X person, that unknown person has got access, apparently, to very important people and is in a position to influence decisions. Like the French Prime Minister's mistress at the time of the last war. Churchill is supposed to have said that he didn't think he could influence that particular Prime Minister in a certain matter because of Madame so and so. And when he was asked why he said 'she has at her disposal arguments that I do not have at my disposal' (laughter) It is this sort of thing.

(end of side 1)

V: But once you do start admitting those things, like you said they have power, there is a lot of energy wrapped up in them, it's like your basic drive; then it is to transform them or ...

S: Then you are in a better position to deal with them, you are more honest with your friends, which is always an advantage. Your friends also may help you deal with them, or at least they may know where they stand with you. If they know that you are being pulled in a certain direction well they won't suggest that you do something that is going to pull you in another direction unknowingly, unknowing what they ask you. Then they wonder what's happened, he's not catching on, he seems unwilling for some reason or other. And sometimes you can't understand people's behaviour on a rational level because of this X factor, and maybe there are other X factors too, of other kinds, but certainly there is this one.

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So there is less honesty, less communication, less mutual understanding. For instance, someone decides to take two weeks off, maybe he has got commitments, he's a class, but he just goes off for two weeks and doesn't give any explanation. But maybe he just wants to go off with somebody, well fair enough, but he doesn't want to tell about that, he doesn't want to admit that is the reason for his going, so he just makes feeble excuses or just disappears and doesn't say anything. So people wonder what has happened, what is getting him, is he upset, is he annoyed by something, have I said anything? But no, nothing, he is just being pulled by this X factor. But you don't know and you are not certain sometimes what is happening. You suspect sometimes that it is that X factor but you don't know, it might be something else, so you don't know where you stand with that person.

V: I've noticed, actually, in myself and in other people when this process comes into play, a strange look comes into the eyes and they are not, when this X factor is speaking through them or through oneself there is this strange feeling.

S: Well they are not themselves, they are not being individuals.

V: Isn't it also an alienation.

S: Well it is certainly an alienation from their own individuality, their own individuality is in abeyance when these collective and as it were racial urges are in operation. As sometimes they say in the romantic novels, 'a glazed look came into his eyes'.

V: Right, which is glorified.

S: Right. Or her eyes, as the case may be.

V: But I think, to bring it back to a traditional point, the ... for inspiration, or the reason for the, amongst the confession between the monks?

S: It wasn't relating, really to this, though obviously this was included. But also it is an expression of openness, what are the factors that are at work in my life, and that not all of them are skilful ones, some of them are unskilful ones. But let me be open about it, I was pulled in that direction by that unskilful mental state and in that direction by some other unskilful mental state, hence I did so and so.

V: In my experience, Bhante, it is really an endeavour to pretend that one has actually got further than one has. An endeavour to leave behind all those negative ... things and not want anything to do with them.

S: Yes, you just sweep them under the carpet and pretend that they are not there any more.

V: Yes, in the effort to evolve you just pretend that you have actually got rid of them all ...

S: Yes, there very often is an element of that.

V: And then you forget who you are.

S: Right, you don't know who you are, you are out of contact [390] with yourself, you are alienated from yourself. This is why it is very important to have at least four or five good friends with whom you can be completely honest and completely open. You can't be completely open and honest with forty people in the room, it is psychologically impossible. But you can with four or five people, or even eight or nine people.

All right, let's go on.

"Geshe Chen-na-wa, while speaking to a gathering of his disciples, said: "In brief, the Dharma can be divided into abandoning harmful activities and taking up helpful ones. All the teachings of the higher and lower vehicles as well as the teachings of the Three Baskets (Tripitaka) are included within this precept.

"To apply this precept, patience is most important. If you are without patience and someone harms you, you will feel vengeful. Should you act on that feeling, you will not cease from harmful activities, much less be helpful to others. Therefore, patience is necessary to begin religious practice.

"To meditate on patience, there are four methods: setting up the target for the arrow; love and compassion; teacher and disciple; and meditation on the nature of existence.

"First is meditation on the setting up of a target for the arrow: if you have not set up a target, it cannot be hit by an arrow. The arrow of harm strikes in this life because we have set up a target by the bad karma we accumulated in previous lives."

S: What is this target, by the way?

V's: Enlightenment.

S: No, it is our own self, our own psycho-physical organism. You've set up the target which others may attack. Do you see the point? On account of your previous karma you have got a physical body, a physical organism which can be the object of attack by others. So you can blame them for attacking it, yes, but who put the body there for them to attack, they may



shoot the arrow but who set up the target for the arrow, you on account of your previous karma. This is Shantideva's argument, as we shall see. We discussed this quite thoroughly when we had the seminar on the Bodhicaryavatara.

"Thus it is not right to be angry with those who harm us. As Santideva said in the Bodhicaryavatara:

If I had not done harm to others, No harm would come to me; I did harm living beings - It is fit that harm returns to me.

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Furthermore, if you have harmed others in the early part of your life you will receive retribution in the later part of the same life. The harm done in the early part of the year will return in the later part. The same for the early and later parts of months and days. If you set up a target of bad activities and hateful speech, it will be struck by arrows of retribution. We set up the target ourselves; understand that the arrows come from our own harmful acts and do not be angry with others."

S: That's going even further. Saying that the arrows are produced by you yourself, not only the target. That may not always be the case, but no doubt in some cases.

"Next is the meditation of love and compassion. When a lunatic harms one who is sane, the sane person should not return the harm by fighting him, but should say, 'How sad!' One who harms you is also insane, possessed by the madness of powerful fettering passions. Think, 'How sad!' and meditate compassion for him.

"Actually, a lunatic is less crazy than the sane person who harms you, for he harms only the bodies of himself and others and thus his harm is not so great. He is crazy only for a while, a few days, months, or years, and so the duration of his harm is not so great. The sane person who does harm, harms all sentient beings, and so is the crazier. He goes under the influence of fettering passions, which extend in the limitless world from beginningless time, and so the harm is of long duration. By carelessly committing non virtuous deeds in body, speech, and mind, he produces the misery of the three lower states. Thus his harm is very great. As this one has the greater need for compassion, meditate love and compassion to one who harms you and do not be angry. As Santideva said in the Bodhicaryavatara:

If one who is influenced by the fettering passions Will even kill himself, How can it be That he will not harm others? Influenced by the fettering passions He will destroy himself and others, too. If I am angry and have no compassion, I am worse than he.

"The third meditation of patience is on teacher and disciple. If there is no Lama to impart instruction, there can be no vow. If there is no teacher to explain the Dharma, there can be no realization. Similarly, if there [392] is no enemy who harms you, there can be no practice of patience; thus feel that those who abuse you are the teachers of patience. Be happy at this opportunity and concentrate on repaying their kindness. Meditating that you are a disciple being taught patience, do not be angry.

"To meditate on the nature of existence as Voidness, contemplate that all three aspects of harmfulness - the agent of harm, the recipient of harm, and the act of harming - are all void of self-nature. As all these things which you now see opposing you are erroneous creations of your mind, like dreams and illusions, it is not right to be angry. As Santideva said in the Bodhicaryavatara:

From being praised, What do you gain, what do you lose? In being despised, Why be happy, why be sad?

When you wake from sleep, you understand that the enemies in your dreams have no self-nature and you are not angry with them. As your actual enemy is also without self-nature,

do not be angry with him and meditate patience."

S: So in the previous section you had methods of dealing with craving, now you've got methods of dealing with anger and developing patience. Do you think these methods work? (V: Yes) Or are still applicable? Perhaps it would be a little difficult to think in terms of their having set up the target in the form of the psycho-physical organism, other than we shoot the arrows, or maybe don't even do that. Because people don't often have a really strong belief in rebirth and karma. But if you do have strong belief in rebirth and karma then obviously you can think in this way.

V: How can one approach teaching beginners in a situation in which karma is very very highly questionable and it isn't even a possibility, the idea of karma, for a lot of people.

S: Well you have to concentrate on this life. Practising in this life and attaining the results of that practice also in this life. You have to concentrate entirely on that aspect. Which is what the Buddha himself often did and which many teachers do and have done in the past. But leave it aside, if you can't accept karma and rebirth never mind, leave it aside, let's deal just with this life.

V: ... the events and thoughts ... the conditions, cause and effect which produce karma in ones own lifetime.

S: Yes, or one need not even discuss karma itself in the context even of this life. But just your practice in general, that the practice will have a fruit, a positive fruit. In a way of course [393] this is karma, but not quite in the sense which it is usually used.

I think it is quite useful to think of the person who gets very angry as being, in a sense insane, not in his right senses, so why get angry in return? Just feel sorry for him, though not in a superior sort of way, not in a condescending way, but feel really sorry that someone can get into that sort of state in which he is completely carried away. And just wait for him to come round, usually people do come round after a while and then very often they feel rather ashamed of themselves and if you haven't made things worse by getting angry too or speaking harshly. If you just waited quietly for the outburst to subside then you stand quite a good chance of being able to say what you want to say to that person, relate to them more positively.

Often in the Mahayana, aversion and hatred are considered the main obstacle, the main fetter. That is because aversion and hatred is the complete opposite of metta and karuna and the Bodhicitta. The direct opposite. So in as much as love, compassion and the Bodhicitta are regarded as centrally important, in the same way aversion and hatred are regarded as the main things that one has to get rid of. So there is no practice, you can't get rid of aversion and hatred without practising patience. That is to say, the first Paramita, therefore methods of practising patience become very important to the Mahayana.

In other words, what is the worst situation for somebody who wants to be a Bodhisattva? The worst situation is the kind of situation in which angry thoughts arise, because the angry thoughts cut at the root of the Bodhisattva vow. So you have to be particularly careful in situations of that sort, and not give rise to anger. You can't alter the objective situation, you can only alter your own attitude. Which means that where anger would normally arise you have to practise patience, therefore you need different methods of practising patience. This is what are given in this precept.

V: Do you think it might be better to use the word hatred here, rather than anger, in as much (S: I do, yes) as often one can speak very forcefully to somebody and they can say 'you are angry', and you say, 'yes I am angry' but at the same time there isn't any malicious intent to what you are saying, (S: Yes, right) but at the same time you are being very forceful? Whereas hatred is something insidious and malicious.

S: Yes, hatred is a definite wish to harm the other person, or intent to harm. I have made this distinction and said that we ought to be more careful how we use the words anger and hatred.

Anger can be healthy, it is energy trying to break through an obstacle, an obstruction. Sometimes rightly sometimes wrongly, but it is relatively at least, healthy.

V: So if you are speaking forcefully but there is no malicious intent in what you are doing then that is not anger then, strictly speaking, would you say?

S: Well yes, you can call it anger in the sense that it is forcive, or it is trying to break through an obstruction. And you may seem even quite heated but if you have no desire to harm the other person, you are only speaking in the interests of truth and you are trying to communicate with them, then that may be anger but it is not unskilful, and it is not hatred. Hatred means that you have a definite intention to harm and hurt and even destroy the other person and malice, which is even worse, [394] is your taking positive pleasure in their suffering.

V: What causes that, malice?

S: Ooh, I wouldn't like to say. It usually has its origins, originally, in very deep seated frustration on your part. Only a very frustrated person can be malicious.

V: Sometimes I feel like clouting people round the ear, and I feel quite positive about it (S: In your Yoga teaching?) - Well I do clout the Yoga students but I'm thinking of others - and I only restrain myself out of.., because it's unconventional. (S: Or they might clout back) I wouldn't do it if they were going to clout back.

S: If you did it very positively they probably wouldn't clout back. We must be sort of namby pamby, we don't want to have righteous indignation or anything like that, which is a polite way of saying you got angry in the negative sense. But I think no one should try to, as it were, invalidate someone's anger in a good cause by saying that they are just indulging in hatred and aversion. As though that is an argument against what they are saying.

V: I think that often does happen, saying something forcefully, or putting it across forcefully in the way you described as then claimed to be harsh speech.

S: Harsh speech is abusive speech. That is to say, to abuse somebody, that is harsh speech, it is not strong speech. And also, very often behind the strong speech there is affection.

V: I was going to say that whether it is harsh speech or not is really a question of whether the state of mind behind is ...

S: And you can say very unkind things with real hatred and real venom, but quietly and even gently and with a smile. And that is much worse.

V: To get back to the forceful thing again. Is this something that one has use the energy.., I mean does that energy have to be refined or is it just that energy ...

S: Well no, if there is an obstruction and that obstruction has to be broken through you need pretty powerful energy. Your refined energy maybe is not going to do it, not in some cases.

V: That's the energy that is there.

S: It is just the energy which is appropriate. That means just make sure that it is appropriate. I mean the Buddha himself spoke very strongly, quite often in the Pali Canon you find him saying 'Oh foolish monk' - it sounds quite forcible.

V: I think when you get angry with someone, it's normally always in spontaneous situations,

you don't think 'well I'll use some really coarse energy, or fine energy', you just do it.

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S: Whereas hatred is often premeditated.

Yeats has got some poems in which he speaks very positively about anger, 'a sort of besom that can clear the soul.' And Luther once said in a moment of honesty, 'he never wrote so well as when he was in anger'. Maybe that's also how one should paint wrathful deities. Wrathful deities by the way, express anger not hatred.

V: I think maybe the whole crux of the matter is that we associate anger with hatred and malice.

S: Also we don't know how to use anger, we are afraid of it because it may get out of control. Many people can't handle anger. You are more likely to indulge in hatred if you can't handle anger. A person who can use anger is master of it and will not usually indulge in hatred. But if you don't let out the anger it may sometimes accumulate.

When I say let out I don't mean by way of self indulgent expression, but when it is appropriate to the situation. If you don't get angry, it sort of accumulates and curdles within you and if this happens many times it just develops into hatred. You start hating the person because your energy has been, not only obstructed, but you have not even been able to express it.

V: That's where the malice could come from.

S: Yes, then even malice can come in there eventually.

V: It becomes a sort of righteous indignation, in the Christian sense.

S: With righteous indignation you tend to label something as evil, but here there is no question of an evaluation of that sort, you are just trying to get through. Usually you get angry in a situation when there is no response from the other side and your natural energy of communication accumulates, and you are trying to burst through, as it were. Burst through the obstruction, and that is quite natural.

Like when you tell somebody something and they don't believe it or don't accept it, you repeat it more strongly. Why, because you haven't got across, because you haven't got across there has been no discharge of energy, positive healthy energy of communication. Because you haven't discharged it it has accumulated, therefore you have to try again, this time more strongly because there is double energy that time, so you start getting a bit angry. If still they don't accept it and there is no communication, well there is more energy accumulated and again you have to try. Each time with more and more energy until finally you do burst through. But you may have to get really, as it were, angry before they start taking any notice. But if still it is unsuccessful, if you are a reasonably person, well just give up. You are surprised, it doesn't turn into hatred, you are just surprised, how can they be so obtuse or not see it or not accept what I say. Or not want to communicate, not be open, not be honest, you are surprised. Maybe after a while your energy just goes into a bit of a laugh, it is funny, it is amusing in a way that people can be so blind. Then if you are quite healthy you go away and do something else and after a while you feel all right.

V: When you use that word, you say 'accept' what you've said.

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S: Receive, allow it to penetrate.

V: They don't have to actually agree.

S: No they don't have necessarily to agree.

V: I think the difficulty with most people is maintaining some sort of mindfulness with the anger so that it isn't just an explosion. But they are still aware of what they are saying, what their argument is.

S: Yes, but actually when you are angry you can be very concentrated and very clear. This is what Luther meant when he said that he never wrote better than when he was in a state of anger, his brain was very clear.

V: I find that I have been most articulate when speaking when I have felt that kind of anger.

S: You also lose your self consciousness, you are completely at one with your energies, completely at one with what you are saying. In a way it is ego-less, in a way, though I don't want to exaggerate that point.

V: Can I ask you a question here because I have heard you comment in the past about Indian spiritual teachers using anger, in I think not a healthy way. (S: No) You said that they are allowed, everybody accepts that the holy man can get angry.

S: No, this is only as regards some old legends about rishis, rishis, in Vedic times.

V: Not your actual experience of them.

S: No, there is a bit of this among Burmese Buddhists, monks are expected to be a bit hot tempered and a bit angry because they are leading very austere lives and not enjoying certain things so they get a bit frustrated and let off steam in the form of anger.

V: In the negative sense?

S: In the negative sense, yes. But the general feeling among Indians is that a holy person should never get angry, never show anger. They are quite extreme in this way and hardly any Indian teacher ever does. (V: Don't they?) No, I've only ever met one who used anger, who used it very positively. An Indian always expects love and kindness and all these sorts of things, often it becomes very slushy and very sentimental. There's very little hardness or anything of that sort. I think this is a great weakness in modern, Indian spiritual teachers.

V: Iyengar is not like this.

S: Yes but he is not, as it were, a spiritual teacher in that full sense.

V: If one has got oneself in a position, or someone has got themselves into the position of having blocked anger for quite a while, so that whenever it does come out it comes out as hatred, how does one let it out bit by bit before the hatred ... ?

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S: Well you could take up karate, something like that. You have to be able to handle the anger. I think what some people are afraid of is that if they start letting it out it will get out of control or that they will get out of control of their energy like that. It may be that they are in a general condition of blockage and they are aware or half aware of a lot that is to come out, as it were. They are afraid if they just let the lid off, just a little bit, it will all come out, it will boil over with tremendous explosion and bits and pieces will go flying in all directions and everything will be shattered.

V: And it might actually happen.

S: And it might actually happen yes.

V: That's where it really is good in karate because the teacher sees this and he'll put you with someone who can ... you. So you find that you can in fact let it all out until ... (S: Yes, that's

very good)

V: It's very important, that finding someone who can as it were take your anger (S: That's true) and not run away from it.

S: Yes, if you are always with people who as soon as you show a bit of anger get all upset and start breaking down, well you feel very bad and you get into the habit of always containing your anger, which isn't good. So you need to be with a few stronger people, if you are of that type, who just don't mind your anger, just accept it quite naturally and not at all upset by it and take it in a quite positive spirit.

I have had that experience several times myself, of people saying how relieved they were that they could get angry and I didn't seem upset. And they are quite surprised and in some cases haven't had that experience before. Their experience hitherto had been that if they got angry people got very upset and then they used to feel bad, used to feel guilty about getting angry.

V: Isn't it a bit strange if someone is always angry, if anger is a build up, well how is it that one always seems to be angry, always ...

S: Well maybe there is constant frustration.

V: Which could be caused by? If it is constant what can it be caused by?

S: A situation that doesn't change, some unchanging factor in your life, in your environment which is always making you angry or always irritating you. Maybe something in yourself that you are not very happy with. But usually it's something in your present situation.

V: And then it becomes even more negative.

S: There are not many people, I think, who are always angry, very often it turns into something even more negative, like resentment or sullenness or depression. Anger, comparatively is a quite healthy thing. If that person who has been depressed and upset, starts getting angry, it is a very positive sign, they are on their way to recovery. So you should be very careful [398] not to reduce a person from anger to depression, because you may be afraid of their anger. Help them to develop the anger in a positive way, not damp it down so that it only becomes depression, say, 'yes you are right to be angry, I would be angry in your place, it is quite understandable, it is natural you should be angry'. And in that way cheer them up a bit, not say 'this is terrible, you shouldn't be getting angry, that is very bad, what you a Buddhist, angry?'

V: A thing though, that has happened to me a lot in the movement, certain Order members saying this to me, that I shouldn't express anything like that within the situation where other people have seen, being an Order member. That you have responsibility.

S: Well you have to bear all those things in mind too, but certainly have a situation in which you can express any feeling of anger that you may have.

V: I think it's different in a mixed situation rather than just in the Order ...

V: But being Ordained, it gets..., it's what we were talking about, not trying to look something other than what you are, it's still ...

S: Yes, but that doesn't mean letting all the different bits and pieces of you hang out simultaneously, on all occasions. In fact, if you get angry they may get a completely wrong impression of you.

V: Yes, especially someone new at a centre, see you rampaging round ... and maybe never come back. They might just not be able to take it.

S: In fact they would get a wrong impression, you will not be being yourself with them, because they would not be seeing, or would be unable to see, on account of your anger, all the other sides of you which are very good and positive.

V: But you said that anger was just as much a positive thing.

S: Yes, but they may not understand that.

V: Yes, most people don't.

S: So one should also choose one's time and place for letting out. And not just letting out, it is not just unloading in a self indulgent way, but using anger where anger is necessary. Maybe you feel anger for the wrong reasons, there is always that possibility, then if you let it out with the people you trust, who are more experienced than you, then they can point out that your anger is not really justified.

V: If someone is angry with you and you find it upsets you, would that be an indication that they have really hit the nail on the head, as it were?

S: Not necessarily. It may be that for instance you are in a sensitive state, maybe you've just been meditating and they just shatter that. You may be upset just for that sort of reason. [399] But sometimes you may be upset because they have hit the nail on the head. Other times you may be upset because you find the whole thing just too tiresome for words, too silly. On the other hand you may have been upset for quite negative reasons, that you are afraid of people's anger, that you are unable to deal with it, unable to cope with it. Maybe you are afraid of your own anger, maybe their anger sparks off something in you and you feel that even though there seems to be no reason for it. You feel an inner response, that you get angry and you just don't like that, you are afraid of that. So you shy away from the anger, you damp them down.

V: It's very interesting this. When I was living in Crouch End in the morning when I was meditating quite often there would be kids screaming. A mother would be dragging this kid down the street and the kid would be screaming and kicking and thoroughly angry and I would sit there in meditation and feel a rage, the same sort of rage was building up in me as a response to that sound. I couldn't explain it.

S: Well it's the anger which is out there sparking off the anger which is in you, in fact, deep down, unexpressed.

V: I think this is something that is more peculiar to Southern England than the rest of the country. (S: What) Just the normal expression of healthy anger. I feel that it is something that I have been..., well I have found myself in the last few years. (S: you mean that people don't express it?) Yes and in the last few years I have felt really guilty, living with people that I couldn't be angry with. But I think it's something that doesn't exist, certainly not in Scotland anyway, Northern England...

V: You don't get much in the North either.

S: I think there is much less up there anyway. People do speak. I was quite amused the other day on the radio, listening to some speeches by miners leaders. It was quite interesting the blunt way that they spoke and how completely they were into what they were saying. There was quite a bit of anger there too, but in a way it was quite positive. But the more educated Oxford accented Southerners, they just don't seem into what they are saying. Whatever they say sounds insincere. Whatever the miners leaders were saying sounded sincere and genuine even though they might possibly have been wrong in what they were saying.

V: I think people change. I remember with my parents, coming from the south, from London seeing lots of scenes of anger. People letting off quite healthy anger. I think it is probably more applicable to the upper middle class. But I think gradually, with all the increase in

advertising and all the working people being conned into believing they have to be like this, then there is an element of that creeping in. You may find it up in Scotland now, that it is increasing.

S: I must say the incident that opened my eyes, quite a few years ago was when I paid a visit, one of my rare visits I am sorry to say, to Sarum House, as it was in those days. I think it was a getting together mainly of Order members and Friends. I forget the actual occasion, but anyway what happened was, I [400] noticed that everyone seemed a bit, and in particular one person, seemed very dull, very downcast and depressed. I noticed this and then Kevin happened to be there and he started helping this particular person put some bamboo sticks into some tomato plants to support them. And in a playful sort of way he started fencing with one of these bamboos with the other chap, the depressed one. Within a few minutes they were fencing vigorously and the other chap at once livened up and they spent about half an hour in this way and quite a lot of energy and even anger went into it but at the end of that period the other chap was completely cheerful and happy.

I noticed this and thought this is very significant and after this I started speaking about the pseudo-Buddhist virtues, the pseudo-meekness, the pseudo-loving kindness. The pseudo-gentleness, the pseudo-restraint, all these very milk and water versions of the real thing. I think one must be very careful about that. Not to have the namby pamby equivalent of the, as it were, gentler Buddhist virtues. They are not really all that gentle. In other words mistaking weakness for gentleness and sometimes bringing in that glorious excuse for it all, 'well I guess I am trying to cultivate my feminine side'. This is the word feminine quite wrongly used to signify the weaker, emotional side.

V: I think this still goes round under the disguise of refinement, now. People don't speak in terms of femininity now, but 'Oh I'm refined', because you are using that kind of energy.

S: Well it even reached me that it was being said.., that certain people were doing very well but that they were operating with very coarse energy, things like that.

V: Could you say something actually about refinement and what it actually is? Because I really do feel that a lot of people are confused about this.

S: Well put it this way. The energy may be coarse, so what, the main thing is to have the energy and to experience the energy. If you are doing what needs to be done and if you continue to be aware and mindful and you are developing positive emotions, and you are into your puja and maybe your art, then the energy will be refined. But I sometimes feel that this charge of the energy being coarse, is a charge brought in some cases by people whose own energy is very weak or perhaps repressed or suppressed for one reason or another. And who feel uncomfortable being with people whose energy is more aroused. Simply that. It's not that they don't like coarse energy, they just feel uncomfortable with energy in general.

V: How does this relate to what you were saying earlier about the puja being too ...

S: Ahh, the puja, it was forced. It wasn't real energy, energy that sort of flows out, natural, spontaneous energy. It was a hard, forced energy. I certainly didn't think of it as coarse energy, it just seemed hard and forced. Coarse energy is quite healthy in its own way, it is just coarse, there is nothing wrong with it. It does need refining, not doubt, but it will get refined if the person is into meditation and puja and so on.

But if the energy is hard and forced and strained, then [401] you just need to stop and go more gently. Not to force, not to shove and to make contact with your feelings.

But, for instance, when you get angry, energy is there, feeling is there too.

V: Do you think that's always the case though? That feeling is always integrated with that energy ...



S: No. I've seen..., it can be, I don't know if there is a word for it, there ought to be a word, I have seen people very much in a state of really negative anger. It is not hatred, it is more like violent resentment and it seems to spring really from weakness, not from strength. In a way it is not energy, it's rather curious, I don't quite know how to characterize it, but do you know what I mean?

V: Defence.

V: Bile.

S: Right, that's the word, bile. It's black bile and it is defensive, yes. It's a discharge of black bile, black, yes, you know what I mean, and I've seen this.

V: It's poisonous.

S: It's poisonous yes, and it affects the atmosphere. So I think we must learn to distinguish between these, even in the course of this short discussion there has been mention made of anger, of hatred, of malice, of resentment, of black bile. And these are all different things. One shouldn't try to invalidate something which is essentially positive by

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by means of a confusion of that particular thing and it's near enemy. Sure, hatred is a near enemy of anger, but it is not the same as anger.

V: Or the other way around, is to cover up one's own poison by saying that one is just healthily angry.

S: Yes, right. Or saying that one is being open when one is merely being offensive.

V: You can tell though, I know although I get very confused about anger, feeling wise I know when someone is positively angry and when it is just poison. It just...

S: Well when they are positively angry you feel the genuineness of it, you feel it as a communication. But if it is actual hatred you feel someone is just trying to destroy you. Though you can feel that when it is just anger, but that is due to your weakness.

V: What do you think about, when someone is trying to destroy..., hate, but rather the feeling that comes with it. It's either clean and clear, or it's murky and there are hints of other stuff.

V: I think that if there is articulacy there, a genuine flow, that is a sure sign. Because that is what I have experienced myself when I have been unsure about whether [402] I should have really done that and given expression in quite that way, but I feel more confident in that from what you said.

V: But let's not make your communication always like that.

V: Well I don't always communicate in that way.

V: Because everything that you have said now, has been like that. (V: So what) So everything that I hear you saying is like that.

V: That's just me.

V: That's just the way he talks.

V: I mean I don't feel I'm being negative in talking like this, I am not experiencing a negative emotion or anything, I am just forceful, I am just demonstrative. I think it's my temperament.

V: This is your software.

Confusion of voices

V: I won't say anything more about that, I'll shut up for the rest of the day.

V: You've got four fire signs.

V: Ahh, that's a point, yes, I've got four fire signs in my astrological chart.

S: Well you see, just look at it like that, he's got four fire signs, he's not really angry (laughter). He's not earth and he's not water, he's quadruple fire, of course he gets angry, it's only natural, it's very positive.

And there is another form which is just spite. Sometimes people are spiteful, which is another form, which is negative.

V: I can really see how these painters could paint Mara's hosts. It's as if with each word they get a picture of a demon, 'spite'.

S: Well we have come to the end of our time. We haven't been getting on, in a sense, very well, in the sense of many pages covered. But it does seem to be the most rewarding part of the book so there might be something to be said for taking our time over these precepts and not necessarily rushing on to the more philosophical works.

V: We have to read fifty pages at a time.

S: Well we have got three days left.

V: That's what I mean, 150 pages.

V: Three days, is that all, I don't believe it!

S: Well we could do. Well anyway let's see.

V: Is it not possible to do extra study sessions?

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S: We could.

V: I would like to very much, I would like to get through the book and I wouldn't like to rush through it.

S: We did have double sessions on the Udana retreat, though they were slightly shorter. We could certainly have a double session.

V: Maybe make this one a little shorter ...

S: We could do that.

V: We could get up earlier, that would...

S: We could get off to an earlier start.

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"Geshe Chen-na-wa said, "In order to obtain omniscience and liberation we must learn not to conform with worldly people. Such people value Buddha more than living beings, value self

more than others, value those who are helpful more than those who are harmful, and value happiness more than misery.

"Those who practice Dharma must do the opposite. We should value living beings more than Buddha. Why is that? Not only is it not disrespectful to value living beings more than Buddha, there are four good reasons for doing so: all living beings in samsara are our kind mothers; as these mothers suffer in samsara, we must help them; by helping them we will naturally achieve our own purpose; and by helping them we respect and worship all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

"Worldly people value themselves more than others, but we must value others more than ourselves. Why? From beginningless time we have created our own misery; it has not been created by others. Misery is brought about by our own fettering passions. As egoism and fettering passions are one, it is our own egoism which has created our misery. Therefore, we must oppose this enemy in every way, and value others more than ourselves, since it is in relation to other living beings that we accumulate merit and wisdom. Also, it is in relation to other living beings that we meditate on the two aspects of Bodhi-mind which lead to the attainment of Nirvana.

"Worldly people value those who help them more than those who harm them; we must do the opposite. Why? In this world, parents are considered to be the greatest help, for they give their children, servants, wives, herds of horses, palaces, gold, turquoise, and land. Yet, according to the Dharma, there is no greater harm than that, because, desiring these gifts, children accumulate and extend bad karma and fettering passions, and by [404] this they may finally fall into hell. What appears now to be help has a final result of misery, and the kind fathers and mothers of this life can thus be considered our greatest enemies. We must instead value those who bring us harm. Why? When harmed by an enemy, we can meditate patience, and from patience we obtain immeasurable merit. When harmed by devils we begin to make effort, and, travelling higher and higher paths, we obtain all siddhis. Thus we must value those who harm us.

"Finally, worldly people value happiness more than misery; we must do the opposite. Why? Desire for the happiness of food and clothes, of idleness, of sex, of rest, and of sleep is finally the cause of despair. Therefore we must value misery more than worldly happiness. Why? By the misery of work undertaken for the Lama and the Sangha, by the misery of the hardships of moral practice, and by the misery undergone while doing virtuous work in body, speech, and mind, we purify defilements and accomplish merit and wisdom. By these we obtain states of great spiritual happiness; therefore we must value misery. When troubled in mind and sick in body, we can turn from samsara and produce the mind of renunciation. Therefore we must value misery.

"If you have learned these four ways of not conforming with worldly people, you are like a good and clever woman - you do not need more explanation. If you do not have these four aspects, you are like a bad woman - no teaching will be helpful."

S: Well first of all about these teachings in general. The basic point seems to be that we must learn not to conform with worldly people. In other words be opposite, go in the opposite direction from what most people go in. Not in a sort of spirit of cussedness, but because if you really want to develop, if you really want to lead a spiritual life you can hardly do anything else. That, no doubt, is fairly clear and fairly acceptable to everybody, but some of the things that this particular teacher regards as representing not conforming with worldly people are a bit unexpected.

What about 'valuing living beings more than Buddha', what do you think that is intended to mean?

V: It means not having overt, religious values while not being aware of the misery around you or helping people. Like doing a religious practice overtly but yet not practising Dana to

somebody who needed it.

S: Yes. Presumably by 'valuing Buddha', is not meant having faith in the Buddha, it is more like devoting yourself to. In a sense the Buddha doesn't need you, but living beings may, human beings may. After all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are devoting themselves to helping living beings so if you also help living beings you are co-operating with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and in that way you are truly honouring them, we can look at it like that.

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For instance if someone comes to see you and they are in quite a terrible state, you can hardly say 'just wait a little while I'll nip upstairs and do my puja'. Unless of course you needed to do that to calm your own mind first before attending to that person.

V: Would you say that throughout this there is a general influence from Shantideva or is it just the Mahayana in general?

S: It is probably the Mahayana in general but Shantideva in the Bodhicaryavatara represents at least certain aspects of the Mahayana in a particularly concentrated and intense form. So some of the expressions which he has given to some of these Mahayana attitudes has become, as it were, the norm in respect of those attitudes for Tibetan Buddhism. He is the authority, as it were, he is the author whom they quote or whom they have in mind. He has exercised a very strong influence one might say on the whole course of Tibetan Buddhism. Not so much as regards this doctrine or that teaching, but the whole spirit, at least in certain respects.

V: I just felt it very much from this ...

S: Yes. It is more like the influence of the spirit of Shantideva. Shantideva focuses certain Mahayana attitudes in much the same way as a lens focuses the rays of the sun.

For instance, valuing others more than oneself which is a very characteristic teaching of Shantideva. He puts it in an even more extreme form, he says putting others in the place of oneself, and oneself in the place of others, quite literally in a sense.

V: I don't know much about Shantideva's life.

S: Not all that much. We do know that he was born and lived in Western India in the area that is now called Gujerat. I think it was in the eighth century, eighth or ninth century. He was certainly a well known teacher and there are other works which he has given, especially the Siksa-samuccaya which is a sort of higher authority of Mahayana texts which he seems to have felt particularly useful, on which he seems to have drawn in composing the Bodhicaryavatara. But the Bodhicaryavatara is certainly his most celebrated work and one of the best know works in the whole field of Mahayana Buddhism, if not in the whole field of Buddhism itself. A very, very influential work. As far as I know, though, it was not known in China, as far as I know it was never translated, I have not heard of any Chinese translation.

V: Are there any sort of biographies or accounts of his life?

S: I have seen short biographies of Shantideva, I can't recollect now many details, except that he did go to ... and he was a teacher there. There are some legends surviving in the Tibetan sources but not much of an historical nature. (V: He was a monk) He was a monk and he was the son of a petty king.

Of course there is again the familiar idea of someone who harms you actually benefiting you. Someone who harms you is helping you to practise patience so in a sense he is a good friend. How seriously do you think it is possible for people [406] to take this sort of attitude to this sort of reflection? Do you think it is possible to actually think or feel like this?

V: I think it's possible but it is very, very hard.

S: In a sense yes, but in a sense no. If you look back you can sometimes see that people who have opposed you or hindered you, or even been actual enemies have sometimes benefited you, in the sense that they have made you more self reliant or more able to look after yourself. That they have drawn out certain qualities in you, that they haven't let you have too easy a time, and this has been good in the long run.

V: It's very hard to see that at the actual time, if someone hits you over the head.

S: Maybe in retrospect you can see it, but not so easily at the actual time. Nietzsche has something to say about this, he says one should value ones enemies, he has quite a lot to say about this sort of thing. He even says you should choose your enemies, you should quite deliberately make certain people your enemies. I mean people with whom you do have basic disagreement but you shouldn't try to gloss it over, cultivate it, you are opposed to each other, let them try to defeat you and bring out your capacities.

V: Didn't he say 'opposition is true friendship'?

S: No, that was Blake. But it is a little bit like that, in a way. Nietzsche also says that you should respect your enemy.

V: Like the story of some island of brothers who had to fight on opposing sides. Would it be like that?

S: Well it depends why they had to fight. Maybe if they were the only two who were matched and they couldn't find any match elsewhere, then they might have to fight even though they were brothers.

V: I think you go in this bit about in retrospect I think when you run into something, you reject that feeling or experience, opposite of patience, then you have some base to support development, rather than try and choose an enemy.

S: That's true. An enemy keeps you on your toes, as it were. You never know from which side the attack is going to come, so you have to be constantly alert.

V: I went through this with a goat recently, we had a very rough time and I went through quite a lot of states with it but in the end I think we ended up with really mutual respect and ...

V: Do you mean a four legged one?

V: Yes, with great big horns.

S: I remember one or two occasions in the past when I was in India, in Kalimpong. I remember certain people who tried to oppose me, tried to put certain things across, the way in which I counteracted all this I would hardly have believed, [407] earlier on before it all happened, that I was capable of such depths of diplomacy and contrivance to prevent them doing the things that they were trying to do. In this way you can find enemies or so-called enemies quite useful. I remember feeling at the end of one particularly brisk exchange of measures and counter-measures when I finally defeated what they were trying to do, which I felt was basically against the Dharma, and they didn't get and couldn't get their own way; and I felt really pleased that I had succeeded in frustrating them in whatever they were trying to do. Which actually, if they had succeeded wouldn't have been at all good for the Dharma.

V: I've found in my experience, Bhante, whenever I have given way to someone who has been opposing me, in the long run it has been deleterious to the relationship, giving way. It has actually produced harm, produced an obstacle because one has sacrificed part of something which one believes oneself... give way out of fear of meeting the situation. It creates an obstacle later on.

S: Or sometimes you might resent the fact that you have to give in or give way when you didn't really feel that that was appropriate.

V: Yes, and that often comes out in a negative way later on.

V: ... cultivate the fighting spirit.

S: Well, the spirit of being ready to fight if you want to fight, if anyone challenges you then you are ready.

V: ... what you are fighting for.

S: Yes, and who you are fighting.

V: But I think there is some, it's also just a characteristic of certain people, I think some people enjoy the battle and so any excuse ...

S: When I was in Kalimpong I was only trying to lead a quiet life. I didn't want to have any battles or even disagreements with anybody. But I felt that if somebody was trying to do something, not just against me, sometimes it didn't involve me personally at all, but against the Dharma, then I wasn't going to let them get away with that. Even though it meant I had to rouse myself from my quiet life and start writing letters and seeing people and getting things done and pulling strings and so on, but anyway I would do that.

Even if you don't succeed, you feel, 'well I did my bit, I did my best'. But I think, as far as I recollect I did succeed, in these different matters.

V: I find it very difficult to know in certain situations, like in the college situation, there are tremendous fighting situations that I could get into, like political activity, ... Very strongly opposed to this and then there is a lot of anger and energy. But in a way it is all, partly I regard it as a complete waste of energy, getting involved in those conflicts.

S: There is a difference between there being a genuine [408] disagreement in connection with something that you deeply believe in, therefore you have to take a stand. There is a difference between that and having a sort of fund within you of unused up resentment, which you are looking for an outlet for. So you go around looking for something to be resentful about, or a cause that would justify your getting angry. And a lot of student activity is of this kind, a lot of the pseudo-liberal activity is of this kind. It is deep psychological resentment and disgruntlement looking for some sort of outlet, almost any outlet, it doesn't matter. But that is a quite different sort of thing.

V: Yet some of the causes I do feel are important. Like certain things, the abortion bill and things like that, all this is very ...

S: It is also a question of how important in relation to other things.

V: I feel it is a little bit, in a way against the Dharma not to be involved in a sense, because there is some things which do affect everybody's rights.

V: What does it mean by, it says, 'travelling higher and higher paths you obtain all siddhis'?

S: It means successively higher and higher stages of the path. Also this particular paragraph raises the question, who are your true friends. We usually think that those are our friends who do what we like them to do and who are kind to us and nice to us and give us things and speak pleasantly to us; but not necessarily. Even sometimes people who say things we don't like to hear or who are a bit rough with us or, as we think, are not very sensitive or not very understanding. They may in fact be truer friends.

V: So do you think we should choose ... in Metta Bhavana?

S: Well it depends how genuine is your feeling that they are in fact your friends. It depends how you yourself actually feel about them, whether you classify them as friends or as enemies. Sometimes you will regard as enemies those who are really trying to help you, you don't want to be helped, you want to hang on to your beloved neuroses or whatever it is. You don't want to be parted from them, these enemies of yours are trying to take away your pet neurosis and get between you and it.

V: In real life, as it were in the ordinary world it does seem that there is, in some way ... in a curious sense much more truthful, much more themselves than people who are being polite.

S: Yes, you assuming that is that it is not true politeness, that it is only a sort of veneer with nothing very solid underneath or even disguising actual negative feelings.

V: It really can give one quite a feeling of delight when you find someone acting, or ... being like that, you can actually smile at it. If they are a bit rough or brusque or irritable, apparently.

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S: It's a bit like Queen Victoria who used to quite enjoy being scolded by John Brown.

V: What does it mean by, 'Those who practice Dharma must do the opposite'.

(break in tape)

S: In other words if you are going against the grain, if you are going against what people usually do, going against the way in which people usually people behave, going against their usual attitudes and your own usual attitudes. Then the likelihood is that you are practising the Dharma. This is what this in fact means.

We shouldn't be too eager to adapt and to conform. Shouldn't be too afraid of not being like other people.

V: I had an interesting experience recently, hitch-hiking back from .. I got a lift from someone who lives in .. he was quite a well-to-do fellow. He said 'where are you living?' and I said 'I am living in the little cottage opposite the pond'. He said, 'Oh are you, you bought the place?' And I didn't think, and said, 'no we are squatting there actually', being used to the London reaction to squatting and he said 'WHAT! you should be shot!' I thought, 'oh I shouldn't have said that', but I immediately wanted to defend my position, in quite a defensive way.

V: Did he throw you out of the car immediately?

V: No he didn't, I managed to placate him to some extent and he did actually seem to accept, in the end, wasn't as bad as he initially thought. But it really sort of took me aback, I was really shocked, apart from my own unawareness, but that this was the reaction of a quite normal, healthy, conventional human being.

S: It's a bit like, towards the end of the film, Easy Rider, when the two very right wing farming types just take out their rifles and they take shots at the two riders and they just shoot them, and that's that, that's the end of the film.

V: I think if he had had a gun on the spot he might even have done that, his reaction was that violent, so hateful.

V: Perhaps it is like ... and you were able to speak to him.

V: I've been a bit more careful since then though.

S: You are sort of violating the sanctity of property. But one must know, or one should know what one is doing. Not just go against people for the sake of going against them, you go against incidentally, you can't help it because you are following the Dharma. Not that you particularly like going against people, you would rather go along with them but if it comes to a choice of going along with people or following the Dharma, then you have to follow the Dharma even though it means going against people, going against their usual attitudes.

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V: It's very difficult not to let yourself be swamped by their values.

S: Yes, or your craving to be liked by them and get on well with them and not be disapproved of by them.

V: Also there is the element that if the question of one's being Buddhist is involved, with a person like that in the car - what religion are you - I'm a Buddhist. And they are shocked by your attitude by your behaviour or your unconventionality. Is it skilful to let them know that one is a Buddhist in that situation? Taking into account that one may not have the opportunity to explain all the background that one ...

S: It may not be, but if they ask you 'do you follow any particular religion and if so which one', then you have to say.

V: Do you have to say?

S: I think you do. You can of course say 'I'd rather not say but that almost suggests that you are ashamed of ...

V: I was thinking about, in a way the karmic effect of that, then they go away with a terrible impression of Buddhism because of their own projections and imagination.

S: But then it isn't a feeling about Buddhism if it is a projection. Well then they are not actually feeling negative towards the Dharma, but only towards what they take as the Dharma.

V: I think that situation can be seen very positively and in a way it is very good that it has arisen because that person is obviously loaded with misconceptions about, say Buddhism or whatever, and now is your opportunity to put them straight about that.

V: But maybe one doesn't have that opportunity, like if you are getting a lift with a ...

V: I didn't say I was a Buddhist.

V: No, I'm just projecting the situation a bit, if that had come up and you hadn't a chance to explain anything, do you see what I mean? He may have gone off with a really bad impression of Buddhism.

V: But I don't think under a circumstance like that, that you would be likely to come up with that.

S: Well you can't start to say that until the atmosphere becomes a bit sympathetic and receptive.

V: In some circumstances you can't avoid, in a sense, letting people know. It is not that you tell them but they just find these things out, especially in a little village. If you get letters addressed to Upasaka Devamitra and Upasaka Ratnapani, there is going to be ... go around from the post office.

V: That's what they think in Cornwall, they think that we are Pakistanis.



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V: And that we've got five names between the two of us, almost.

S: They probably think there are five people.

V: Five names?

V: Well I have three.

V: He has his professional name.

V: Some people still write to me as ... But you can't help it in a situation like that. We didn't advertise the fact that we were Buddhists, it just comes up.

V: Yes, but I was talking about a situation where one obviously has a choice to reveal it or not.

S: Well if you hypothesise that let us hypothesise that you somehow find a way of wriggling out. (laughter)

Confused voices.

S: Anyway, let's carry on unless there is something more. Though there is this question of the attitude towards misery, value in misery. I suspect that this could be taken a bit negatively. It is just the incidental hardship, it's not misery, it is incidental hardship, when you are doing something that you deeply believe in and which does give you real happiness though incidentally there is some hardship. It is a bit like when you play tennis even, there is a bit of, in a sense, hardship, a bit of exertion. You may even get very tired or maybe continuing to play when it is really hurting, or in Karate, but there is an overall sort of joy and you accept the incidental hardship. You are not revelling in the misery of it. I think this passage should be understood more like that. It's hardship, more incidental hardship, more than actual misery.

V: It seems to tie up with what you were saying earlier about the Tibetans being a very positive sort of people. Perhaps this is much more directly applicable to them, this whole...

S: Yes, I have sometimes quoted the Tibetans as saying, as I have heard them say, 'without difficulty there is no religion'. If it isn't difficult it isn't religion, they really do believe this, that it must be hard, it must be really hard work. It must involve a lot of effort, a lot of strain. Not strain in the sense of nervous tension but of real genuine exertion and effort, and expenditure of energy. Sometimes in a very painful way. If you don't have this then it is not religion.

But this is not quite what the Buddha said, the Buddha said quite clearly that you can have a perfectly happy spiritual life from beginning to end. That is one possibility, it doesn't have to be hard, it doesn't have to be painful. It depends, perhaps partly on temperament. So I think one must be careful how one takes this. Otherwise you start drawing the wrong conclusion, that the more miserable the more that you must be practising the Dharma.

V: 'All living beings being our kind mothers'?

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S: In previous existences. You should think, and this is again a typical or standard Tibetan reflection, that you should reflect that in past lives all living beings have been your mother some time or other. So you should have that attitude towards them, that in some previous life or other, have been very kind to you and brought you up and nurtured you.

Again this is only possible if you have this very firm faith in rebirth and karma.

V: I took it to mean that all living beings mould you, the way they see you, they bring you into existence.

S: No, the Tibetans take it quite literally, as the Indians would. That in the course of the innumerable revolutions of the wheel of life that you have stood in all possible relationships to all possible people. Amongst others, everybody that you meet in this life has at some time or other in the past been your mother. And you should reflect on that and continue to have that sort of positive attitude towards them. And of course to the Tibetan it is a positive attitude that you automatically feel towards your mother. There are not any of the sort of complications we get in modern life.

V: I ... when you said that.

S: Well if it doesn't, if it can't, then obviously this sort of reflection is not meaningful for one then, not very helpful. We have to think things like, well they are all human beings, we are all in the world together.

V: Sounds a bit like the soul theory, that's the only thing that stops me from accepting it completely and wholeheartedly. I see it more ... way.

V: Also there are more people around now ...

S: Well you have to go back to previous worlds and previous universes, other planets. Look at it that way. But don't forget that the purpose here, the function of this sort of reflection is practical, to get you into a positive mood towards others. That is the basic thing, by whatsoever means you do it, to get into an attitude of positive good will, metta towards other living beings who you actually encounter in this life. If you happen to believe in rebirth, literally, then you can do it in this way. If not you have to do it in some other way, but you have to do it, by one means or another.

V: I find this section interesting. 'in this world parents are considered to be the greatest of help - for they give their children servants, wives, herds of horses, palaces, gold, turquoise and land.' (S: Typically Tibetan) Yes but it also reminds me of a situation where a child is brought up and spoilt but not given possibly what a child really needs, which may not be very pleasant for the child.

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And this could lead to positive resentment in later life etc. Which is bad karma.

S: Yes, right. You can see lots of children being brought up in a way that one can see clearly is only going to do them harm later on, and be a source or at least a cause of [413] inconvenience to the people that they come into contact with. They are just going to be impossible to live with if they carry on in that sort of way. But the parents are encouraging them, the parents are responsible for them.

V: Do you think there is anything one can say in those circumstances to the parents?

S: It depends on the nature of your relationship with the parents. Sometimes you may know them very well but you are not able to do anything about it, they just won't listen to you, you do find this.

V: Even when you do know them very well, it still may be impossible.

S: And parents, and I must say especially the mother, usually, is very blind where the children are concerned. Usually the father can be a bit objective and a bit rational. But mother often is completely irrational, and doesn't realize what she is doing, doesn't realize what harm she is doing to the child. She thinks she loves the child and she would be very offended if you told

her that she was doing harm to the child, but very often this is what she is doing. Out of blind love and blind attachment.

V: It may even do harm to her to tell her that, psychologically anyway.

S: It depends how you tell her.

V: She wouldn't be loving it enough.

S: Yes, right. But she would believe that she loved the child very much and obviously the attitude towards the child would be a reflection of her general attitude. You couldn't do anything about her attitude to the child and the way she was bringing the child up without tackling her life as a whole and her attitude towards life, and that's quite a big thing. And perhaps her attitude towards her own child goes back into her own childhood and how she was brought up. So you have got quite a big problem, virtually, on your hands, and sometimes you can only stand by helplessly.

V: And the mother says, 'it's all the father's fault, he just doesn't understand.'

S: Anyway, how did we get on to that? From Chintamani, yes.

V: And misery.

S: Anyway we mustn't just blame parents, even if you were brought up not in the best way, because once you have started seeing it then you can do something for yourself and even, maybe, go back and do something for your parents too.

V: Do you think you really can?

S: I think you can. I think some people have done, quite definitely.

All right let's go on to the next piece.

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"Geshe Chen-na-wa said, "Nowadays even the best people mix their religious practice with worldly interests. Afraid of weakness, they seek patronage with families of great name. Afraid of devils, they recite mantras of the wrathful deities. Afraid of starvation, they accumulate many possessions. Afraid of being criticized, they act hypocritically."

S: This is the same sort of thing that we have been saying, isn't it. And the emphasis seems to be on fear, you are afraid, and very often one is and this is why one does these various things. 'Afraid of weakness they seek patronage of families of great name', that is the so-called religious people even.

V: ... one night I had quite an experience of fear, just pouring out of us. I went to see a film and it sparked off all this fear ... just pouring out of them. So in order to try to keep a hold of something, I think it was just a fear of going insane or something, I had to recite the mantra just to stay with it, should I just have let it go, let it...?

S: Difficult to say, difficult to generalize. Here, obviously what is being referred to is not a momentary or relatively short lived intense experience of fear but the sort of habit of being afraid. Your whole life is based on fear about which you are not doing anything. 'Afraid of weakness they seek patronage of families with great name'. So clearly it is not that sort of experience that is being referred to. It is something much deeper, more insidious, more general, more deep rooted.

V: Is it more in line with anxiety?

S: Perhaps it is more like anxiety.

V: What exactly by weakness is meant here? 'Afraid of weakness they seek patronage'.

S: Well what do you think, what sort of weakness?

V: Financial weakness?

V: (Unclear)

S: Organizational weakness. For instance I have seen this in India. Seen Buddhists organizations trying to get the support, just the name of the wealthy and powerful and the influential. Get them along to a meeting just to preside over it, just speak some nonsense from the platform. Anything to get themselves associated with that person because he is well known, influential (V: prestige) Yes, possesses prestige. This is really a terrible thing when religious bodies start doing this.

V: Is it something, again like the power of acquisition?

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S: It means you are just into completely the wrong sort of thing. You are thinking that you can have a successful or more successful religious and spiritual movement, just by associating yourself with these purely worldly interests. So it means that you don't really know what you are trying to do.

I have known occasions and sometimes protested against them when it has been decided, or at least debated to invite a certain person to preside over a Buddhist function who is well known to be unfriendly towards Buddhism, but some people wanted to invite him just because he was very well known and if he was invited to preside over the meeting that a lot of people would come and hear him speak, but he was known to be quite opposed to Buddhism. But sometimes even Buddhists would want to invite him because he was well known and would attract a lot of people and help popularize their movement and so on, which seems completely disgraceful.

So in India I had a lot of this sort of thing to contend with, sometimes made myself unpopular raising my voice against it. But sometimes people quite genuinely thought they were doing the right thing, they were so blind. You used to get the same sort of thing in the Buddhist movement in this country. If you have a Buddhist function a Buddhist ... what do you do? You try and get hold of all the diplomats, all the ambassadors from the Buddhist countries, and if there is some visiting Prime Minister from some Buddhist country, try to get them along too. And all your Buddhist activities sometimes centre around this sort of thing, getting dignitaries from Buddhist countries along. The more you have the more successful you are.

I remember an amusing story in this connection that someone told me, needless to say it centres upon the Buddhist society. After the King of Thailand had visited the Buddhist Society, someone went along there and was just about to sit on a certain chair in the library and Mr Humphreys leapt forward and said, 'don't sit on that chair, the king of Thailand sat on it'. This is what I was told, told it by the person who was going to sit on it. (laughter)

So perhaps when you are a small, growing organization you shouldn't unnecessarily offend such people, like go out of your way to offend them, but certainly not court them and try to gain their purely worldly support under the impression that it will ever really forward your spiritual movement. That is a tremendous mistake.

V: What about the more general case of, perhaps quite advanced Tibetans who may come within the orbit of our movement generally?

S: I'm talking about purely worldly people, political figures and that type of person. Even in

those days, Geshe Chen-na-wa said 'nowadays even the best people mix their religious practice with worldly interest'. I don't know when he lived.

V: Sounds very contemporary.

S: Yes. So we don't want just to criticize others but we just have to watch that in ourselves and in our own movement.

All right carry on then.

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"Among such people do you think any will become Buddha? It isn't likely. Do you think a sheep can rise up when the butcher is grasping him for slaughter? Do you think he can free himself when he is already butchered? It isn't likely."

S: In other words don't leave it until too late, don't leave it until the Yamaraja has got his grip on you.

"What should be done? If someone harms you, do not retaliate, but meditate patience. If you do that, you will not be overcome by even the most powerful person. Therefore, as the chief strength is meditation of patience, it is senseless to seek patronage.

"If devils come, seeking to trouble you, realize that, like the horns of a hare, an independent ego does not exist; if you give up life and body to the devils, even the demons of the three thousand worlds cannot harm you. Therefore, the principal power is the realization of egolessness, and it is senseless to recite mantras of wrathful deities.

"If you are completely impoverished, you will entrust yourself to the Dharma. As a final consequence of turning toward the Dharma, you will entrust yourself to the life of a beggar. As a final consequence of this, you will entrust yourself to death. Because of your holy life, after your death you will be revered by all those faithful to the Teaching. Therefore, the greatest joy is found in non attachment and it is meaningless to accumulate possessions.

"If you are without hypocrisy, although some may criticize you, you will actually be the most admirable. Therefore, as the basis of a good name is to be without falsehood in thought or deed, it is useless to act hypocritically."

S: He says, 'if you do that', that is to say meditate patience, 'you will not be overcome even by the most powerful person.' How literally do you think that is to be taken?

V: If you react to them, then they have in a sense overpowered you.

S: Yes. They may overcome you physically, but if you maintain your patience they haven't really overcome you. I don't think that one should take it in the sense that if you really are patient you won't be overcome in the literal, physical sense, you might be. And that is then perhaps, the greatest test of your patience, that you can be overcome physically but not accept defeat. 'Bloody but unbowed', as the poet says.

I think it would be a mistake to think that if you practice patience you will not be overcome physically. Because then in a sense you are just using the patience just to obtain [417] a worldly result. Whereas you should be patient because it is good to be patient and because patience leads to Enlightenment. And continue to be patient even though apparently it doesn't seem to be paying any dividends. If it doesn't you've just got a further opportunity to practise patience.

If someone gets angry with you and you are very patient, well it's wonderful if your patience stops his anger but it may not. So if it doesn't, you shouldn't think, 'well my patience isn't working' and then get angry, maybe with the Buddha and the Dharma. But just be more

patient than ever even if he goes on, then beating you. It's just a further opportunity for patience. So the more patient that you are then the less you are defeated, he may end up by killing you but you've won because you're still patient.

V: I don't know, how would you define patience, then?

S: Well, not giving rise to anger and not wishing him ill.

V: In the previous session today, we expounded the virtues of anger.

S: But it was in a context of communication and exchange of ideas, wasn't it?

V: Yes, well, not say, not as a reaction. So rather patience then would be defined as a non-reactive state.

S: Yes, a non-reactive state in a situation where a reaction of hatred, not so much anger but of hatred, would ordinarily be looked for, ill-will for ill-will.

V: The practice of patience doesn't exclude the employment of other factors like intelligence and energy vigour even and persuasion or whatever. It doesn't mean you just sit there and let someone thump you.

S: You haven't got to be a patient ...

V: This is the picture I was getting.

V: You have to, in a way, be patient to reason with somebody.

S: Under certain circumstances, yes. For instance if you are dealing with a very powerful person, with the king, what can you do, you can't argue, you can't reason, you have got no force that you can oppose to his. Maybe you've been gagged and bound, what can you do but practice complete patience, be even passive, in a sense, in that situation. If it is just among friends, that's quite a different situation. But if you are up against the powers that be, then what can you do sometimes, you can only practice patience in the quite literal sense, and practice only patience.

V: ... a documentary, not a play but a programme on the radio about a man in the navy who was accused of homosexuality. I don't know if you heard about it, a very famous case. (S: I think I did, I read about it) He was drummed out in disgrace and he fought the case because he knew he was innocent. And he fought against [418] the whole admiralty and everybody for about eighteen years, ... over twenty years. And eventually he won, after appealing to everybody, everybody refused him time and time again, they insisted that he was guilty, but he knew he was innocent. Everybody was against him right from the start and he eventually appealed to the Commons and to the Lords and the Admiralty.

S: Yes, well there is a still more famous case, the Dreyfus case. That was a case of a Jewish officer in the French army at the beginning of the century and who was framed and who was accused of being a traitor and who was discharged from the army I think he was imprisoned for many years. Many people believed in his innocence which was eventually demonstrated, after many many years. But he had been completely disgraced his career ruined and so on, but his innocence was established in the end.

V: I wonder how many of us would fight on a principle like that for twenty five years?

S: I think though there is some difference between fighting for an impersonal principle and fighting, in a sense, for yourself. In the case of this particular man it might have been a bit neurotic. He might have felt that being a homosexual was such a terrible thing that he was indelibly disgraced by even being thought one when he wasn't. So there could be in that sense

a neurotic element to it. Instead of saying, 'well let them think it, what does it matter', but he seems to have taken it very very seriously.

V: I think, I was just under the impression that he was just after getting the truth of the matter because he knew he hadn't done anything whether it is wrong or right.

S: Yes, but again there is the question, why should you be so concerned what people think about you, even though it is wrong. Obviously it is better that they don't think anything wrong about you but is it worthwhile spending all your time and all your energy year after year just to correct some people's wrong impression about you?

V: It's like the ... again, isn't it, the ...?

S: Yes right. So sometimes there are some misunderstandings that it is better to accept. Otherwise you can spend all your life putting right people's wrong ideas about you, and there is no end to that sometimes.

V: And after all that all you have got to show is your own ...

S: Yes, if it is the Dharma, that's another matter. If you happen to be a Buddhist or a follower of the Dharma. But if it is just some foolish people's wrong idea about you, why bother too much. If the misunderstanding can be corrected easily, well OK. but if it is going to take more time and more energy than it really deserves, well think very seriously before you spend that time and that energy, to that extent.

It reminds me a bit, though this is much more comical and less serious, about that occasion I sometimes mention when I was [419] introduced to a Bombay audience by an over-enthusiastic Buddhist as an ex-Christian, who had not only once been a Christian but a Catholic priest, a Bishop and even Pope! (laughter) I could have sat down and written an article, at least, demonstrating how I couldn't possibly have had time to be Pope. Mentioning the people who were actually Pope but it didn't seem worthwhile spending time on it. It didn't do any harm, luckily. They thought how wonderful, he was even Pope but he still became a Buddhist monk and they cheered and clapped and applauded (laughter) So there must be thousands of people in Bombay who still think that once upon a time I was Pope. But they were enjoying it all so much I didn't like to spoil their fun and the chap who introduced me so evidently believed this, I don't know where he picked it up, and told the story with such conviction and such admiration for my spirit of renunciation. Willing to give up even the pleasures of the Vatican to become a simple Buddhist monk in India.

In the same way I didn't bother to correct the story that I had been a fighter pilot during the war, where I had been, in fact, something much less heroic. It just isn't worth it.

V: What else haven't you been?

V: You weren't Pope while ...

S: No, these are the two great legends about me that I actually heard. Though there was another legend that people recounted coming up from Calcutta, and I have no idea how this had started. They came up from Calcutta and I think they just came especially to Kalimpong to see me, it was an American couple, elderly people interested in Buddhism. And in the course of the evening they said, 'we heard while we were in Calcutta the story of how you became a Buddhist monk, it was so wonderful it was so inspiring.' So I said, 'Oh yes'. So they said, 'Yes, the way you left that girl just standing there'. So I asked what they meant and they said, 'You know, you remember what happened, so and so told us the whole story.' So I asked exactly what he had said. It transpired that they had been told this story, but they wouldn't say by whom actually, but it was in England and I was a young man and I was going to be married and I was there in the Church just in front of the altar with her at my side and I had a sudden realization (laughter) and just in the nick of time, before the words were pronounced

which would have made us man and wife for ever and ever, I just leapt out of the church and got ordained as a Buddhist monk.

There was this dramatic story that they had heard in Calcutta and even though I disclaimed it they were not convinced. This is the interesting thing. (V: They didn't want to) They didn't want to, no, they clearly felt that for some unknown reason I was not willing to own up to this account. But they said they had it on absolutely impeccable authority and they knew it was true. So I didn't argue any more. So maybe this story is still going the round of Calcutta and Kalimpong and elsewhere. You might even find it in a little biography of me one day.

So after these various experiences of actually hearing myself described as an ex-Pope in a public meeting with thousands of people present and seeing in print this story about my being an ex-fighter pilot, in a newspaper. And also having the experience of people disbelieving me when I denied that I had become a monk in that dramatic manner, [420] I really started wondering about all these ancient Buddhist legends about different saints and sages and Yogis and teachers. Because in India, at least, legends and stories get around so easily.

So if this can happen even in my own lifetime and despite my own explicit denials, what must have happened in the old days, centuries after the death of some teacher. So you can't help feeling a bit sceptical.

V: I wonder why someone makes them up in the first place.

S: I don't know. Especially that last one and they said they heard it in Calcutta.

V: I must say it does sound so good that I would want to disbelieve you as well. (laughing) No, I don't want to believe it if it isn't true.

S: Well it's not going to be in my official biography, anyway. And they didn't want not to believe it.

V: It's strange isn't it? I think all legends, all stories ...

S: Well perhaps it has a certain symbolic truth.

V: That's what I was going to say.

S: Perhaps, one could say.

V: Perhaps people become addicted to dramas.

S: Yes, right. Colour. The actual, how I became a Buddhist monk was much too drab and uninteresting.

V: The spirit remains.

S: Hmm, maybe.

V: People need heroes.

S: Need heroes, yes. They seemed very happy at the idea that I'd left her standing at the altar in this dramatic fashion, they seemed very pleased to think that. As though I had done something really remarkable and praiseworthy, that I just had this sudden realization in the nick of time. And I gather that I hadn't had any thoughts about Buddhism or being a monk before, that is what I gathered, but I had had a sudden realization, just at that moment, and then fled. And become a monk, I gather from their account, within half an hour.

V: It was a couple who..?



S: It was a couple, an elderly couple too.

V: Well perhaps they wished that it had happened to them.

S: Well perhaps she wished that he had left her standing there at the altar!

So even when it is more serious, as it were, and more [421] negative, sometimes one just has to leave it and not bother. You can't go round correcting all misunderstandings. But if it involves the Dharma, then you should take some action in a skilful manner. If there is a misunderstanding of the Dharma or something against the interests of the Dharma.

V: Still on patience, there seems to be a fine line between a meek acceptance of the situation and patience. I'm thinking of someone in particular.

S: I think it isn't patience when you don't have the capacity, the ability or the strength or the courage to take up arms on your own behalf. But if you are a strong man, who is deliberately not reacting and not using his strength against the other person, then you can be said to be practising patience. But if you are just a weakling who isn't able to retaliate anyway, there's no meaning in your practice of patience. You can't practice it, you're not practising it.

This is where Mahatma Gandhi used to say, 'it takes a strong man to practise non-violence, not a weak one'. And it mustn't be used as a rationalization for cowardice and ineptitude.

V: It's like a eunuch practising celibacy. (S: Yes)

V: But one can be mistaken for the other.

S: Yes, that's true.

And what about this matter of not reciting the mantras of wrathful deities to get rid of devils out of fear.

V: It's a materialistic attitude again. (S: It is)

V: How do you mean materialistic?

V: It's like praying to God to give you something, it's the same basic...

S: Mmm, you are believing in the mantra or trying to use the mantra as a sort of magic weapon, out of fear. You have a sort of faith in the mantra but it isn't a very noble faith, you just believe it is something magical and if you recite it it will drive away these devils of whom you are afraid.

V: It's also giving the devils an objective reality.

S: There is that too, yes.

V: Believing that you need to protect yourself in that way.

S: Whereas, even if there are devils, what you need to do is meditate on Voidness or, as it were, offer yourself. If you want to eat me up, All right, here I am, gobble me up.

V: I've heard stories about, I don't know whether they are Tibetan or Chinese masters crossing the Gobi desert and they use, I forget the mantra, I think Conze mentions it somewhere.

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S: It's, I think the mantra of Avalokiteshvara, used it.

V: Yes, against the demons of the desert. What would be a case like that.

S: Well, the key word is 'afraid' of. You could say that those monks, ideally at least, were not afraid of the devils, but they wanted to continue their journey, wanted to complete their journey, wanted to make their pilgrimage. Wanted to go to India to collect sacred books to take back to China so they just guarded themselves against the devils. But they didn't do it out of fear, I think is the important fact. Not out of fear for themselves, that invoking magical aid, but just taking certain precautions and having recourse to a certain line of action to protect themselves so that they could complete their mission for the sake of the Dharma.

Also there is another point, they didn't recite mantras of wrathful deities, they recited the mantra of Avalokiteshvara. In other words they tried to neutralize the devils by invoking peaceful and loving and kindly forces. But not to destroy them by reciting mantras of the wrathful deities.

V: Also you could say that if you were rather anxious and frightened of something that the Avalokiteshvara mantra, what it represents is quite healthy, to overcome...

S: Yes, because it overcomes the fear. If you develop love and compassion you don't feel fear. But to remain in a state of fear and in a sort of superstitious manner to be reciting mantras of wrathful deities to drive away devils in whose objective existence you believe and of whom you are afraid, well this is not very skilful.

V: In this connection I had quite an interesting experience a few weeks ago. I was in a rather deluded state about something, emotional state so I thought 'I'll do the Manjushri practice, it will give me lots of energy and make me feel better', and in fact it made me feel far worse, but I saw the situation much more clearly. Because I appealed, if you appeal to a Bodhisattva, it's, I suppose like appealing to aspects of reality and that will give you maybe not what you want but what you need.

S: Yes, well if you ask for help, and if you ask a real Bodhisattva, well he will help you, but the help may consist in taking you by the scruff of your neck and dragging you out of that situation, kicking and screaming and saying, 'no I didn't mean that, I just wanted the situation made all right!'.  
Sometimes the advice of a good friend may be like that. He might say, 'I'm sorry but you ought not to be in that situation at all'. Instead of just helping you to make the situation more comfortable, which is what you meant when you asked him for his help, for his advice. But he says, 'no, the situation itself is wrong, you should get out of it'.

Sometimes the advice of a good friend may be like that. He might say, 'I'm sorry but you ought not to be in that situation at all'. Instead of just helping you to make the situation more comfortable, which is what you meant when you asked him for his help, for his advice. But he says, 'no, the situation itself is wrong, you should get out of it'.

V: It's a really nice feeling when you can begin to accept that good advice, though painful, is really a very nice thing to have.

S: Yes, and it really is in your best interest, in the long run.

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V: There is a sort of pleasure.

S: What about being completely impoverished and entrusting yourself to the Dharma? Do you think this is possible now, in the West? Referring of course more to the life of the monk especially the wandering, mendicant monk.

V: By degrees (?)

V: Do you think that is meant to be taken literally as material impoverishment? Because I take it ...

S: I think it is, because he is addressing, apparently, monks.

V: Great freedom in giving away ... depending on who it is, you don't have to worry about ...

S: Of course there are some societies in which you no doubt would starve. In India, as in Tibet, there is a tradition of looking after and providing for the religious mendicant. But we don't in fact have that tradition here. That is what I meant by asking would it be practical here, could one do that here, literally?

V: Not literally, but there is a state of impoverishment, mental state of impoverishment.

S: But literally, to some extent, as Asvajit said, you can hitch, you can travel without spending money, without buying tickets.

V: Go on Social Security.

S: But that is not quite the same thing, really is it. Supposing you knocked on someone's door in a remote village, we'll leave aside the town, and said 'could you, please give me something to eat I am hungry, I have no money. If you asked you probably would be given in many areas.

V: You have this in the case of tramps, a lot of tramps who come up and ask for ten pence for a cup of tea or something like that.

V: Reeking of alcohol.

V: I think that there will come a time when the teaching and its effect will be recognized by the authorities and then things like grants and so on would be forthcoming. I think the ... way to go about getting that recognition as an educational centre ...

V: I have doubts about that because in a way our whole aim, purpose is directly against the interests of the established society, so why should they help the movement? If they see our real purpose and function they would not help it.

S: I think it is a question of whether you use them or they use you. I think it is a very fine point, I think one has to be very careful, especially if you are small and weak, organizationally.

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V: I mean the government might be prepared to help small religious organizations that perpetrate knowledge in an educational sense, but I would have said that they wouldn't do that if they really saw the consequences of Dharma being ...

V: They did in New Zealand ...

S: There is a somewhat different situation there. They are not, of course, supporting Buddhism specifically, but they have been giving grants of land to counter-culture groups.

V: If it's what the public want hopefully the government is representative of the public ...

S: Yes, but I am referring to the present state of affairs.

V: We've got a Mitra, actually, whose job is to give out money to such people.

V: Really, what in New Zealand? (V: Yes)

S: Any more that needs to be said on that particular precept? 'As a final consequence of this', i.e. entrusting yourself to the life of a beggar, 'you will entrust yourself to death'. In other words you take quite a risk, even in Tibet, even in India you could die of starvation, you could, you do take a risk. But that is very positive.

V: It's a very trusting attitude, isn't it, the whole thing like say even hitch hiking or travelling without any money?

S: Yes, it is certainly opposed to the anxiety motivated attitude. To take to the road believing you will get a lift, that someone will stop and ask you where you want to go. So it does imply a bit more faith in human nature, and in that way it is a bit more positive.

V: It does ... sometimes.

V: You have to practise patience.

V: It's funny, when in situations where I have found myself, say in Europe, and I have had to just fend for myself without much money, when I actually get home I feel a sort of empty feeling. That great sort of challenge is over, back to the cosy ...

S: Well, you take initiative yourself, much more. And when you are taking initiative you experience yourself much more, you feel more alive. Even though you might be in quite a difficult situation, or maybe you feel even more alive because of that, you are alert, like an animal, you are having to survive and to make an effort to survive. That can be quite a positive situation, I mean in a quite ordinary way, leaving aside spiritual consideration.

V: Do you think this is why, say, in modern times in industries and factories and so forth, usually in people's daily work they are not allowed this, to take their initiative, and...?

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S: You're so safe, you just become like a big fat white rabbit, kept in a hutch. You lose many of your more truly human qualities, energy, initiative, spirit of adventure. Think of all the people who are civil servants, who can't lose their jobs, in a way that is terrible. There is no element of risk in your life at all, short of a world catastrophe.

V: There was an article in the Guardian on that subject of view. Someone wrote that the reason that there is so much conflict and violence in our society is that nobody is exposed to any risks, therefore they have got to be artificially created. Things are made so safe, clean, hygienic and we are protected all the time (S: Easy) therefore you create violence, going back to something real.

S: A situation in which we can exercise initiative, and certain even heroic qualities though in a warped and even perverted form.

Let's go on, next precept.

(End tape 19)

"Again Geshe Chen-na-wa said: "Depending on the egoism of a person and the egoism of phenomena, the fettering passions, and all else that is wrong are increased. Yet it is really the egoism of persons which harms us. Therefore we should overcome or abolish this egoism of persons by the wisdom gained through hearing, thinking, and meditating on the Teaching.

"But if through hearing, thinking, and meditating you feel disdainfully, 'I am holy,' while your patience becomes less than that of a fawn alone in the forest, and your egoism increases, this is a sign that the wisdom of hearing, thinking, and meditating has gone wrong.

"Understanding that all external appearances are empty of true existence, but still not subduing inner egoism, is like setting up a target and shooting the arrow away from it. It is like losing a thief in the forest and searching for his footprints in the meadow; like scattering offerings in the west to appease devils who abide in the east."

S: And like bolting the stable door after the horse has gone. Though this same teacher is

saying that if someone does you harm, why does he do it? It's through his egoism. So if you want to deal with that situation the best way, in fact the only way, the only real way of dealing with it is by tackling his egotism. How can you get rid of his egotism, only by making him wise so that he sees into the truth of non-ego. How can you make him wise, only by being wise yourself, how can you become wise yourself, by hearing, reflecting and meditating.

So if anybody does you harm the best thing you can do is to set too and to start hearing the teaching, listening to the teaching, reflecting on it and meditating, practising it. In this way, sooner or later you will develop wisdom and be able to tackle the egotism of other people due to which they harm you. So it's obviously a long term operation.

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V: Some retreat from the situation is probably necessary ...

V: I suppose through meditation, hearing, and thinking, it's the best thing to do too, could be for any situation, whatever it might be.

V: Or you could say it's your own egoism that is being hurt, unless it's physical harm.

S: That's true but he is doing harm to himself by being egoistic and harming you and you don't want that. You want to help him as well as to save yourself. Or maybe if you are a follower of the Mahayana you are more keen on helping him than saving yourself.

But if you look at it in more ordinary terms the only real way of resolving conflict between yourself and other people is by coming to some genuine understanding of them. Not by warding them off or by taking counter measures or counter attacking, but just in coming to a better understanding by taking a wiser view of the situation, and by appealing to something better and more positive in them.

Anyway I think we had better close there because we want to spend a little time now on the meditation, don't we? So who had something to ask about that. I'm afraid we won't be able to have much of a discussion because we are already over time but certainly deal briefly with any actual points that you may have.

V: I think the overall effect of it was extremely positive.

S: There is one thing that I would like to mention, that I mentioned through the last retreat when we went through this practice, one can also recite the Nidanas on the rosary. That is to say one can take the different Nidanas and recite the Nidanas like a mantra, reflecting on them and repeating them as many times as seems necessary to get the feeling of what they are all about. If one finds that just saying the Nidana once and then bearing the meaning in mind results in wandering thoughts then just say the Nidana over and over again on the rosary. And if one has got plenty of time and is doing just the twelve positive Nidanas you can do each individual Nidana once round on the rosary. You can say, for instance, 'in dependence on suffering arises faith', one bead, 'in dependence on suffering arises faith', one bead, 'in dependence on suffering arises faith', then you can have a little reflection. Then when you have had enough reflection and seen something or if you feel your mind wandering a bit then go on, 'in dependence on suffering arises faith, in dependence on suffering arises faith', then you might stop and have a little reflection on what is faith in this context, what is suffering and how is one dependent on the other. In this way go round the rosary, or just repeating the phrase, and then for each of those twelve positive Nidanas in that way. This is one method of practising.

But what is important is that one must have a quite positive experience and therefore preferably do this practice after the Metta Bhavana, it shouldn't just be thinking. One should attain a definite degree of concentration, even though a weak and limited samatha experience. Because this method is a vipassana method and is meant to develop Insight but this Insight is not just an intellectual understanding. Though the intellectual [427] understanding may be the

basis for the arising of the Insight. So first have a good concentration and a very positive, even powerful state of positive emotion and then take up the Insight style practice.

V: Can you say again what the asravas are?

S: The asravas? The asravas are the asrava of craving for sensuous experience, craving for existence, for non-existence and the asrava of ignorance. These are the four that are usually mentioned. There are various versions, sometimes wrong views is mentioned as an asrava. I think probably the most common set is of karma, bhava and avidya, that is to say, sensuous desire, becoming, and ignorance. In other words very, very basic things. You see that these are completely vanished, completely destroyed.

Karmasrava, bhavasrava and avidyasrava. Asrava being Sanskrit, asava being Pali.

V: Just a general word about practices, if as quite a few of us now have accumulated, in the course of our association with the movement quite a number of practices, I find this; the mindfulness of breathing, the metta bhavana perhaps more than one mantra, one sadhana and now this practice. It all begins to mount up and I find that confusion sets in, which one shall I do and for how long shall I do it, what period of time should I do it? What would you suggest?

S: Well there is the question of the daily practice. I think that one should have one practice that you do every day, at least for two or three years and then when you have extra time, as when you are on retreat or you go away by yourself you add the other practices and practice them at intervals during the day.

So that, suppose you have a weeks solitary retreat or two weeks, you as it were polish up on all the practices that you have. Doing more or less of them according to what you feel are your needs at that particular time. For instance if you feel that you have been rather negative and resentful, well concentrate more on the metta bhavana. So that for instance say you were away on solitary retreat and you have four or five practices you could do them, say in this order. When you got up in the morning you could do the mindfulness of breathing, then after breakfast the metta bhavana. Then before lunch you could do the six element practice, you notice after metta bhavana. Then in the afternoon again you could do the mindfulness of breathing, then in the evening you could have more metta bhavana and a session of reflection on the Nidanas and last thing your mantra recitation and visualization practice. In this way you would fill in the day quite nicely if you wanted to have a predominantly meditative retreat. You would be doing different practices, different exercises which would mean that the day would be more interesting, you wouldn't get bored just doing one particular practice and you would be providing for different aspects of your spiritual life. Providing for different spiritual needs.

Of course if you get really very well into a practice and you are very steady and solid you can spend the whole day doing one practice and not feel bored in the least. But the comparative beginner on a sort of meditation retreat, if it is even for a weekend, probably is better advised to make use of several methods in the course of a day or in the course of [428] the weekend or the week or the month, just for the sake of variety.

V: On one of the other seminars you did say about balancing the samatha practice with vipassana.

S: Well eventually that is so.

V: But are you here saying that just develop samatha first?

S: Yes, broadly speaking the samatha side must be developed well before you take up a vipassana type practice.

V: Right up to the fourth stage?

S: It's difficult to generalize but certainly sufficient to provide a basis for at least some degree of Insight so that you are not just having an intellectual reflection or a theoretical reflection. So that you can start really deeply understanding with a concentrated mind and with a lot of energy behind your, as it were, mental effort.

V: Is there any reason why puja is done in the evening, also that you mentioned just in doing that series of practices that the visualization and mantra are?

S: It seems to be more appropriate, in the evening when it is calm and the end of the day and you feel more peaceful, that you do this kind of practice and exercise. In a way it is the culmination, it's the mantra, recitation and maybe your own special visualization, and having been doing the meditations during the day you can feel in a very positive and energy full state. But one can do even different visualizations all during the day if you want to especially develop that or concentrate on that.

V: You would say generally speaking it is better to do visualizations in the evening with one's mantra recitation?

S: I would say that, yes. Though again that is not a hard and fast rule by any means. If you feel like doing it at any other time do by all means.

V: Would you say that in city, in the world existence, it is not advisable to do daily visualization but far more basic meditations.

S: No I wouldn't say that, no. I think probably if there is a lot of noise and disturbance, as there often when one lives in the city, I think probably the mindfulness is the most difficult to do. Because you'd become a bit sensitive when you do that practice. So perhaps in the city metta would be particularly good and after that maybe a visualization.

V: I've found personally that ... to develop clarity and one pointedness of mind in the city because it counteracts specifically all the confusing sort of...

S: Well metta is very concentrating too.

V: I was wondering also about one's visualization [429] practice. The very fact of having to do it, having to concentrate on visualization, is that enough or would one also need to be doing the mindfulness of breathing, say, developing the concentration separately?

S: I think most people would need to get themselves into a concentrated state first by some other means. But it depends, some people I have given the full practice to, unfortunately not very many because there hasn't been time. For instance the Manjughosa practice and the Avalokiteshvara practice, if you have got the full practice you don't need any preliminary concentration exercise. That full practice itself will concentrate you.

V: Should one, generally speaking, do the metta before doing visualization.

S: If you are doing the more abbreviated form that would be good. Even in the more elaborate, the full practice includes it anyway. It is mentioned in that verse about happiness and the cause of happiness, may all beings be free from suffering and the cause of suffering. This implies the four Brahma Viharas, you can just recite those verses, but if you do the full practice you do the four Brahma Viharas, or at least the first one.

It seems that we will have to be having more seminars for these practices.

V: What about if one has one practice and a mantra as well. What I've basically decided to do is to do the practice and then when I am moving around say the mantra, the other one. (S: Fair

enough) and not do the visualization with the mantra.

S: No, that's all right, but you can do it some other time if you go away on solitary retreat. It is very difficult to generalize, one just has to see each individual person and what they are able to do, what time they have got, what their temperament is, what practices are available to them. Sometime or other we have to systematize all this. Especially as there are more and more people in the Order. It's All right when there are just a few dozen, but when it gets more than that, then a more systematic approach becomes necessary.

V: That's one of the arguments that somebody from Throssel Hole put up about following too many practices that there is a tendency ... but to be distracted by this instead of ... one practice.

S: This is, I think, an example of the sort of thing I was talking about some time ago, seeing the dangers too much. There are definite advantages in having several practices if you are on a long meditation retreat, and especially by yourself because the variety does keep you interested and does keep you practising. You are not sort of chopping and changing, usually before people go away in this manner they just have a little talk with me and I draw up a programme for them and distribute the different practices throughout the day in accordance with their needs. So there is no question of them hesitating between different practices, they just go through that whole schedule.

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Even in the case of the Zen people there are actually different practices. Sometimes they may be meditating on their koan and sometimes their chanting and sometimes they are having their interview. They don't have just one thing all the time. But you could extend that and say 'well you shouldn't have different things, you should either just be meditating on your koan or chanting all the time, just one practice, chanting, or always engaged in exchange with the Master, just one practice'.

V: Always carrying pails of water (laughter)

S: Or always bowing or whatever.

V: I've found that if I am working hard or if I am supposed to be working hard, that I can't do a lot of meditation. Even if I just do my practice, certain stuff comes up which interferes with my efficiency of working.

S: Yes, you can't combine too much meditation with too much work, that is impossible, you shouldn't try. You should decide this week or this month is more work, less meditation, some other week, some other month is going to be more meditation less work. But you can't do too much of both together, they are incompatible, unless you have reached a quite high level of spiritual development, by which time you will be virtually a Bodhisattva.

So it is just a question of being clear in one's own mind which you are doing, or which you are giving more time and more energy to at any given time. But if you have got twelve hours at your disposal you can't work for six hours and meditate for six hours. Not unless you are very exceptional, not especially if it is fairly demanding work, especially physical work or involving physical work.

Any other point arising out of the Nidana practice? You get the general picture, the general scheme and the general feeling?

V: What does dispassion mean?

S: Dispassion, that is viraga, it is, as it were a state of complete passionlessness consequent upon your withdrawal your disentanglement from worldly things. It is a positive state of aloofness but not in an alienated way, on a transcendental level now, not just psychological.



You have separated from the conditioned and you are standing aloof from it, you are not affected by it, not disturbed by it, not touched. You are not affected by it any more. But in a positive way, not in just a psychologically aloof way.

You have consolidated yourself with the unconditioned rather than with the conditioned and you can't be affected by the conditioned, you are no longer under the influence of the gravitational pull of the conditioned, you are firm. Can't be swayed.

V: Is it then that one should bring in the twelve wheel Nidanas?

S: No, that has come before, that comes with in dependence upon concentration, samadhi, arises knowledge and vision of things as they really are. So here one can insert the Nidanas of the wheel of life. You can also insert other formulas, according to your choice, like for instance the four different [431] kinds of Sunyata. Because this stage represents, or this point represents an actual Insight an actual vision of reality. And there are various formulas, various ways of looking at that, various means to help you see reality. So you can reflect on Sunyata, the four kinds of Sunyata or on egolessness. Or you can reflect upon the pure land, taking a completely different approach.

V: The Four Noble Truths

S: The Four Noble Truths, yes. In fact any particular aspect of the Dharma so far as it pertains to the reality of things that you would like to develop a deeper insight into. Impermanence, dukkha, you can take up any of these things by way of any of the traditional formulations, conceptual formulations at this point and go into them deeply. Then when you have done that, then go on to the next of the positive Nidanas. In dependence upon that knowledge and vision into reality from one aspect or another, arises withdrawal, disentanglement from the conditioned, you have seen through the conditioned.

In that way you go on completing the positive Nidanas. So I inserted the twelve Nidanas of the Wheel of life at that point just because it was a Nidana contemplation, but you need not insert those, they are rather long and cumbersome anyway. The Four Noble Truths give you an abbreviated version of them or you can take up completely other formulas; the Three Characteristics, all conditioned things are impermanent, all conditioned things are unsatisfactory and all things whatsoever - conditioned and unconditioned - are egoless. The three Characteristics, you can take those up. Or at that point you can recite the Heart Sutra.

V: And that's all, just recite the Heart Sutra?

S: Yes, at that point, as many times you feel and just, I won't even say reflect on it, but just be open to it. That would be very good, or even the mantra Gate Gate.

V: What about the whole sutra in Sanskrit?

S: One can do that, one can recite the Diamond Sutra, the whole Prajnaparamita corpus if one has time! (Laughter)

V: How about ... sutra?

S: One can recite that, any of these sort of formulas at that point. But the idea is that as you recite the Nidanas you in a way imaginatively, but in a way actually also experience those Nidanas, and work yourself up step by step, Nidana by Nidana into [a] very positive concentrated state where you can develop insight with the help of one or another of the traditional conceptual formulations. Whether of the Nidanas of the Wheel of Life, The Four Noble Truths, The Three Characteristics. Or you can reflect on the Five Skandhas, you can reflect upon Nirvana, you can reflect upon Sunyata, you can repeat the Heart Sutra, you can repeat the Gate, Gate Paragate or any other suitable mantra, at that point. Then when you have developed as much Insight or at least deep understanding as you can at that stage you go on to

complete the positive Nidanas and feel yourself withdrawing and feel yourself dispassionate and feel yourself free and spontaneous and liberated and so on.

At first it will only be an imaginative experience but [432] then that will deepen with practice and you will begin to get some experience of the real thing.

V: What are the four kinds of Sunyata?

S: That is to say the emptiness of the conditioned, the emptiness of the unconditioned, great emptiness and the emptiness of emptiness. These four are mentioned in the Stages of the Path, in the three Jewels, and I think in one or two lectures. But if one wants to fill in a bit more as regards the content of those twelve positive Nidanas read that Chapter of the Three Jewels, which is on the stages of the path. That is just sort of background material.

V: I think that verse in the Udana is very good too, about 'Great monks there is that condition where there is ...

S: Yes, right, that too. One can use that sort of opportunity, use that sort of gap, as it were, between the conditioned and the unconditioned when you come to the Nidana, in dependence upon concentration arises knowledge and vision of things as they really are, for developing even your ordinary understanding in a deeper sense of one or another aspect of the Dharma. As that understanding deepens it becomes more and more a basis for Insight and eventually Insight does arise.

V: I found the practice really altered my viewpoint and then when we did a puja afterwards, the precepts, they were very different, the precepts themselves and the ... .. meaning for them.

S: Yes, right, because you come to them not only with a concentrated but with actually some understanding, and immediately afterwards. You know more clearly what you are doing.

V: Will we be doing that practice this evening?

S: I hadn't actually thought yet. I don't know, leave it to me, I'll think about it afterwards.

V: What's the difference between rapture and bliss?

S: Rapture is the more ecstatic, bubbly state where there are even physical side effects, hair standing on end, swoons, tears, giggling, hysteria. But when these die down that's the calm and you are just left with a state of great happiness but it is not bubbly, that is the bliss.

I was thinking though, yesterday evening that probably happiness is the better word than bliss. Because happiness suggests a more sort of permanent state, a more calmer more settled state. Bliss is a bit exceptional. You get a bit suspicious if someone tells you that they were blissful all day but you can be happy all day.

(Break in tape)

V: Delight.

S: Delight, I think that is in the Three Jewels, isn't it? [433] Delight or joy, it doesn't really matter pamojja, pramodya, even satisfaction.

V: Delight has a sort of discovery sound about it.

S: Yes, there is certainly that suggestion, that in dependence upon faith arises the delight. You are delighted to discover the object of faith, as it were, that to which you emotionally respond in a very positive way, because it is something very exalted and noble and sublime. So you are delighted, you take delight in it.

Then that delight intensifies, you become rapturous, ecstatic. You want to jump for joy, you want to dance all over the place, want to turn cartwheels and somersaults and fly in the air if possible, levitate. This is all ecstasy and rapture.

Anyway I think somebody had better levitate into the kitchen (laughter)

V: I must say sometimes when I am meditating, if I am in a room with other people, I sometimes feel like shouting or screaming. I find it quite difficult to contain it because it would give everybody a fright I think.

Next Session:

"Geshe Pu-chung-wa said: "Though we have obtained the indispensable human body with its leisure and opportunity, we do not have the power to stay in it - we have to die. At the time of death, we cannot take with us any of the enjoyments or concepts of this life, just as a tree sheds all its leaves. At that time the measure of our knowledge, our strength, and the wisdom of our goals will be clear. When we face death happily and with joyful anticipation, we are wise, strong; our goals are noble, and we will enter death clear headed. But if at that time the form of Yama and the distinct sign of lower states of birth appear, our goals were foolish and we are without self-mastery.

"We, for the most part, follow the wrong path, seeking the desires of this life. The perfect Buddha never spoke falsely. The authors of the commentaries, such as Nagarjuna, never spoke falsely. The holy spiritual friends do not speak falsely. Then how do we enter the wrong path? By the desires of this life. Thus we should always contemplate death, for remembering the imminence of death we understand the need for non attachment to this life. We should contemplate the perniciousness of all samsara, for then we understand the need to be unattached to the whole of it. By remembering living beings in the meditation of love, compassion, and Bodhi-mind, we understand the need to be unattached to our selfish purposes. By remembering egolessness in the meditation on the Voidness of all things, we understand the need to be unattached to objects and attributes."

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S: So once again the importance of contemplation on impermanence and death is being emphasized. Any query on anything here? From the most part it seems quite straightforward.

V: 'the distinct sign of lower states of birth appear', would you elaborate?

S: These signs are of several kinds. There can be, according to Buddhist tradition signs of the actual sphere into which you are going to be reborn. For instance if you, at the time of death, have a vision of a lotus flower it is a sign of heavenly rebirth. If you see animals, it is the sign of an animal rebirth, and if you hear shouts and cries of pain this is a sign of rebirth in one of the states of suffering and so on. That is one kind of sign.

Then of course there are signs associated with things that you have done during your lifetime from which the general tenor of your life can be inferred and your future state predicted. As for instance the example I gave some days ago, if you have been a butcher you may see a blood stained knife, you may see blood or you may hear the cries of the animals you have slaughtered. So from this sign an unfavourable birth could be predicted. Or if you have been doing much meditation and puja, at the time of death you might hear the sounds of the chanting, you might smell incense, might see offerings; this would be a sign of auspicious rebirth and so on.

I don't know whether anyone has had any experience of being with people when they passed away and noticing any reactions on their part of this kind. Nowadays of course people pass away quietly in hospitals with nurses in attendance, or maybe no one in attendance.

V: Have you experienced any of them?

S: No, very little I am afraid.

V: Would these signs come at a point when the person who was dying could still communicate ...?

S: That's unlikely. Usually it is said that one can infer just from the persons reaction what they are actually seeing except in the case of highly developed Lamas and so on they are not able to communicate that, they have passed that point. But from their reactions you can see them starting at something or they smile and look very pleased and follow something with their eyes and from this it can be inferred what they are actually seeing.

And of course there is this overall consideration that some people at the time of death are quite troubled and disturbed and others pass away quite happily and are relatively in a clear state of mind. Some people, of course, pass away very suddenly. There is a case of a friend of ours a few years ago who was helping to run one of the local Buddhist groups and she had just taken the class, she was about seventy six, she had just taken the class, she was in perfect health in the sense that she had no illness or anything of that sort and was a quite active and capable woman of seventy-six who was running that local group. And she had just concluded the meeting and went to her upstairs sitting room, sat down on her usual chair and immediately passed away in about two minutes, and that was that. Usually it happens, this was quite a few [435] years ago, I used to go for that monthly meeting and usually I was there in the sitting room with her afterwards. But just on that occasion I wasn't able to go, I wasn't very well, otherwise I might well have been there at that time. But everybody was very surprised that she had walked upstairs quite hale and hearty, having conducted the meeting, I think they concluded with a puja, sat down in her chair and passed away immediately and people came just two or three minutes after bringing in the tea and she was already dead, but sitting up in the chair.

She had been in quite a cheerful mood that evening, apparently had no anticipation of anything like that, but it just goes to show that one can pass away in this sort of way. If one is physically healthy and one is also of a cheerful state of mind and it is a very simple business indeed. I went down a week later and conducted her funeral.

V: A nice way to go.

S: Yes.

Any further query about this particular precept? (Pause) The author is also drawing attention to something that very often does seem really strange, that you get all sorts of good teaching, all sorts of help from the Buddha, authors of the commentaries, ... spiritual friends, whatever. But nevertheless we somehow or other manage to go on to the wrong path. We hear so much advice, so many exaltations, read so many good books, have all the facilities, but somehow we wander off on to the wrong path. And the reason for it is, according to Geshe Pu-chung-wa that we follow after the desires of this life.

(End side 1)

Just the gravitational pull of the conditioned. A good example of this was Rechungpa, Milarepa's disciple. He stayed with Milarepa for years but somehow he just went wandering off, quite literally, and sometimes stayed away for years and then came back. He experienced various miseries in the meantime.

V: Did he learn in the end?

S: Eventually.

All right let's carry on.

"Again Geshe Pu-chung-wa said, "To practise Dharma earnestly, you must be like a small bird. As a sparrow is unable to mingle with hawks, you should not mingle with worldly people, for if you do so you will be carried away by devils. When a worldly person dislikes you, it is just what you want, for then he will leave you alone. Because of his insults, others will leave you alone. Also, although you have nothing but an ounce of barley flour, if your mind is tranquil and happy, you can do virtuous work. If you increase your virtuous work, you will increase your knowledge and by that you will naturally benefit living beings."

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S: 'When a worldly person dislikes you this is just what you want for then he will leave you alone', whereas if he likes you, on the other hand he will be inviting you to parties and wanting you to go out with him or to do things with him and that will be a real nuisance. Because he dislikes you he will speak badly of you, he will insult you so this will give you a bad reputation and then other people will leave you alone - (laughing) - because you will be able to get on with your meditation and other practice undisturbed. This is not the usual way people usually think, of course.

Usually we are very dependent on other people in this sort of way. Liking to be popular, liking to be liked, liking to get on well with people. Not for any reason connected with metta or karuna but just because we are unable to face their displeasure or their disapproval.

Also, 'although you have nothing but an ounce of barley flour if your mind is tranquil and happy you can do virtuous work'. The ounce of barley flour suggests that you are right down to the last of your resources, maybe the bottom of your sack of barley flour, just an ounce left, just enough for one more meal. But you are happy and tranquil of mind. Because no one is bothering you, people are leaving you alone, giving you a wide berth. Ostracising you, sending you to Coventry, that's a really peaceful happy life. You can really get on with your work. The popular person is in a very difficult position, the person who is always in demand, always being invited here and invited there and having to meet all sorts of people and go out with them and do things with them, a very difficult life.

Just think what it is like to be a popular actress, never a moments peace I imagine.

V: Although people like that, don't they?

S: Well they have nothing to get on with by themselves. If they were left by other people they might have to sit and think.

V: So it is much better just to sit quietly and wait until you really feel motivated to do something worthwhile with other people than to go plunging in ... (S: Yes)

V: Would you say that solitary retreats help to cure that?

S: Yes certainly. And not only help to cure this, obviously they have positive value of their own quite apart from any neurotic dependence on other people that they may cure. Oh, yes. In fact I have said that I would like to see every Order member having solitary retreat, let's say up to a month, shortly after ordination. I have even been thinking that it would be a good idea that everybody has a solitary retreat before ordination.

V: Better still.

S: Better still, yes. Up to a month, I think a month is a quite reasonable period. Unless of course someone has a regular job, it is difficult then, but those who don't have regular jobs and could take a month off quite easily, should I think have a months solitary retreat before ordination. You can't really be with other people unless you can be on your own.

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V: That's so true. I've never lived by myself at all, I've always lived with other people, from

home, every place I have been it has always been with other people.

S: Well this is usual isn't it, most people have this experience. At least people very near, people at least whom you see or you exchange a few words with, but to live entirely on your own is very rare.

When I say solitary retreat I mean being entirely on your own and not seeing even anybody else if possible. Not speaking to anybody else for a whole month, just living with yourself for company.

V: What makes somebody not ready to go on a solitary retreat?

S: Do you have in mind, say a month or six months or a week?

V: Any period of time, or can it be.

S: Well someone might be ready for a month who wasn't ready for a year. But then again you say what makes them ready, well they are ready if they are able to stand it, I suppose. They are ready if they wouldn't go stark staring mad at being left alone. I think any normal person ought to be able to live alone for a month. If you can't there is something wrong with you. It's not even a question of any spiritual qualification, just a normal, healthy, human being ought to be able to live alone for a month.

Again in some primitive communities this is what they do, they send you off on your own. For instance the Australian Bush men who are supposed to be very, very primitive but who are in many ways very sophisticated, I would say. They send off their young men, they are hardly young men even, they are not much more adolescents, into the Australian desert all by themselves when they reach a certain age. It's survive or die. They send them off, I think it is for about three months. I am not sure whether they send them off or take them and leave them somewhere, but they have to go right off into the desert and they have to subsist. They are not allowed to take anything with them, maybe a little knife or something like that, they have to subsist, they have to survive entirely on their own and eventually find their own way back to the tribe. And they do, failure is hardly ever known. But there is no shelter there is no food, no water and you are in the midst of the Australian desert and you have to survive, I think it is for about three months, maybe longer. There are little tiny plants, little cactuses and tiny little lizards and things like that and you have to live on them.

You have to survive the cold and the heat, to say nothing of the loneliness. Well you are so busy keeping alive there is no time to think about being lonely and then find your way back. Apparently they find their way back just through something we can only call instinct. If you have been wandering here and there for so many weeks, the tribe might even have moved in the mean time. But a sort of instinct tells you in which direction to go and rejoin the tribe. So you come back a man, you have been out there on your own.

In other communities like those of the North American Indian you go off on your own and you perform certain ceremonies, certain rights, evoke the tribal deities, and you are supposed to have a vision indicating the particular line of work, the [438] particular line of action, whether you are going to be a great hunter or a great fighter or whatever. And you stay alone with these visions for some days or even weeks or months, then you come back.

So this is something that every normal human being ought to go through, just being away from the group, being away from the tribe, away from the community. Just experiencing one's own self on one's own. And if you can do that and live happily with yourself you stand a much better chance of being able to live happily with other people. You can say that there are two kinds of people, those who are happy with others and happy on their own and those who are neither happy on their own nor happy with others. If you can't be happy on your own you can't really be happy with other people. If you are really happy with other people you will be able to be happy on your own too.

V: So you can attack the problem from both ends, as it were.

S: Yes. So when you go away you are not able to depend upon others and you are forced to live with yourself, which is an excellent practice, an excellent experience. How many people have done this, some of you have I know. Hmm, not nearly enough. I think everybody ought to have this experience, certainly in the course of the next two years. At least one month on their own somewhere. Either on the sea shore or in the depths of the forest or a little hut somewhere, chalet or whatnot.

V: It's very difficult to find anywhere though in this country which is genuinely isolated. Buddhadasa was very lucky in the place he got.

S: Yes, well Durangama is willing to lend his place to people who want to be really isolated. It is a little cottage, it is isolated and it has all mod-cons. It is away out in the fields, there are such places here and there. Some of our Friends found a cave on the South Coast and stayed there on their own for a while, individually ... arya stayed there for a while and Graham ... stayed there for a while on his own ... So it is possible.

Obviously Tibet is the ideal place but then you can't go there. It is also possible in New Zealand. One of our New Zealand friends shortly after his ordination went on a solitary retreat, no two of them have done this, one went for a month and one went for a week. The one who went for a week just pitched his tent in the midst of the bush and was completely on his own. And of course thoroughly enjoyed it.

V: Well now that we have links with Finland I'm sure there are places there.

S: Yes. Because lots of Fins have got cabins up in the Forest, several of our own Friends. And it is certainly not difficult to borrow a cabin for a week or two weeks or a month, depending on the time of year, during the summer of course they will be used but in the Spring and the Autumn they would be available. Winter time would be quite impossible, it would be much too cold, you would be snowed up.

V: No doubt if one were a bit tougher that would be quite a good thing too, to be snowed in.

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S: Yes, but it would be pretty cold, I wouldn't like to dig you out and find one of you frozen to death.

V: As long as you are frozen to death meditating!

S: Anyway, let's carry on.

"Again, Geshe Pu-chung-wa said, "The greatest happiness is the happiness of abandoning desire rather than the happiness of indulging desire. The most important realization is understanding properly the meaning of one thing, rather than understanding many words. The most important help is the help of the Dharma rather than the help of material gifts. The most important fear is to fear the misery of future lives rather than the misery of this life. The most important decision is to cease internal wrong concepts rather than merely to cease wrong concepts about external things."

S: All right let's stop there. There is quite an important point in that first sentence. "The greatest happiness is the happiness of abandoning desire rather than the happiness of indulging desire." I remember in this connection the statement of a well known Yogini, that is to say female Yogi in South India. She said once that when a desire is satisfied, the happiness that you experience is not on account of the satisfaction of the desire but on account of the momentary suspension of the desire, consequent upon its satisfaction.

V: Could you say that again please Bhante?

S: She said that the happiness that you experience consequent upon the satisfaction of a desire is not really on account of the satisfaction of the desire but the momentary suspension of the desire consequent upon it's satisfaction.

V: It returns immediately.

S: In other words for an instant after satisfying the desire, you are free from the desire, but only for an instant. It is then that you experience happiness, it is because you are free from the desire, not because the desire is satisfied.

V: So you can never satisfy desires.

S: So you can never satisfy desires. This is why it is sometimes said that to try and satisfy desires by indulging desires is like a dog gnawing a dry bone on which there is no meat. You can go on gnawing the bone but however long you gnaw the bone you will never get any meat off it. There is no meat there, it is a dried bone.

So sometimes one can experience this that when a desire is satisfied the happiness that you experience is because you are free from the desire. But unfortunately after an interval the desire comes back and you think that it has come back because you haven't properly satisfied it etc. etc. so you try to satisfy it again. But actually what is giving you happiness is the fact that you are not experiencing the desire, just for a little while at least, after its satisfaction. Your mind is free from that desire so you are able to be happy.

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V: Desire is a sort of distraction isn't it? One can't concentrate at all, one can't do things fully.

S: Yes, so this is why the Buddha says that the happiness that arises from the cessation of desires is far greater than the happiness that arises from the satisfaction of desires.

V: It sounds like an itch, you scratch it and after it goes away you feel happy.

V: Yes, you have often talked about this ...

S: Yes. Like when you have got a very strong desire to go and see a certain place, that desire really troubles you. So eventually you get there, you go and see that place so you enjoy being there very much but it is not so much that you are enjoying that place but the strong desire that was troubling you has now ceased. So you are free from that desire, you are not being troubled any more, and that is really why you are happy. The actual being in that place and seeing those sights is secondary.

Though probably you can say this applies more when there is a sustained desire over a long period which builds up and which you are working to satisfy. Then, when it is satisfied the happiness that you experience is more on account on the removal of the desire. But supposing you have just arrived in a place, quite unexpectedly, by chance and it happens to be a beautiful place. Then your enjoyment would be genuine, your happiness at seeing that place would be genuine. It would not be the result of the subsidence of a desire that had been building up over a long period. You could then say that you were enjoying that place itself and not merely the cessation of your desire to see the place.

V: Could that also be said of people who find happiness in being together, wouldn't necessarily be because they desperately wanted to be but because they ...

S: Yes, if you are not all that desperate about it you enjoy it more. Everybody I am sure has had the experience of looking forward to seeing someone and being with them and getting very desperate about it, but when you do actually meet, in some strange way you have an absolutely wretched time together. But you can meet someone very casually or just be with someone that you don't have this terrific urge to see and to meet and to be with, and you have



a very happy time.

V: Bruce (?) talked about this in his novel 'Remembrance of Things ... ' He went into this whole aspect very deeply. He said that no actual experiences are enjoyable, the actual external experience of something. The only enjoyment we get is in the mental recollection of it afterwards, or in the anticipation of it before or afterwards. When we recollectively enjoy it.

S: That's sounds really neurotic doesn't it?

V: We enjoy the recollection, but we don't enjoy the actual thing.

S: That is when there is this terrific, and the [441] actually neurotic build up and anticipation and instead of just taking the thing when it comes along you are thinking about it and building it up in your mind and anticipating and wanting. So that when you get actually to the object itself you can't enjoy it, there is so much tension created by that building up process that has been going on, maybe for weeks and months, even years. You can't just simply be with that person, you have got this tremendous build up of desire to be satisfied.

V: Well you aren't with the person ...

S: You aren't, you are just with your own desire. And maybe you have put so much on to that person by that time, you just see them through a thick fog of sentiment or what not. But if you just take them as they come along, or maybe you know that you are going to meet them in a few weeks time, you don't think about it particularly, you are getting on with other things and when you do come to meet them, well, you can really be with them and be happy with them for their own sake, as it were.

V: When I was at the BBC I used to have these incredible meetings at the retreats, I used to live for the retreats because life was so boring and intolerable and everything was put on to the retreat. And when I got on the retreat all there was was the pain in the legs in meditation and things like that. One doesn't think of the nasty aspect, the painful aspect of something when you are anticipating it. You exclude that from the ...

S: But even if the situation is non-painful you spoil it by over-anticipation, like children. You can work children up into a state of excitement by saying I am going to take you to the Zoo tomorrow and won't it be lovely. If the child is a bit highly strung you can get it really worked up in that way to such an extent that by the time it comes to go to the Zoo the child is in a state bordering on hysteria and can't enjoy the Zoo. Not only children, you do this with yourself sometimes.

V: My father in the summer holidays, six weeks before he goes 'ahh, six weeks today, guess where I'll be?' and then it's two weeks after he's come back and he says, 'ahh a week ago yesterday I was...' Really, the whole year builds up to this point which is an anticlimax, and then he starts looking back.

S: Just a watershed between anticipation and recollection. It's as though you never enjoy the thing itself.

V: This happens a lot with festivals, centre's celebrations of Wesak and things. 'It's great, Wesak, we'll have, this is going to happen and this may happen,' and you get ... and these things are not happening and there is quite a disappointment in these things which haven't happened. So you have to try and accept what is happening here and now.

S: It's not as though you shouldn't prepare for tomorrow, as it were, but in a reasonable objective way and not over-anticipate mentally what tomorrow is going to mean to you, even though you are preparing for it in a sense. You can make [442] your sensible, practical preparations for Wesak without anticipating in your mind all the glorious spiritual experiences you are going to have on that day (laughter)).

So, 'the greatest happening is the happiness of abandoning desire.' It is more like the non-experience of desire. That when the desire ceases it is such a relief, such a rest, as it were. You can take a deep breath and begin to be happy then that you haven't got all these desires. I think this applies much more, of course, to neurotic desires. There is a healthy anticipation and a healthy satisfaction as with a good meal when you are hungry. But this is something of relatively limited duration, when you are satisfied in a matter of hours. But if you are planning a great feast for next month, and if you are drawing up the menu for days and days on end and savouring it all in your mind, well that's a bit neurotic. But if you come in hungry and you just ask 'what's cooking and when will it be ready?' and they say that it will be ready in an hour and a half, and you are really looking forward to it, well, this is quite natural this is quite healthy. One doesn't want to take things to extremes.

All right, enough about that. 'The most important realization is understanding properly the meaning of one thing, rather than understanding many words.' There is something like that in the Dhammapada, 'Better than a thousand meaningless words is one word, hearing which one is at peace'.

V: So does this imply, Bhante, that when you really understand any one thing in its depth, that that gives you the understanding of all things?

S: Well in a sense yes, though I don't think this is the point actually being made, although what you say is so. It's just a corrective to our superficiality, we don't usually go deeply into one thing. We don't go deeply, say, into one particular precept, we prefer to just skim through a lot of books. Quite a few people spend a lot of time browsing but they never go deeply into any single passage, never understand it really thoroughly. Maybe skimming is all right at the beginning when you are still very much on the path of irregular steps but when you start getting on to the path of regular then you have to be more selective, more discriminating, more thorough and go into everything much more deeply than before.

That means concentrating sometimes on the one word rather than on the many words.

V: An example is the Twelve Nidana Practice.

S: Yes, or when we have these study seminars we just go through a few pages a day and this is more than enough.

Some people, of course, can read quite a lot and also understand quite thoroughly too, quite deeply too, but they are rather exceptional. For most people to read extensively and to skim means that they are not going into anything very thoroughly or very deeply. But after a while it is better to concentrate on just a very few important texts or very important teachings and try to get thoroughly into that, to understand them properly.

If you consider that nowadays even the average educated person reads in the course of his lifetime far more books than even the greatest scholars were able to read even a few hundred years ago. How many books did people like Plato read, not very many. Even Aristotle who used to collect books, that is scrolls, he had apparently only at his disposal, [443] certainly not a thousand. Think of medieval times when if you had a collection of ten books you had a really big library, they were all hand written, they would be illuminated. And even the biggest monastic libraries didn't contain more than three or four hundred volumes which scholars knew really thoroughly.

I think there is a great deal to be said for a thorough knowledge of a very small body of works. In a way this is one of the disadvantages of Buddhism, that there is so much literature it almost encourages superficiality.

V: I don't know how many books in the Order library.

S: There's not all that many.

V: Eight hundred and twenty.

V: Eight hundred and twenty, that's not bad.

V: They're never used ...

S: No?

V: I'm not sure actually, except Ananda.

S: Who browses.

V: When you talk about getting into something more deeply do you mean like dwelling over a sentence?

S: I mean essentially studying it in the way that, at least, that we study on these study seminars. I think this is hardly possible for the individual on his own unless he is definitely of a studious and reflective temperament. Most people just can't do it on their own, their mind wanders off or they just haven't got the intellectual penetration which is necessary. They can understand it and appreciate it and benefit by it when it is explained to them, but they can't investigate and discover for themselves. So I think for the majority of people study really means study in the group situation, to be really effective.

I think most people who have been on study seminars do feel that they learn much more in that way than by reading on their own. I think the same applies, probably to a lesser degree even to the study groups, with just four, five or six people. You have to concentrate more, you have to think. Someone may notice something that you didn't notice and they point it out, what do you think this means? You might have just passed it over, not even thought about it, well then you have to think, what does it mean, to give your mind to it. So probably for the majority of people group study is much better and more useful, from this point of view, than just individual reading.

V: Would you say that most people can develop intellectual penetration through their practices and meditation, or do you think it depends on temperament?

S: Intellectual penetration? I think meditation can help, because sometimes lack of intellectual penetration is due to lack of concentration and lack of energy behind the intellection. And if, as a result of meditation, you become more concentrated, more unified, your energy more together, then your intelligence, your natural intelligence will become sharper and more penetrating. And this will be the case also when you come to take [444] up some kind of Buddhist study, you will have greater intellectual penetration.

V: I must say that I have felt over the last eighteen months, having been on a number of seminars and worked on them as well, that I now find it much, much easier, I can get value from studying on my own. But I didn't feel that particularly before, because I have got an overall sort of vision and a better general grasp of the Dharma. I can concentrate more easily on just reading something quite mindfully, going over it a bit, and getting into it really.

S: And also you have a better idea, probably, of the sort of approach that is needed. The sort of things that you should be looking out for, the sort of questions you should be asking yourself and so on.

V: What is the actual, I sometimes wonder what the value of study is. There seems to be two aspects, that in studying you sometimes realize something yourself, that doesn't..., that seems to happen sometimes just by reading through something, a sutra or something, you respond to something in it. On the other hand there is the aspect of study so that you can communicate ideas and even concepts at first, to other people. That's basically it?

S: Well obviously you can't communicate to other people unless you have understood for yourself. And if you have understood the chances are that you will feel like communicating, at least when there is a suitable opportunity. Not that you have a real urge to communicate, but that you enjoy communicating when occasion offers, you feel able to do that. You take a sort of natural pleasure in exercising that capacity.

I think, also, formal study is helpful, in as much as you do have actually to read the text, and to stay with it for several hours. Some people find even this difficult, left to themselves. After twenty minutes they just put it aside, they can't sustain their interest, it does not mean enough to them, they are not getting enough out of it. But in the group study situation you have to stay with the text for hour after hour, and you are able to, actually. So this helps that type of concentration, for most people. Very few people can study by themselves all day, and not day after day, certainly. But in these study seminar situations you are able to do that, at least to some extent. So you just get more thoroughly into the whole subject.

V: I used to find when I was at college that was one of the benefits of the examinations, that I spent most of the year finding it very difficult to study. But gradually as I had to, I was forced to, I suddenly realized that I had tremendous capacities to sit down for hours on end working out problems.

V: In a similar context here, preparing a talk you have to do the same thing. And that's a tremendous incentive for study.

V: I can correlate [corroborate?] that because talks I've given, there's been so much research and background reading necessary even on a light topic. You've got to go through and in order to glean the essence of something you have to read an awful [445] lot and I found that very, very useful, incidentally almost to the talk. Because it leads you into certain things quite easily.

All right let's go on to the next sentence. 'The most important help is the help of the Dharma rather than the help of material things'. Again this is quite standard Buddhist teaching. It's not the usual point of view nowadays, that you should give people the gift of the Dharma, you are giving them something more valuable than anything material. It doesn't mean that the material giving should be neglected but the gift of the Dharma definitely has a higher value.

I think this is quite important from the standpoint of the hierarchy of values. In some quarters there is the view that people who are into what can be described for want of a better term as religious work, ought to be doing social work, that is more valuable. Do you know what I mean? That you ought not to be teaching Buddhism, you ought to be visiting the sick and so on. Well that's all very true in a way, visiting the sick is very good and no doubt one should be doing that as well, if one can. But one should not lose sight of the fact that for the sick also the Dharma is more important in the long run.

Otherwise there is a sort of ideology around nowadays, that only social work is of any value. This is a definite miccha-ditthi.

V: I met someone some time ago, someone gave me a lift who was a lecturer in Economics at the University of Essex. He was saying that certain economists had been looking at the whole structure of our economy and wondering what an earth was going to happen, how could we save the economic situation. And that certain economists had come to the conclusion that the only thing that could really save it was..., apparently we have lost what they call 'invisible products'. And I told him that I was involved with Buddhism and he equated this with an invisible product which was necessary for the sustenance of society, for an economically sound society. It was very close to the Buddha's teaching.

S: In other words an ideal. So those who are into spiritual activities, especially teaching, are, in a way, sustainers of the ideal. It is very significant, I think, that so many Christian clergy virtually abandon Christianity and they just take to social work. Of course they try to justify it

in terms of Christianity itself but it means, virtually, that they have no faith in Christianity any more. They have to justify their position as clergymen, to justify their existence, as it were, by doing socially useful work. There is also the feeling in many of them that they must do something that people regard as worthwhile, other people. And they know that other people don't usually regard religious work, that is Christian work, specifically Christian work, as being at all worthwhile, and they want the approval of people. It is really quite pathetic.

V: There's a very ... Christian aid poster, which says, we are more interested in harvests than festivals, with a black man with a scythe.

S: Ahh. The harvest is important too, if you can't have the harvest you can't have the harvest festival, but to set the one off against the other like that is really wrong. I think there is a series of those posters because I have seen something else rather like that.

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V: And not only ... something about water, praying for rain and drilling for water.

S: In other words we don't believe in Christianity at all. Please accept us, we don't believe in Christianity, not really, we are just like you. It's really quite pathetic. But there is a little bit of this, I am afraid, creeping in in the Buddhist countries in South East Asia.

V: I don't really see how you make that connection, I don't see how it implies lack of faith in basic Christianity. I would see it, rather, as a lack of faith in the way that Church ... it, the teaching, as an institution.

S: I say as a..., I don't say it as a necessary inference, but I say it as a sort of statement of fact that this is just what I feel, reading some of the things that these people write and hearing some of the things that they say. (V: Unclear) but they have in fact. Certainly social action is compatible with a Christian faith, it can be a genuine expression of it but I think that in a majority of cases, the engaging in social work, by Christian ministers, is just an escape from the fact that they have in fact no faith and they have got to do something to justify their existence. You can tell from other statements that they make that they just don't believe in Christianity any more, they have got to fill that gap up with social work.

Not that the social work is an expression of their faith in Christianity, it is a cover up for the lack of faith in Christianity, though they rationalize it as an expression of their Christian concern, etc. But from other aspects of their lives and from other things that they say, you can see that there is no Christian faith. If you ask them about God, 'do you believe in God?' they are not even sure about that. 'Do you believe in the saving blood of Jesus?' they are not sure about that, 'do you believe that the bible is the word of God?', they don't know. They shilly shally, they hum and hah about it, they prevaricate. Not all, but the majority.

V: It suggests to me, I must say, the whole institution, the ecclesiastical system has got in the way of the spirit of Christ's teaching, rather than that they have lost faith in the basic teaching.

S: Well one can put it like that but I don't think it is a very useful way of putting it.

V: It seems to me that they have just allowed themselves to be completely... to lose their spiritual ideals in the current thought of the day, which is predominantly socialist, or at least the liberal thought of the day.

S: Ah, yes, but you see this is what I call pseudo-liberal, and it is that which sets the pace. Orwell has written about this, some very penetrating essays, that pseudo-liberalism, he doesn't call it that, I think he calls it trendy leftyism, it has taken on the role of pace-maker and it has been allowed to do that. If you have any sort of view which does not accord with this trendy leftyism you have to be very apologetic about it, you are not progressive. Everything trendy lefty is labelled progressive, if you don't go along with the whole band wagon then you are non-progressive, you are reactionary etc. And this pseudo-social concern is all part of the

same [447] pseudo-progressive, pseudo-liberal outlook. At least we have ... sort of gestures.

It is really quite nauseating before a general election the way everybody who is seeking election goes on about old people and how concerned they are about old people, these are the ritual gestures in the liberal direction. But once they are elected they don't bother too much about the old people, they have to profess this great concern for the old, it is expected of you.

V: There's something I have noticed about Christianity generally in the contact I have had with it, once in Glasgow, once a talk I gave in London, and that was they were falling over backwards to agree with everything you said and everything that everybody else said.

S: Yes, I was most irritated by this I must confess. Shortly after I came to England in 64 I was invited up to Hampstead by some group meeting at the local parish Church and I was invited there to meet and have a public discussion in front of some young people with Joseph Macullen, who is the rector of St. Mary-le-bow and who has these lunch time dialogues, meeting one ... and some other prominent figure. I had never heard of him at that point so I went in in all innocence, so I was clearly invited along as a representative of oriental thought and he was going to cut the ground from under my feet by agreeing with everything that I said and saying that Christianity already had it. So in the end, believe it or not, when I mentioned karma and rebirth he said, 'Oh yes, Christianity teaches karma'. So I said 'it doesn't teach rebirth' although there are the odd very indirect reference to rebirth in the gospels so he said, 'oh no, Christianity teaches rebirth too, there is no difference between Buddhism and Christianity in that respect'.

So what he clearly was trying to get across to all those young people was, that there is no point in becoming interested in Buddhism or following it, it is all there in Christianity. But he was doing this to the point of intellectual dishonesty. Surely he knew that traditional Christianity never taught rebirth, except some obscure sect in the very early centuries. But here he was boldly maintaining that Christianity taught rebirth. So I thought this is just dishonest, the man is not an honest person. I thought this was really terrible, I didn't say so, I didn't in fact really quite know what to say when he came up with this whopper. Just like when you hear people [say] that Christianity has never persecuted, Christianity only teaches love. You point to the crusades and the inquisition, 'oh that's not the real Christianity', well where do you find the real Christianity then?

So much of this prevarication, but the point that they really ought to be coming to is, Christianity is finished we don't believe in it, let's look for something else. If we do believe in social work let's resign our position as clergyman and say so, 'I'm finished with the Church and I am going into social work.'

And again, something I remember when I came back from India in 64, there was a colour supplement feature on some other wordy ecclesiastic, that was Nick Stacey who just concluded an experiment at a Church that he was attached to, under the auspices of the Bishop of Woolwich. An experiment to try to get along young people, and he failed. He had been doing it, I think it was for five years, I'm not quite [448] sure, I think it was for five years and he had been given a hall and facilities and plenty of money and four other young priests to help him and he had been trying to get the young people in. And in this article it said, 'we've tried everything, we've had jazz bands, we've had pop concerts, we've had bingo, we've had ping pong, but we haven't been able to get them in'. So this was his signed confession of failure. Someone asked me what I thought about this article, knowing that I had read it. I said that my feeling was, after reading it, pity they didn't try Christianity to get the young people along.

They tried everything except religion. They were supposed to be trying to attract people to Church, to Christianity. But it was just sports and games and no Christianity, apparently, at all, so what were you trying to get people along too? Whereas if you genuinely believed in your Christian teaching and you just presented that, without gimmicks, surely you would have got a few people at least, but that way they got none at all. So he went into social work, he

took up some post with the Ealing borough council, at a salary which staggered me - \$7,000 a year - Director of this that or the other. I think he is back in the Church and he dropped a hint some years later that he wouldn't mind being considered for Archbishop of Canterbury - that again staggered me.

I can't help wondering how serious are these people, where are they, do they know where they are, do they know where they stand?

Anyway that is all very much by the way, well no it isn't by the way, 'The most important help is the help of the Dharma rather than the help of material things'. No doubt there are some people in this country who still do need material gifts, but the majority, fortunately don't, they need the Dharma. So it is the Dharma we should concentrate on giving them, that is our special function if we are able to do that.

V: Just something I was going to say earlier on ... This, people finding it difficult to understand that Dharma is more important than material things, why not do social work, I think even more difficult to understand is working on oneself rather than, say doing social work, is very difficult for people to understand.

S: Do you find that? (V: Yes) I must say that I am getting a bit out of touch with the general public, in as much as I have dealings mainly with Order members and experienced Friends and usually Mitras, at that. I don't see much of the raw public, as it were. Except at a safe distance. I may be getting a bit out of touch, but is this your experience, that ordinary people find it very difficult to find this idea of working on oneself, of personal development?

V: Yes, more difficult for them to understand than, say, religion and social work. (S: Is it so?) Because it sounds, it seems so contradictory, it seems so selfish somehow.

S: Why do people have this thing about being selfish, in this respect? They don't mind being selfish in other ways, why do they bring up this question of selfish, it's selfish?

V: Because it is what they would like to do really. (S: To be selfish?) No, just to get it on on their own, they resent the people who do.

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S: Do you think so?

V: I don't even think they think that far, I think it is just the most obvious thing to say, it's selfish.

V: Instead of actually having thought about it.

V: Why isn't it well thought of?

V: It's different, it's quite different.

S: Why are people so against selfishness, you wouldn't have thought so.

V: ... that they don't know what it is going on.

S: Ahh, it may be more like that. But why do they label it selfish, why is that the term of ...

V: Because it is out of key with the current trends of thought that we have just been discussing. It's not socialistic (S: Yes right.) it's directly opposite to that, so it's the obvious thing that comes to mind.

S: It seems to negate social concern. (V: Yes)

V: It's a form of emotional blackmail.

S: Yes. It does occur to me that one possible approach would be, as it were, via physical training and physical culture. That you explain to people that no doubt it is a good thing to develop yourself physically and a lot of people, especially a lot of men, would agree with this, body building and all that. Then say, well what about your mind, what about the whole cultural aspect, why do you think you go to school. It is not just to fit you for a job, it is to develop you, help you to use your mind and develop your emotions. We are just taking that a bit further.

V: I recently met a fellow who was at school with me, I hadn't seen him for many, many years. Much to my surprise he understood and sympathized with this approach, although I thought he was exactly the person who would not understand and sympathize at all with Buddhism or with Higher Evolution or mental development. He could see the parallel between mental development and physical development.

V: I think there is a tendency, actually, to assume that people are going to react in certain ways and therefore not really making the effort to get something across to them, because you are going to assume that they are going to think this and that.

S: Yes. Well this is one of the things that really impressed me when I was getting round among the Ex-Untouchables, most of whom were illiterate, and giving talks on Buddhism. Caste Hindu friends used to assure me that these people were very uneducated, illiterate, they are very low and not very intelligent, that is why they are being treated as untouchables all these centuries. But I didn't find that at all, I found that anything that I explained, if I explained it carefully and step by step as I did [450] to any other, even highly educated audience, they could understand every single point. The men and the women, even though they were factory workers, illiterate, they could understand every point I made, the vast majority of them, without any difficulty at all. They had a very immediate response, I could see from the expressions on their faces that they were understanding and following everything.

So I think, very often, the intelligence of the average person, the average non-educated person, allegedly uncultured person, is underrated, underestimated. It's a sort of middle class snobbery, almost, 'the workers won't understand it, not intelligent enough, don't have the culture', that's just rubbish really. Without idealizing the workers, but they have got the same intelligence as anybody else. It is just a question of putting it to them and presenting it to them in the right sort of way, putting it across.

V: This fellow that I met, actually, was regarded at school as a bit of a dunce, he was supposed to be unintelligent, but I found actually that I could communicate very readily with him. There seemed to be something there which was on quite another level.

V: In some ways it is much more difficult to communicate with an intelligent person.

S: Yes, they rationalize it.

V: You have to be really on the ball yourself.

S: Not so much the intelligent, but the intellectually agile people.

V: Children also are assumed to be unintelligent.

S: Yes, that's true. I was hearing a programme on the radio not so long ago, and the point there was made that very old people are assumed to be unintelligent. An old person was complaining over the telephone, on the radio programme, that the nurses in the hospital always treat her as they she was absolutely stupid and can't understand anything. They talk to her in a loud voice though she is not deaf and repeat everything three times. Every opinion



she expresses they just shake their heads and say, 'she is just getting on a bit', and she is a completely rational person saying what she thinks. They are trying to suggest that she is senile.

V: Horrible isn't it.

S: Another woman was saying that a worker who was taking an occupational therapy class for blind people, and not very old blind people, at that, happened to remark 'I know how to handle you lot I have been working in a mental hospital', and they were simply blind. This was stated on the programme.

There is this tendency on the part of some people to treat the less educated as though they were unintelligent, the very young as though they have no intelligence and the very old as though they have no intelligence. This is really quite extraordinary and very bad.

V: I wonder why that is.

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V: It ties up with this whole progressive thing, in a way, I can't quite make the connection but I feel it ties up with it somewhere. If you are in a social work role with everybody, with that coming into the general consciousness then that seems to encourage this sort of attitude. People are inferior to you, somehow.

S: Yes, you don't relate on a basis of human equality. You relate from a basis of alleged superiority almost.

V: Patient/Doctor role almost.

S: Yes. This is one of the things that I was getting at with Mamaki, because I felt that she was tending to slip into this and this became a sort of normative role. This is why I took it up with her very thoroughly.

V: This happens with quite intelligent people in hospital. They are never told what is happening and why, they are treated as idiots by the doctors. There is no reason to assume ...

S: Yes, right. Admittedly the doctor has (V: Specialized knowledge) - specialized knowledge, but he is not basically more intelligent.

V: No, I mean, one knows one's own body.

S: Right, and the assumption seems to be that you are so stupid that you can't even be told what is wrong with you, you wouldn't understand, it wouldn't mean anything to you. As far as you are concerned, whether it is measles or mumps or whether it is cholera or whether it is influenza it is all the same, you are so stupid that you can't understand the difference, so what is the point of telling you?

V: Perhaps it goes back to what we were talking about the other day. The underlying resentment and malice in people. It keeps itself going, presumably if you spend your childhood being put down, when you reach a stage where apparently you are an adult, you then spend the rest of your life putting other people down as a way of getting your own back.

S: It could be, say in the case of some at least of those who work with old people, they don't like old people, they resent really having to work with them and for them. Admittedly sometimes it isn't very agreeable work and they take it out on old people in this way.

V: I think maybe it even goes a bit deeper than that, in that there is a basic fear of the unknown. Fear of something like old age, basically ... as old age, fear of that.

S: Well one would have thought in that case they would have, it would have been an incentive to treat the old people as normal, instead of treating them as senile.

V: But this is..., the normal human reaction to something like that is to reject or put down something that you fear. If it is old age that is feared then you will [452] treat people as inferior because you feel ...

V: It really is amazing, actually that old people aren't treated well in this country. That there is people in their middle life who have so much wealth, relatively and then..., it just seems so obvious to me that you are going to get old. But most people don't seem to face up to that. There are fifty million people living in the country, or the working population...

S: And three million, no it's ten million old age pensioners, which is a staggering number.

V: I think part of the difficulty may be that old people are often physically quite unattractive. And the quality of their mind, by association therefore, mental contact is shied away from them, because they are thought to be somehow mentally unhealthy or ugly. Whereas in fact they might be quite sensitive, alive.

S: It also maybe the result of the 'youth culture', the emphasis on youth and beauty.

V: That's a big factor, isn't it?

S: And there is no longer the idea that a middle aged person can have an attractiveness of their own. Attractiveness is only found in the very young, and this places a premium on youth in a quite unhealthy sort of way.

V: It also seems, old age is also associated with death, and there is just so much hiding up of death these days.

S: This really reaches its extreme in Finland. Older people are actively disliked by the young, they don't want anything to do with them. Old people are not allowed to live in the new housing estates where young married people go to live, because young married people wouldn't want to live on the same estate where old people were allowed to stay. Even at the centre, Vajrabodhi was telling me that if young people arrive there and see that there is an older person, that is to say someone over forty, actually there they don't like to stay. Sometimes they leave at once, immediately. They just go if they see an older person sitting there, they don't want anything to do with a place where old people go. It is really extreme.

V: It does remind one, it's like a constant reminder of old age, death looking like ...

S: I don't think it is anything instinctive, that they have any fear of death or anything like that, but it is the value that the whole culture and whole society places on youth. For instance the younger you are the higher your salary, in Finland. And it decreases as you get older and older professors are ousted from their posts to make way for young ones. They are given a reduction of salary and so on. This is very pervasive in Finnish society, apparently. It is quite horrific.

V: It reminds me of Brave New World.

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V: Has it been going on for a long time?

S: It is relatively recent, it's since the war and it has been stepping up all the time, the last twenty years, fifteen years even ten years. It has been stepping up all the time.

V: It may have been started to break up a pattern in culture of...

S: It seems to have gone to extremes.

V: Yes, because I thought it was probably quite a good thing when I think of politics, sometimes. You get people who are just past it and living in another world altogether.

S: But there of course it is the opposite. There, many members of the Finnish cabinet are in their twenties, the Prime Minister became Prime Minister when he was thirty-two. But the President is over eighty. The President is even more radical than the young people, and he is very popular, he is so old that he is no longer regarded as old. He is very fiery and very radical and proposes sometimes very extreme measures which even his very youthful colleagues hesitate to bring in.

V: So what they are afraid of might just be that someone becomes fossilized.

S: It could be. But youth can be very fossilized too.

V: I don't know what that means actually.

V: Stuck

S: Petrified.

V: Locked.

S: But it seems that society is not in a very healthy state when there is too great a discrepancy and too great an opposition, even, between the generations. But certainly it was quite interesting to see that in the Helsinki centre, with the Helsinki Friends these typically Finnish difficulties were being overcome and it was remarked on by Vajrabodhi as something really exceptional. Something that represented a real achievement that on our last weekend retreat there were twenty people of all ages from about seventeen to about fifty-five. Quite unusual, quite extraordinary, that sort of situation. And they all got on quite happily together and there was no feeling of difference and they all quite enjoyed it. So Vajrabodhi regarded this as a real milestone in the history of the Friends in Helsinki, that they could have this sort of retreat and everybody be very happy.

V: What's the general attitude of the old people towards the young under those conditions?

V: They must be terrified.

S: It is very difficult to say, I didn't have the chance to discuss it with any old people. But older people are noticeably more shabby, they are more shabbily dressed and they obviously have less money to spend. They live in the less [454] attractive areas. They tend to be segregated in the less attractive areas, away from the modern housing estates, unless they are a bit well to do. It is quite pathetic in a way.

V: Vajrabodhi is nearing forty isn't he?

S: He is, he has to be quite careful. Bodhisri is, not to speak of Vajrabodhi, Bodhisri is nearly forty.

V: You wouldn't think it.

V: Appearance may come in, if they continue to dress in an attractive way and look attractive well then...

V: And have a face lift occasionally.

S: I don't think it helps.

V: What, they go by the age on the certificate?

S: I think you can always tell.

V: I can't, I thought Bodhisri was ...

S: Well maybe I have seen a bit more of the world than you, one of the advantages of age.

Anyway perhaps we had better pass on. 'The most important fear is to fear the misery of future lives rather than the misery of this life'. Do you think this is an attitude that people can very easily adopt, now?

V: It's something that I have experienced a lot quite intensively, recently. I have felt it increasing in the last eighteen months, it seems. Almost a terror, that if I don't get to stream entry in this life what will happen to me! It's quite real for me, it wasn't always there, but it is real now.

S: It is definitely a very important consideration for Tibetan Buddhists. They do have this very firm belief in karma and rebirth.

Then, 'the most important decision is to cease internal wrong concepts rather than to merely cease wrong concepts about external things.' What do you think is meant by internal wrong concepts?

V: Superstitions and irrational fears.

S: Yes, miccha ditthis relating to ones actual spiritual state or progress.

All right let's go on then and read the next part of the precept.

"Geshe Nyug-rum-pa said, "You who wish to obtain rebirth as a man or god, and also wish to obtain perfect enlightenment, must think of samsara as a prison. You should see this life and body as a bubble of water, bad company as an enemy, the spiritual teacher as a Wish-fulfilling Jewel, the fettering passions as a poisonous snake, sinful activities as strong poison, the aspects of [455] desire as the embers of a fire, sweet words and fame as an echo, respect and gain as an entangling snare, bad friends as a contagious disease, good friends as a beautiful and fortified palace, all sentient beings as your mother and father. You should feel that Giving is the wish-fulfilling cow, that Moral Practice is a precious jewelled ornament, that Patience is strong armour, that Effort is the wish-fulfilling wisdom-horse, that Meditation is a great treasure, and that the Wisdom of hearing, thinking, and meditation is a bright lamp.

S: A whole series of synonyms. 'Samsara as the prison', conditioned existence itself as a prison, your own psychological conditioning as a prison. Do people ever feel this, very limited and restricted by their own selves.

V's: Yes.

V: I get quite frightened almost, sometimes to ...

(break in tape)

S: What about seeing this life and body as a bubble of water? It means that it is very transitory, because a bubble only lasts an instant.

'Bad company as an enemy', often one thinks that bad company is good company.

'Spiritual teacher as a wish fulfilling jewel' because in that way you get all your desires fulfilled.

V: Healthy desires.

S: Yes. 'Fettering passions as a poisonous snake', etc. All this seems quite obvious, doesn't it. 'Bad friends as a contagious disease, good friends as a beautiful and fortified palace.'

V: How ... 'sweet words and fame as an echo'?

S: Well there is no reality in them. The echo is not the real sound, as it were. The echo is usually used in Indian literature as a symbol of something unreal, it doesn't really exist it only seems to exist.

In the same way the sweet words and fame are just sounds in the air, there is no real meaning in them and no real substance.

'Respect and gain as an entangling snare'.

'Moral practice a precious jewel ornament, patience is strong armour, effort the wish-fulfilling wisdom horse.' These are the Paramitas, of course. Meditation a great treasure and the Wisdom of hearing, thinking and meditation a bright lamp.

V: When one hears spiritual armour being referred to is it always patience that is meant, or principally, or primarily patience that it is referring to?

S: It seems to be so as far as I remember. Perhaps it is more like fortitude, patience in the sense of fortitude. [456] That you can bear and suffer and endure, just as the armour insulates you from the arrows, so your own mental state is so powerful, so positive that you can't be affected, you can't be influenced by negative things without.

Sometimes the Bodhisattva's vow is referred to as an armour. There is sometimes the idiom, donning the armour of the Bodhisattva, which means taking up the life and the vow of the Bodhisattva. Sometimes it is said, donning the Bodhisattva's armour of patience, here the simile is clearer because just as arrows can't hurt you if you are wearing armour, so in the same way if you are patient the arrows of other peoples unpleasant words don't hurt you.

V: The Wisdom of hearing, thinking and meditation, is that the division of sutta, ...

S: Yes, that's right, the three kinds of wisdom.

I think we had better stop there and have our tea and coffee, I think after that we can finish the chapter.

Tea Break Discussion:-

V: It seems that with children that they are naturally grateful and then when some grown up says, 'now say thank you' and they have already said it with their faces or with everything they do. This makes a child close up.

S: Yes. Though I must say if the adult puts it positively the child is happy to say thank you. But if you say, 'say thank you', in a threatening sort of way then of course the child will close up. But if you just suggest, 'well wouldn't you like to say thank you', the child nearly always does like to say thank you. It is just a question of tact and your own positive attitude.

V: The child will know that that is the way an adult receives ... and children understand these things quite clearly and they usually copy it if they see it. (V's Yes)

V: Yes, the feeling is that you can't give when something is being demanded, it is impossible. Even if you give, it is not giving if it is demanded of you.

S: But I just got the impression sometimes around the centre that a lot of the people coming and benefiting from the centre were doing it in a preta like sort of way, without any positive feeling on their part.

V: It's taken for granted.

S: And that they wouldn't get more out of the centre beyond a certain point until they started putting into it.

V: I think that has changed quite a bit now though.

S: Yes, this was some two or three years ago, four years ago even.

It is not a sign of spirituality to allow oneself to be exploited. That is quite different from free and generous giving, you shouldn't let yourself be exploited. You shouldn't let others vampirize you, unless you quite consciously offer them your blood etc. (laughing) But it is not good for you and [457] it is not good for them, because sooner or later if it is too one sided you start resenting it, unless you really are a great Bodhisattva, and it doesn't help them. So let them get away with it for a while, the first few weeks of their coming along but then gradually suggest in a positive way that they have a responsibility too and they will get more out of everything if they put more into it. They shouldn't be lying back expecting to be spoon fed all the time.

This sort of pseudo freedom, you want to remain free and just take and not have to be under obligation, not commit yourself, this isn't freedom at all. Tagore says, 'I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight'. The bonds of delight are your commitments.

V: Who said that?

S: Tagore. The interpretation that the bonds of delight are your commitments, that's my own. (laughter)

V: This is the ... of the positive Nidanas, isn't it. In dependence upon faith comes delight. (S: Yes)

V: Presumably without these bonds of commitment the Bodhisattva would just float off into Nirvana.

S: Though a very pseudo Nirvana it would be, wouldn't it?

V: Yes it would, his own private Pratyekabuddha Nirvana.

"Geshe Kham-pa-lung-pa said, "As it is so very difficult to obtain a life of leisure and opportunity, guard moral practice as you would your eyes. As it is not certain when your illusory body will be destroyed, practice the Dharma with body, speech, and mind. As impermanent virtuous work is ineffectual until dedicated, make heart-felt prayer for the benefit of all living beings. As all that is impermanent is illusory, abandon attachment, not holding anything as truly existent."

S: This all seems quite clear and straightforward and goes over much of the same ground we have already traversed except for one point perhaps. 'As impermanent virtuous work is ineffectual until dedicated, make heartfelt prayer for the benefit of all living beings.' This idea of dedicating, which means transference of merit, dedication of merits. The Geshe is saying, as it were, that the virtuous act is not really complete until you have dedicated the merit accruing from that virtuous act to all living beings. So that it is quite important to do this after a particular act. Especially, say, at the end of a puja or a ceremonial Dana, you dedicate the merit to all living beings. Which is a form, in a way, of metta bhavana.

V: This means transforming a basic ... (S: Yes)

V: Could you dedicate previous acts, acts from the past or would that not be possible?

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S: I don't know, I can't say that I have ever heard of this being done. Presumably you could retrospectively dedicate. Or at least you perhaps should be a bit humble, and say, 'well if there was any merit in past virtuous actions of mine then let it be shared by all.' Or whatever merit there was.

V: This implies that maybe there might not be.

S: Well yes, in as much as you didn't have that idea at the time it may be that you just did the action and that is that, there is no...

V: Because the merit is not inherent in the act.

S: No, in a sense not. Or perhaps you have used up the merit. Because if you didn't dedicate it then presumably you intended that the merit accrued to you and you might well have used that up by the time that you come round to thinking about dedicating merits.

V: If you were reflecting on past good deeds it can, it can still help you develop metta if you like, can't it which can then be used?

S: Or perhaps you can adopt the attitude of dedicating the merit of reflecting on your past good deeds.

But what do you think it implies, this additional dimension, as it were, of dedicating?

V: Egolessness.

S: Egolessness. It brings in all living beings, it gives you your basic orientation from the Mahayana point of view. This is not just some little good act that you have done for your own benefit or because society demanded it, or to get to heaven, or even to win your own liberation. This is ultimately for the benefit of all. It all helps you to think positively about other living beings. That you would like to share your merits with them, you can hardly do that unless you feel very positively towards them so it is a form of practice of the metta bhavana. You can't help developing a bit of metta at least as you share your merits with other living beings. You can hardly hate them when you are doing that, you cannot but feel a bit positive towards them.

V: It all implies too the bringing together of positive feeling and the Voidness. (S: Yes)

V: Also it stops one from becoming attached to certain states from meditation, I know this with Yoga as well. After meditation you might be feeling all lovely and peaceful and wanting to hold on to that and it can in fact become quite negative, disturbing that. If one gives it up or has the attitude of giving up then one doesn't cling to those states, one has got the energy at one's disposal to give.

(End side 1)

S: Yes, it means it counteracts any possibility of your ethical life, even spiritual life, becoming self centred and self absorbed. Having done a particular good deed you then think of all living beings and share the merit with them. [459] It's more outward going, in a way more creative, you are taking initiative.

Also the Geshe says, 'a heartfelt prayer for the benefit of all living beings', it's not enough to do it in a perfunctory way, just reciting a few little verses, you must really feel it.

It says, 'impermanent virtuous work is ineffectual until dedicated', what do you think he means by ineffectual, how can virtuous work be ineffectual? In what sense is it said to be ineffectual?

V: Spiritually.

V: Karmically.

S: Spiritually. It can be karmically effective, positively or negatively without being dedicated.

V: The person feels the merit towards themselves only, instead of...

S: Yes, so in what sense is it ineffectual?

V: Effective to the arising of the Bodhicitta.

S: Ahh, to the arising of the Bodhicitta. It is ineffectual from the Mahayana point of view. It is ineffectual as regards helping you follow the Mahayana path and become a Bodhisattva. It is effectual enough on the level of good deeds, yes, you get some good karma from that, you may even get to heaven or if you are following the Arhant path you may even reach Nirvana, but unless you dedicate the merits of that good action or virtuous deed to all living beings, then that virtuous action or that good deed is ineffectual as regards the living of the life of a Bodhisattva and the attainment of Enlightenment for the benefit of all.

So you transform your good deeds from being a means to heaven or a means to individual Nirvana, into being a means to perfect Enlightenment for the benefit of all by dedicating them. Always remembering other living beings at every stage and wishing to share the benefits and the merits accruing from your virtuous deeds with all. In this way you transform what would otherwise be a means to a purely individual attainment, into something much more universal, much vaster.

V: Do you say until it is dedicated it is ineffectual in helping to develop the Bodhicitta?

S: Yes. Well, no, I wouldn't put it even so narrowly as that, but ineffectual from the general Mahayana point of view. Ineffectual from the point of view of one's following the Bodhisattva path. It is not helping you overcome your basic, as it were, spiritual individualism. But that individualism is being strengthened so long as you think in terms of virtuous deeds to help me go to heaven, or virtuous deeds to help me gain Nirvana. You can only undo that spiritual individualism by sharing the merits accruing from your virtuous deeds with all. And to the extent that you undo spiritual individualism to that extent you are following the Bodhisattva path. Therefore, unless you dedicate the merits of your good deeds and share them with all, the virtuous deeds are ineffectual from the Mahayana point of view.

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V: It seems really that merits, in fact, are not something that you can actually transfer and give away, but it is something that you dedicate to the benefit, and in doing so that action can affect everyone else.

S: It represents a change of attitude on your part.

V: Yes, it affects your attitude which will affect other beings, which always affects other beings.

V: This is something that we should practice at the moment, even though we are...?

S: Yes, surely. For instance at the end of the Seven Fold Puja there is the dedication of merits.

V: I mean apart from that.



S: Apart from that yes, whenever possible. Whenever you feel that you have done a good deed.

V: I'm just [wondering] whether the word transferring is a bit misleading. It's as Ananda said earlier, he had a problem with merits, I think perhaps it is a genuine case, that people think in terms of giving merits away, well what are these merits? And it all does seem a bit silly.

S: I say personally the more literally you think about merits the better probably.

V: Then you have got something that you can actually give.

V: But on the other hand see, if you think that, you have accumulated all those merits and you are really growing and you are getting more merits by dedicating them to people, you can get a tremendous amount of confidence, it spurs you on to doing more and more. (S: Yes) But if you keep giving them away all the time...

S: Then they keep coming back, it's like the endless knot as I said the other day.

V: I think, is that not ... knowing a method to get, can it not be a trap in itself, thinking that way (V: Another trap) well I give it away so I am going to get more again.

S: Well even if you think about that at first never mind.

V: I think one of the points here is that the action will purify your motive for doing it anyway, presumably.

S: No, I thought it was the motive that purified the action.

V: But does it not also work in reverse? That is you do something which is objectively good, for whatever reason that it will...

S: I don't think it will necessarily purify the motive, [461] no. It may strengthen your tendency to do that particular thing but I don't think it will interfere with the motive amend (?) the motive. But a change of motive would show itself in the action itself, eventually.

V: Something I have noticed in connection with this is that if one does a lot of spiritual practice of some kind or another and builds up a lot of energy and gets very high and so on. But if there is still some unpleasant residue that hasn't been resolved, that will usurp all that energy and pervert it slightly, and you will become very, very powerful but possibly very inflated. For instance if there is a tendency to resentment because you get all this energy from your practice you will begin to build yourself up in order to become superior to everybody else. (S: Right, yes)

V: I was thinking about this the other day, actually. That in a way, I thought that maybe it was impossible to enter on to the Tantric path or the Vajrayana until you have at least the intentional Bodhicitta. Otherwise all that energy can destroy you.

S: Right, yes. Because of course this is very much the path of regular steps. That you don't enter upon the Vajrayana until at least, as you say, you have the intentional Bodhicitta and have done various other things as well. And have really gone for refuge.

V: I think all this shows how far, probably, we are from..., our attitude towards the spiritual life is very selfish probably for most, very self centred, we are very self-concerned. We are not really seeing our development in a larger context, how it will effect other people... (S: Yes)

V: That's probably due to this instability thing, you feel that everything is going to crumble away, I think that is what it is due to.

S: Yes, it is a sense of instability in a negative sense. Yes.

V: So in that light it is almost better to be spiritually not very advanced but quite clean and ...

S: Solid.

V: ... solid, than to build yourself up and become like Devadatta.

V: You become human(?).

S: This is one of the reasons why I have been saying lately that people ought not move about too much within the movement. Two or three years at least in one particular place, not be moving about all the time.

All right let's go on.

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"Geshe Ben-jag-pa advised himself: "As we do not have any influence over even today, do not count on living forever, venerable sir, and do not feel as 'mine' this illusory body. Reverend monk, do not hold as dual that which is without duality, and toward those who have not realized nonduality, generate love and compassion. Reverend monk, make valiant effort, for in this short life you sow the field for the crops of future lives."

S: So once again there is this emphasis on impermanence. We don't even have an influence over the day. It isn't within your power to say whether you will definitely go on living even today, not to speak of the future. So how can you feel that the body is yours, you have no control over it? An accident may happen, you may be run over by that proverbial bus, you have no control, you have no control over your own body even ... it can be taken away from you any time. So how can you say that it is your body?

V: I don't find that kind of reflection particularly elevating actually. (S: You don't)

V: It can be quite alienating, if someone doesn't like their own body...

S: Yes, one might be a bit careless about letting it fall under a bus. For people with a poor self image it might not be very helpful, or a poor body image of themselves.

I have mentioned before the instance of the girl who came along to a very early retreat and she was really taken by the Anatta doctrine. She had had some previous contact with Buddhism but she really loved the Anatta doctrine that there was no self. She came on retreat and we had several talks, she was into the meditation but she was also harping on this anatta doctrine and how she loved it. But one day after a meditation she came to me and she said, 'I have just realized the anatta doctrine, it's because I hate myself and I like to think that there is no me there, really. I hate myself so much that I would be more pleased if I just wasn't there. And the anatta doctrine tells me, or seems to tell me that you are not really there, there isn't any you, there is just an empty space where you think there is you.' And she said, 'that fitted in with my self hatred'.

So one has to be very careful about this, there are certain teachings, or at least certain presentations of teachings which can be taken in a psychologically negative way. I think in presenting the Dharma to people in the West we have to be very aware of this. It may even mean just putting to one side some quite time honoured presentation of the Dharma because they do just not produce a very positive effect on people in the West, at least some people in the West.

V: I think I have become particularly aware of the how likely it is I might get killed at any moment. Which makes me a little bit nervous.

S: Let's go on to the next precept then, it is a bit different.

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"When he was having an audience with Geshe Kha-ra-gom-chung, the "Victorious Teacher," Ye-shey-sung asked, "What is the way to devote one's life to the practice of Dharma?"

Geshe Kha-ra-wa replied, "There are three stages in the practice of Dharma: the initial stage is to not harm living beings; the middle stage is to help living beings; the highest stage is meditation on the significance of birthlessness, which is that living beings and oneself are undifferentiated."

S: That's quite interesting, 'the initial stage is not to harm living beings', ahimsa, the first precept, at least you can do that, don't harm other living beings. Which has got quite extensive implications. It reminds me of a little saying that I have quoted once or twice before that if you want to do anybody real harm, then fall in love with them. So it also suggests that you shouldn't get even emotionally involved with people in a way that is not going to be very good for them, which is even going to harm them.

Harming people doesn't just mean going and cutting their throat or hitting them over the head with a hammer. There are lots and lots of ways of harming people. The first step is to simply to stop harming people. So much of the time we are just harming people, at least harming them with our negativity, harming them with our general attitude of discouragement, all this is harming people.

So first of all just stop harming people, stop interfering with people, stop getting in people's way just let them alone. In most cases they are much better off without you, just stand aside and let them grow, as it were, just give them a bit of space, it's the best thing you can do for them in the early stages of your development, just keep out of the way. Don't do any harm. This is quite a positive step. You can only make things worse at the beginning. If you do help do it very unobtrusively in very simple, practical ways. Put no more than that, just concentrate on not doing any harm, that's the first step.

Do people ever feel this, that they are really doing more harm than good, (V: Yes) and that they can't really help very much, the best thing they can do is to keep out of the way? Yes, or not?

V: I've felt that when I thought I have been doing good, as it were, as it's been going along I have realized that I know that that is doing good and then I lose that stream and I really don't know and I lose confidence in that.

S: Well you don't know absolutely, in a mathematically predictable manner but if you have got a fair amount of positivity in you and a certain amount of insight as a result of your experience of life in general, the Dharma, of such situations, then the chances are you can help. But you can't be totally certain. That certainly isn't possible when you are dealing with other human beings, they are unpredictable. You can't guarantee that what you say is going to affect them in a certain way or not. But there can be a very reasonable [464] expectation based on your own knowledge of yourself and of the situation and of the Dharma, and of them.

V: Is it a good criterion to use..., judge whether you are being of help to them if they participate more in discussion, for instance? Is that necessarily a good lead?

S: It would depend what they were like before. If they were just withdrawn then it would be better for them to participate. They might be just waiting for an opportunity to speak but afraid of not making a good impression, and their speaking then or participating then wouldn't be so positive, it's difficult to generalize.

V: I find it very difficult to go out of my way to help somebody in a direct way. I feel that just

trying to relax with somebody, I feel is the only way I can.

S: Yes, sometimes this is in fact the most helpful thing one can do.

V: In the light of what you have just said, though, don't you think that one needs to have the courage to make mistakes in this area. (S: Well this too) Otherwise you are never going to learn what is more skilful or not. (S: Yes) I presume you are talking about beginners just then, not necessarily Order members.

S: No, I'm talking about beginners.

V: Quite often one is 'helping' (in inverted commas) somebody in order to make yourself feel good and big and clever.

S: Yes, again this professional attitude.

First of all make sure you are not harming others, and then actually just try to help them. Helping is not excluded, but that is a somewhat advanced stage. Don't take it for granted that you can help, that is the average person. Don't take it for granted that you are in a position to help except in very simple ways.

'The highest stage is meditation on the significance of birthlessness, which is that living beings and oneself are undifferentiated.' This of course brings in Sunyata, the Voidness.

So a negative stage, a positive stage and a supra-positive, transcendental stage. You could say the Hinayana, the Mahayana and the Vajrayana, if you wanted.

V: Is that the meaning of the phrase, 'cease to do harm, learn to do good and purify the mind.'?

S: One could make that analogy too, this is a very popular Buddhist verse. 'Cease to do all that is unskilful, (cease to do all evil) learn to do what is skilful, purify ones own mind. This is the teaching of all the Buddha's.'

'Sabbapapassa akaranam, Kusalassa upasampada, Sacitta pariyodapanam, Etam Buddhana sasanam.'

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It also suggests that there is a real difference between really genuinely helping people, being able to help, and just interfering. Interfering is not helping, very often we may think that we are helping when we are in fact just interfering. Also we must be very careful when [we] are even genuinely trying to help, that we just don't get entangled and don't become part of the situation that we are trying to resolve or to sort out. This can quite easily happen.

V: Can you give an example?

S: Well, for instance suppose two people have a quarrel and you just try to separate them and one of them picks on you, or maybe both of them pick on you. For instance, in this sort of way it is very inadvisable to get involved in the problems, or the sort of problems that arise between husband and wife. Unless you really know what you are doing, because the husband/wife relationship is a very peculiar one indeed, you can think that you are helping when you are getting involved in their problems and becoming part of that.

V: Actually a practical example of this reminds me of Vajradaka last week. He went out and tried to separate two dogs that were fighting and in the process got bitten.

S: Yes, not only bitten, he was quite shaken wasn't he?

V: I thought of a good one, of interfering with two lovers having a quarrel and falling in love with one of them.

V: Is that personal experience?

V: No it isn't actually.

S: But you do sometimes find that when you try to sort out somebody's problems in a very subtle and cunning, though quite unconscious way, they try to incorporate you with the problem. You must really be very careful of that.

All right let's go on then.

"Again, Geshe Kha-ra-wa said, "As a person who has no faith has no chance to develop excellence, one should rely upon the spiritual teacher and read the sutras. As a person who makes no effort has no chance to develop excellence, one should meditate on impermanence, and abandon laziness. As a person who has pride has no chance to develop excellence, one should be self-effacing and humble. If one does these things, one has the suitable basis to become a Sravaka, a Bodhisattva, or a practitioner of the Mantrayana - in short, one has the suitable basis for all excellence."

S: In other words faith, effort, humility, these three are being singled out as of special importance.

Do you think that what the Geshe says about the development of faith is really adequate? No doubt one does develop faith by relying on the spiritual teacher and reading the sutras, but is there no other way?

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V: Going for refuge.

S: Yes, going for refuge but there was something else even more familiar that I was thinking of.

V: Suffering.

S: Suffering, yes, but even more familiar than that. Well, the Kalyana Mitras, not just the spiritual teacher but one's brothers and sisters in the Dharma, those who are on the same level as oneself but with a more positive attitude and greater faith and devotion. Association with them also is very important, so one could possibly add that.

Reading the sutras, perhaps that includes puja too, it is not just reading them, it is chanting them presumably in the traditional manner. Then of course there is the meditation on impermanence as the means of getting rid of laziness.

What about this being self effacing and humble, how do people feel about this, it isn't exactly a very popular virtue nowadays is it, being humble, practising humility? Is it a very real virtue?

V: I think it is if one has practised the opposite. One has practised heroism and...

S: But is heroism the opposite, would you say? (V's No) It's a complement, rather.

V: Heroes should be humble.

S: Well a hero is humble.

V: I think most people have no idea what real humility is ...

S: It is a rather unfortunate word. Although perhaps I should say the associations of the word in the West are rather unfortunate. We tend to think of Uriah Heep.

V: Yes, wringing his hands.

V: It's more a case of being genuine in a way. (S: Yes) Just accepting the fact that you...

S: Yes, no false pride but no false humility either. Just seeing yourself in relation to others objectively. Seeing that you are a bit brighter than some not nearly so bright as certain others. So it is neither pride, nor humility. It is just a matter of fact so you accept that and recognize it.

V: It's not overvaluing or undervaluing, isn't it?

S: Yes. But humility shouldn't mean abasement, self-abasement or grovelling. But this is the connotation of the word, that 'I am a miserable sinner, I am a worm, trample upon me Oh Lord.' I was reading a book not so long ago about Charles Wesley, the brother of John Wesley, he wrote thousands of hymns but apparently most of them can't be sung in church any longer, including even some of the best ones, not without alteration anyway, because he habitually referred to human beings as 'we worms'. To the modern, this quite spoils the hymn. Even [467] Christians are no longer into this now. For instance there is a line which says, 'and worms aspire to sing thy praise', worms meaning we wretched human beings. We wretched human beings are regularly referred to as worms in these hymns.

V: I suppose it is a bit like, consider yourself a servant until others see you as a leader, don't make yourself out to be a leader.

S: But why consider yourself as a servant?

V: I don't say that as a kind of a..., the debating, it was quite a good thing.

S: But again there is a different connotation, isn't there?

V: Seeing oneself is [an] extremely important factor.

S: Yes, being objective about oneself, especially about oneself in relation to others.

Blake says, even, 'though art a man, God is no more, thine own humanity learn to adore'.

V: You must have been reading a lot of Blake lately!

S: I think I read that one when I was a boy.

Self-effacing, not pushing oneself forward unnecessarily.

All right let's go on.

"Again Geshe Kha-ra-wa said: "It is a mistake not to see that attachment is harmful, for it keeps us from rising from samsara. It is a mistake not to see that anger is harmful, for anger destroys the root of virtue. It is a mistake not to see that pride is harmful, for pride stunts the root of virtue, preventing the growth of excellence.

"Do not despise Giving; by Giving we obtain the spiritual pleasures of men and gods. Do not despise Moral Practice; by Moral Practice we obtain rebirth as a man or god. Do not despise Compassion, for it is the source of all the Mahayana teachings. Do not despise the Bodhisattva precepts, for the Bodhisattva vow is the special method of achieving perfect omniscience. Do not despise the Mantrayana vow, for through the Mantrayana one can quickly obtain the ordinary and superior Siddhis.

He also said, "The culmination of Wisdom (Ita-ba) is freedom from all assertions. The culmination of Meditation is freedom from all mental activities. The culmination of Deeds is freedom from all discrimination. The culmination of Practice is freedom from all superfluous experience."

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S: What do you think is meant by that last paragraph? It strikes a somewhat new note, or at least looks at things from a different point of view. 'The culmination of Wisdom is freedom from all assertions'. What do you think is meant by that? This actually harks back to quite early Buddhism, even to the Buddha's own teaching and also to the Madhyamika, freedom from all assertions.

V: Views.

S: All views, even right views in the sense of something you retain in your mind and which you have a feeling that you want to assert or lay down. You can produce views appropriate to the occasion as the occasion arises, you are complete in yourself. But there is no view that you are, as it were, holding in your mind ready.

V: ... you have nothing to say.

S: You have nothing to say. If you are asked a question then you reply, you respond, but actually you yourself have nothing to say.

V: Is that the culmination of Wisdom?

S: Yes, this is what it says. You have nothing to say, which does not mean that you insist on remaining silent of course. All the answers are in your being, you don't have to keep them in your head. It is just like someone who knows a subject very well, because he is completely at one with the subject, as it were. He doesn't mind being asked questions about it, he is ready for the questions but he doesn't have to keep all the answers in the mind. He has got complete confidence that he knows that subject, he is one with that subject and is able to deal with any question that arises.

V: Hiroshi (?) often used to say in lay initiation ceremonies, one day, in her initiation ceremony when she was being initiated they got the priests or Lamas all firing questions about the Dharma at her, she used to go into a complete state of non-thought, meditation, so that the answers would come without, not from conceptual sense but ... spontaneously.

V: But the reverse would in any case suggest that the doctrine was something apart from oneself, one's own experience, one's Insight.

S: Say that again.

V: The reverse of this part of the precept would suggest that the teaching, the doctrine is something separate from oneself, one's own life, one's own experience.

S: Well it is separate from oneself only to the extent that one isn't a Buddha. The Dharma is not inseparable from a Buddha, the Buddha is not inseparable from the Dharma. First of all there is only the Buddha, there is no Dharma, the Buddha has gained Enlightenment. If someone asks the Buddha a question and the Buddha starts communicating, then the Dharma comes into existence.

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V: It also indicates that if you really feel the spirit of this teaching you are not so likely to go out and put it across.

S: Yes. You are certainly ready to respond to a question, you are even ready to go out, as it

were and teach, but you don't have that neurotic urge to impose something that you believe on other people. That is quite a different thing. You don't have that missionary urge, though you may as a Bodhisattva be very, very active, but it is not with that sort of motivation. You do find that not only some of the more evangelical Christian sects having this neurotic motivation, but even some of the sects nowadays of oriental origin. A lot of the Divine Light people seem oriented or motivated in this way, it is really quite surprising, because it isn't very common in the East.

V: What's the Mantrayana vow?

S: These are the vows, or more properly the oaths which are taken on the occasion of the Tantric initiation, but these may vary from initiation to initiation and may to some extent depend upon the nature of the Buddha, Bodhisattva or deity to whom the initiation pertains.

'The culmination of meditation is freedom from all mental activities'. I think that is pretty clear isn't it.

V: In what sense do you think the word meditation is used here, concentration?

S: Samatha. 'The culmination of deeds is freedom from all discrimination', what do you think is meant by that?

V: ... compassion?

S: Compassion, yes.

V: ... ask yourself constantly what should I do, is it right or wrong.

S: It's a spontaneous activity. Also there is a suggestion of not discriminating between persons, say with regard to Dana, not discriminating between friends and foes, giving to all alike, equally. But it suggests perhaps, or most of all, spontaneous activity, that doesn't have to think first and then do, which just does. There is no prior discriminating mental activity, I should do this and shouldn't do that, one just acts. As even ordinary people do in an emergency, if there is an emergency you just act, you don't think, very often, you know at once what has to be done and you just do it. The knowing and the doing are the same thing.

V: It doesn't tire you when you do that.

S: 'And the culmination of practice is freedom from all superfluous experience'. What do you think is meant by superfluous experience? I suppose it means experience that does not conduce to Enlightenment. But what sort of danger do you think this draws attention to?

V: Getting caught up with experiences.

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S: Experiences for their own sake. There is a sort of popular miccha-ditthi that you have got to experience everything, especially before you take up the spiritual life, you have got to experience everything first. Have you ever heard this one? (V: yes) Oh have you, what have you said?

V: What have I missed out on.

V: Actually it is true in a way, if you want to take up the spiritual life it is best to experience them before hand because there is not much ...

S: But everything, do you think you can experience everything? (V: No)

V: You spend all your time chasing experiences and never start the spiritual life.



V: I think you do to a degree, certain human things that you are going to come across.

S: Do you? I mentioned in one of the previous seminars I had been reading a book about Buddhism in China, especially during the first fifty years of this century, and some investigation had been done by an American scholar. One of the surprising things he discovered, at least it surprised him, that the best monks, those who were the most sincere and who remained with the monastic life despite very great difficulties under the communists and so on, and who were most genuine in their devotion and who really cared for the spiritual life were those who had gone into it when very very young, when they were small boys. He said they were quite definitely almost a class apart. He was surprised because it did not tie in with his ideas as an American, but he noted the fact that this was one of the facts that emerged from his investigations.

So this certainly doesn't suggest that in order to be into the spiritual life genuinely you have got to have quite an experience of worldly life first. And what is that worldly life? You have it in a sense from the moment you are born.

V: I think maybe dukkha, in the sense that it comes out through pursuing worldly life, unless one has had some kind of Insight or vision ...

S: But suppose you happily pursue the spiritual life without experiencing dukkha.

V: Well, I mean greed, hate and delusion is greed, hate and delusion wherever it arises.

V: Well what happens then is there could always be lingering in your mind that although the scriptures might say this, that and the other, how do I really know, I don't know.

S: But apparently this didn't happen in these cases.

V: It presupposes that you have tremendous faith.

S: Well apparently [it] didn't happen in these cases. They entered the monastery when they were seven or eight and had no experience of worldly joys.

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V: Ahh that's different in a monastery, I was thinking in our own movement, where one is in contact with the world.

S: But you are in contact with it right from the beginning, aren't you?

(End tape 21)

V: It seems to come back to this being human ... in some ways, unless you are helping, you are living a stifled closed in life. There doesn't seem much chance you can get on to the spiritual path, you've probably never heard of it.

S: I'm not so sure about that. In the case of these monks, apparently most of them came from ordinary peasant families.

V: I think in that context I can see that, but not in the West. (S: Why not?) Well, not so much not in the West, but if you had a monastery and one could go into the monastery at eight or nine then I think, yes it could work, there is no reason why not. I am not holding that one has to experience everything, but if one is in contact..., the other side of the coin is denying ones... (pause)

S: Well for instance, to put it in a really extreme form, presumably not one of them had a girlfriend, much less still being married, all during his life. But still he had been a very good monk and progressed on the spiritual path, whereas most people would say that unless you

have had those normal, human experiences first you could hardly have got on to the spiritual life, there would be some unresolved hankering in your mind all the time; but it seems not to be the case.

V: But in the West there isn't the generally accepted idea that you can progress and there is a higher ideal, people...

S: But supposing you do feel that?

V: If you do then I think that is fine, if you have faith. If it comes from vision rather than dukkha, if it comes from vision you are going towards something, I think that's fine and that can be easily done, but I think with the majority of cases you have to come from a spur from behind of experiencing, seeing the unsatisfactoriness.

S: But what I am saying is that people question whether it is possible for someone to have a vision and to go forward because they have that vision from a very early age. People say that, no, that isn't possible, you have got to have the experience of worldly life first and then you can have some spiritual aspirations.

V: I think that vision is probably there in a lot of young children but that is not enough, you have got to go towards it, so they ... encouraged. (S: Yes)

V: It's very strong.

S: I certainly must say I noticed this in the States. I think you see it much more there, this sort of vision in very young people, especially somewhat hippie type of young [472] people but it does get stifled and smothered.

V: Even younger ones? (S: Yes)

V: They have had a genuine experience of disillusionment as opposed to disgruntlement.

S: No, I wouldn't even say that, not even that, it's just a positive vision, they are not disillusioned or disgruntled at all they are quite happy and positive but they are not attracted by worldly things and as soon as they come in contact with something spiritual at once they respond. (V's Yes) I think you do get this and of course the traditional Buddhist would explain it to some extent at least by referring to a previous existence. We don't find that very convincing always, but that would be the traditional explanation, at least a part of it.

V: I think also that the teens are a time when you do have aspirations and visions but because of the culture that you live in one is pulled very much into a different sort of life.

S: Ahh, yes. I remember after the Friends started, I got an invitation to a girls high school at Parliament Hill Fields, some of you might have been there, I mean not as pupils (laughter and confused voices) but anyway I spoke to the fifth and sixth forms. I think they were girls of fifteen, sixteen, maybe even some were fourteen but it was very extraordinary the amount of positive feeling and idealism and real interest And I thought [in] two or three years time most of them will have lost this. Maybe some of them will be married already and others will be in rather stuffy jobs and it will have evaporated, but it was there, very much so.

V: I think acid has had a good effect, one of the positive aspects.

S: I was even, I am afraid I rather shocked people on the first seminar, especially, I think it was the first one, I shocked Subhuti by suggesting that the Order was becoming a bit staid and saying that we ought to have a few young people. I said I thought maybe even some teenagers would be a good idea. I felt that if you are not careful despite your seriousness and your deep sincerity and genuineness you lose that youthful idealism and sparkle and verve. It goes really easily and that is really very necessary in a spiritual movement. A person of sixteen

could easily be quite intelligent enough and quite understanding enough to be able to commit himself or herself.

V: We have one or two people at Brighton like this, it's really refreshing to have them around you, they have life, vitality, enjoyment.

S: Yes, I encountered a few in Helsinki, just towards the end of my stay, they weren't more than seventeen or eighteen but there is a very different kind of freshness and vitality, as you say.

V: Yes, very much so, I am all for that...

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(Laughter and talking)

V: For all the wrong reasons!

V: It's almost like sometimes, these children, people who have this kind of vision and they, later on in life they find things difficult and you say 'you can't cope', but maybe they shouldn't have to cope with them in the first place, that there was no need for them and they are forced into situations which they..., which were totally irrelevant.

S: Yes, I was also describing, I think it was on that first seminar, how in Thailand how very often people join the monasteries. It is a quite different thing from what we would think here. That the monks were always going along to the people's houses to chant and the monks usually like small children so they are very kind to them. When the children are taken to the Vihara the monks usually give them sweets and look after them and play with them. The children naturally start really looking forward to going to the Vihara or temple, usually temple and Vihara are combined; and then instead of saying, 'if you are naughty you will have to go to Church twice today', people will say, 'if you are naughty I won't take you to the Vihara'. It's a quite opposite and in a way quite different psychology. The children think of a trip to the Vihara and meeting the monks as a sort of reward, something very pleasant and positive to look forward to. They think of the monks as very kind and very friendly and so on, much nicer than mummy and daddy, the monks never scold them and never speak harshly to them.

So, sometimes it happens that a little boy gets so enamoured of the monastery that he's always running off there, especially if it is at the end of the village as it usually is. He is always running off to the monastery, always wanting to be with the monks. In the end he feels that it is a nicer life than being at home and he wants to stay there always. In that way he becomes a monk, not with a grim idea of giving up the world and disillusioned with everything, and it's all dukkha. He just likes the monastery, he likes being with the monks, he likes that way of life, it seems so much more positive and happy and free.

V: It seems to me that if you are a spiritually developed person that's the way it would naturally go anyway. You shouldn't have to go down into the mire again, all over again.

S: This is why I am saying that I really do rather question this attitude which some people have that you must have quite an experience of worldly life otherwise you will go into spiritual life with the wrong motivation and so on and so forth. That may be so for people that you are trying to dragoon into spiritual life, who don't particularly want to get into it, but not with those who take to it spontaneously at a comparatively tender age.

So I think we should also be open to that possibility, that there may be some very young people coming in and not automatically adopt the attitude, 'you're much too young, you had better wait until you are grown up, another five or six or ten years and you've seen a bit of the world and then you'll be in a position to make up your mind'.

V: 'You've got to suffer a bit more!'

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S: Yes, it's not necessarily so. If someone is a bit doubtful, or even quite doubtful, yes, don't make up your mind just look round a bit more. But a very young person can be very sure.

V: Yes, it's not easy is it to know whether somebody is sure or whether it is a burst of enthusiasm. It might be anything next week or next month.

S: I think you do know. (V: Yes, you do). Or perhaps we just haven't had enough experience dealing with such people.

V: I think it is through lack of really spiritual..? that people do go seeking out... experiences, as a substitute.

S: And also they are encouraged to do it.

V: Do you not think it is good for young people to associate with people of their own age, or do you feel that there is a danger of them being a certain age and associating with people of older age..., not have that gradual experience of that...

S: But they do associate with people of their own age, don't they? I think it is wrong to think that they must only associate with people of their own age. Some young people really like associating with older people, they get much more out of it, I mean some, admittedly exceptional and they find the company of their contemporaries a bit boring.

So you shouldn't insist that they associate only with their contemporaries, if they feel like being around older people that is quite good, that's quite helpful. Not because they are dependant and infantile, I am not thinking of that. Some young people are interested and curious to find out things, and ask questions and so on.

Anyway, let's go on.

"Geshe Dra-gya-ba said, "If you wish to practise the Dharma sincerely, you must turn your back on the concerns of this life by constant meditation on impermanence. Though you may have happiness, pleasure, and fame in this life, if your mind is not directed toward the Dharma you will be deluded in everything you do. Thus you must quickly detach yourself from happiness, pleasure, and fame. If you totally renounce these things now, what you do in this life will be meaningful. If you do not renounce these things, though you may be known as a great meditator and teacher, holy and wise, your activities will only be worldly and you will merely fill your surroundings with junk; non virtuous and sinful deeds will arise naturally, and your life will gradually cease to accord with the Dharma. If you continue in this way, not thinking about death, you will die clinging to your enjoyments and will be reborn in a lower state of being.

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S: I can't help noticing that in the precept of the teachers after Atisha and Drom, they seem to be less imaginative.

V: It's got a heavier feel about it.

S: Yes, there seems to be a definite difference.

V: It seems to be a slightly more negative approach.

S: Yes, it does seem like that.

V: Pity they have to detach themselves from happiness.

S: Well, maybe that is a slightly unfortunate choice of words on the part of the translator.

V: Maybe it is directed more now towards monks as opposed to laymen. Drom himself being just an Upasaka.

S: But he was speaking to monks sometimes. No I don't think it's that. I just feel as though the tradition is hardening just a little bit.

V: It doesn't seem to have so much life in it.

V: ... a complete teaching.

S: Yes, not so complete, it is more an emphasis on one particular theme, which no doubt needs to be emphasized, or maybe it was necessary in those days. Maybe they were fully justified in emphasizing these things, they were addressing certain specific people. But perhaps it isn't an emphasis that is so helpful to us.

V: It's spoken to, maybe you may be known as a great meditator and teacher, it could be spoken to somebody who has been in it for some time.

S: Yes, right and perhaps not in the best possible way.

All right let's carry on then.

"When you have achieved understanding of impermanence and have renounced worldly aims, you can achieve your purpose although you may not be renowned for cleverness or holiness. When you die, by the strength of having prepared for death beforehand, you will die with happiness and pleasure, unhindered by any attachment.

"Therefore, keeping impermanence in mind, look and see if what you have done previously, are doing now, and will do in the future is involved with concerns of this world. If your activities are entangled with these concerns, they are defiled by fettering passions; you must stop pretending that such activities are religious practice. To abandon such activities you must cultivate heedfulness, which consists of continuous, careful remembrance and watchful discernment."

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S: This paragraph seems especially directed against pseudo-religious activities. The dates of these teachers aren't given but it may well be that this is sometime after Atisha and things haven't perhaps exactly degenerated, but certainly people were needing to be kept up to scratch.

"If you are motivated by desire for the things of this life, however much effort you make, in the tomorrow of death you will be empty-handed. Therefore recognize that death is imminent and do actual religious practice.

"When you practice the Dharma, you cannot be certain which will come first, next year or your next life. Therefore, before next year, donate all your material goods to the Sangha. Confess and cease all wrong-doing. Focus your mind on your aim. Make great effort in your religious practice. Pray sincerely that whatever you do will be for the benefit of living beings. There is no other method of action."

S: It is probably quite positive to think that you may not be here next year, but probably not so positive to think that you may not be here next minute. A year at least gives you a reasonably amount of time, you don't feel too hurried or too rushed. But anyway, the Geshe isn't going to be satisfied with that, as we'll see.

"You cannot be certain which will come first next month or your next life. Therefore, before next month, do as I have just said. You cannot be certain which will come first, tomorrow or your next life. Therefore, before tomorrow, do as I have just said. As we cannot be certain

even of this evening, this very day give your material goods to the Sangha. Confess your sinful activities, pray sincerely, meditate. There is no other method of action.

"From the time of birth, you move toward death. As you cannot know when death will come, you must always do religious practice as if you were going to die this evening."

S: perhaps this is all the more appropriate in a society where life expectation was very short. With all sorts of epidemics and so on, you might be whisked off at any time. We might be too, but then our chances of survival for a relatively longer period are probably somewhat higher. So I still say what I said earlier on, think in terms of a year, you may be wrong but it is a reasonable expectation that you have got a year, to get really into it.

V: Perhaps this particular Geshe was just down to his last ounce of flour!

S: All right, let's go on.

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"Geshe Nay-sur-pa said: "As you will not reach Buddhahood by conceiving of others as your adversaries, you must realize that all living beings are your mother and father. As you will not obtain Buddhahood by the habitual concepts of the ordinary mind, you must realize that all sentient beings are deities. As you will not obtain Buddhahood by distinguishing attributes, you must realize that Voidness is the nature of all living beings."

S: This is the first time we have come up against the idea of realizing that all sentient beings are deities. Do you think this is a very practicable attitude for people nowadays?

V: Not in the sense of deities.

V: They don't believe in deities.

S: Deities here means especially in the sense of Buddha's and Bodhisattvas.

V: I was going to say not specifically in that sense but the spirit of that, I think, would be very useful, to have a devotion for people. To see them as worth..., as spiritual beings.

S: There's also a corollary here, or rather this attitude itself is a corollary of something else, which is that you experience yourself as a deity. There is of course a practice in Vajrayana meditation of this kind, which is called self generation. You generate yourself into the deity and meditate on yourself as the deity and when you come out of that you see the whole world, the whole universe as a pure land and all other beings also as deities, Buddhas Bodhisattvas and so on.

What I think we must be careful is that we don't just sentimentalise and pretend that we really do see people like this when we don't. It is probably better, from our point of view to think in terms of potentiality. That everybody has got a potentiality and this can be encouraged, this can be developed. But for us to say that we see all other living beings as gods and goddesses, this is probably a bit too much and it wouldn't be very honest, it would be a rather artificial attitude that we adopted.

Just try to see sincerely the genuine potentiality that others had.

V: It may not be too difficult with some people at least, the more positive people, to see them like that.

S: But as Buddhas and Bodhisattvas? (V: Ahh, well no.)

V: It could be a bit freaky, actually. I think unless you have got a lot of metta it could be quite frightening. Rather it's best, I think, to see people as human beings.

S: The idea of human being includes the idea of the possibility of further development. (V: Yes)

V: I remember that [478] ... used to teach this very much, that all beings are Buddha all human beings are actually gods in a sense.

S: Yes, well he is still teaching it, I believe.

V: If you speak to someone and say they are a Buddha and they are not very skilful, but ... you are a Buddha, they don't feel that, they probably feel bad and you make matters worse.

S: May feel just alienated.

V: Surely it's a question of having that attitude, at least in potentiality. Not actually saying that they are a Buddha, you may not say it with full understanding of what it means anyway itself, let alone them understanding it.

V: People are very easily, can very easily latch on to these sorts of things ...

S: Yes. Well it's a question of your having an attitude towards other people's potentiality and really feeling that they could develop.

V: What is happening when one does see somebody as a Bodhisattva, actually experiences it like that?

S: Well if that happens what you see is you see somebody as a Bodhisattva. (V: What actually) If you really see them as a Bodhisattva that is what is happening, but I think that is very, very rare.

One can use Bodhisattva very loosely meaning a nice kind person, but it is much more than that really.

V: Surely when one's conceptual realization of what a Bodhisattva is all the time being elevated, anyway.

S: Yes, right.

V: I think possibly a more approachable way to do it for us is to visualize beings as containing ... not actually being that Bodhisattva but having.., like one point when I was doing my Vajrasattva practice ... I felt quite into this. Seeing all beings as physically containing the image of Vajrasattva, in the heart of everyone.

S: That represents their potentiality.

V: Some painters do see it like that don't they, ... with all the beings, hundreds of Bodhisattvas?

V: Inside their bodies?

V: No, I mean, descriptions of thousands of Bodhisattvas present and all the devas and everything, a sort of assembly.

S: But that is not exactly seeing ordinary human beings as Bodhisattvas. The Bodhisattvas they depict are generally recognized Bodhisattvas, those who are actually Bodhisattvas.

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V: I think if you study some of the Tibetan drawings of teachers who, for instance, are popularly believed to have been Bodhisattvas, very careful line drawings, and you study them

to see what they indicate and then you study other people quite carefully, you can see suggestions, sometimes.

S: Hmm, slightly Bodhisattva-like traits. Also it means seeing the positive side of people. It doesn't mean pretending that the negative side isn't there but seeing the positive side too which is often overlooked.

I think what one must be careful not to adopt in an artificial way what is fundamentally a false attitude that you don't have any real conviction in. Say, 'well they are all Bodhisattvas', using this sort of language but actually it is not very real. You get this in some spiritual circles, luckily we don't encounter them very often.

"Geshe Lang-ri-tang-pa said, "As one person cannot truly take the measure of another, do not criticize anyone. As all the Buddha's teachings are effective, do not discriminate between them, saying that some are good and some bad. As all the deeds of the Mahayana are for the benefit of all beings, do not weaken the armour of the Bodhisattva path. As you cannot lead others until you have achieved stability yourself, make effort and meditate in isolation."

S: Do you think one should never criticize anybody under any circumstances, or not? (V's: No) You don't think that, so what do you think is meant here?

V: Have a negative attitude towards them, an attitude of ill-will.

S: Hmm, yes. You can criticize certain things that someone does or says but you shouldn't criticize the person as a whole because you can't, as the teacher says, you can't truly take the measure, the total measure of another. You can certainly say, 'well that action was unskilful' but you can't say 'you are an unskilful person'. If you do criticize any specific thing it must be within a context of an overall positive attitude towards that person. You must be sure about that.

So are all the Buddha's teachings effective?

V: Not all equally for a particular person.

S: Yes, so you certainly shouldn't say that some are good and some are bad, but you can certainly recognize that some are more appropriate to you and to others, perhaps, than certain other teachings.

V: Sorry, what was the reason why you can't criticize one's being, one's person?

S: Because it suggests a totally negative attitude towards that person. It suggests that everything in them is negative, everything is unskilful, but this is never the case. There is also something which escapes criticism, something which is [480] positive, so you can only criticize specific things. You may be right or wrong about your criticism but in principle you can criticize specific things, a particular unskilful action or thought or word. But you can't ever criticize the person totally because no one is completely bad.

V: Is there any specific practice apart from metta for developing a general positive emotional attitude to people?

(Break in tape)

S: I think whatever one can do in this way will be reducible to metta in one form or another. If you have the metta you have all these methods.

V: I was thinking of something that one could do ... within the context of the quick, instantaneous situation. Outside in the world, you just meet someone and you haven't time to develop the whole practice obviously and I thought maybe reflect on a certain thing.



S: Smile, you can smile at them, shake them by the hand, pat them on the back.

V: I think if you are practising the metta, regularly sitting then you won't have to think about these things, that these things would happen spontaneously in your everyday life. (V: Well, provide the context ... ) Well I mean you would be transforming your attitude through your regular practice, so you won't have to think what can I do because you will be doing it.

V: Yes, well I was assuming, accepting that one is doing that practice. I was thinking more in terms of a more specific thing that one can ...

V: That's like looking for more, you've already got a practice, why look for anything more, you've already got something to do.

V: Perhaps it is a case of finding out maybe what's getting in the way of the flow of metta.

V: In my experience it's just not seeing the person ..

V: It may also be the trying to, how shall I say it, deriving..., feeding yourself from the other person rather than feeding them, rather than having an attitude of giving towards them.

V: Feeding yourself?

V: Yes, in other words expecting something from other people rather than developing a positive attitude towards them.

V: I think it is a question of seeing them, of actually communicating with them.

V: I think that is a very, very general sort of question, I think we have to be much more specific. I think [481] your original question is much too general and vague.

V: I was trying to find something more concrete within a particular situation which for me, like a mantra, obviously the metta practice is the root of that, the basic thing.

V: Probably if you are looking for..., if you are looking to do all the right things, to say all the right words in a situation... Someone has said this to me, you know, that I couldn't find any words that conveyed the meaning so, yes, you are just looking for...; 'what do I say in this situation and what do I say in that situation,' you have already all the tools at hand. There's nothing spontaneous in it, you think, 'right I can say this in this situation and if this situation comes up I can say that', there's nothing really coming from yourself. It's just all ...

V: I've found with my own practice of metta that it is necessary for me to realize what I feel towards people initially, first of all, before I start developing metta, otherwise it is all kind of..., you can feel it in the practice you have got this sickly grin on your face.

S: Well whether they are friend, neutral or enemy.

All right let's move on,

"Geshe Sar-ba said, "As women are the root of the fettering passions, do not rely on them. As wine is the root of the fettering passions, do not drink. As travel is the root of the fettering passions, do not take many trips. As accumulation of possessions is the root of the fettering passions, abandon material attachments."

V: Strong medicine.

S: Anything not clear here, anything in doubt? 'As wine is the root of the fettering passions do not drink.' This is something, I think we haven't discussed for quite a long time. Maybe there is no need to.

V: Maybe we should drink. (laughter)

S: No, I was rather thinking that we were just not drinking.

V: I think it probably occurs.

V: The need or wish for wine is ... it just isn't there.

S: Well, for alcohol, let's say. Are you specifying wine particularly as opposed to beer or? (V: No, just...)

V: People do drink but not too ... I don't think they are absolutely tee total but.

S: I think that if you feel that you may not be able to observe the limit, that is your limit, then it is wiser to be tee total. But if you are able to observe your limit quite well without any difficulty then a small amount of social drinking occasionally [482] probably doesn't do any harm. Although as you get more and more into meditation you may find even that not possible, in which case you will just stop, no one will need to tell you.

V: Just drink if you are thirsty.

S: What do you think is meant by not relying on women? Let's discuss it in terms of women first and then in terms of men.

V: Well if you are relying on women then it means that your consciousness is limited to the world of desire.

S: It also means that you are not relying on yourself.

V: Rely is the main word.

S: Rely, yes. And the same the other way around. If you are relying on men if you are a woman then you are not relying on yourself. So the great thing is to rely on yourself. But when it is specifically a person of the opposite sex then what sort of reliance is that?

V: Emotional.

S: It's emotional dependence.

V: It's taking.

S: Yes, it's taking, it's taking rather than giving.

V: We may have to rely on men to do certain kinds of jobs that a woman can't manage.

S: Men might have to rely on women in the same way but that is not relying on men as men or women as women in the sort of emotional sense. You are just relying on someone who has got a certain skill or ability that you don't have.

V: If you don't do that then it amounts to a pseudo-independency. You don't see your own limits in a situation.

S: Yes, because you can be emotionally relying on someone for whom you do everything, practically.

V: That's quite often the case as well.

V: You are relying on them not to be angry with you, always to treat you kindly.

S: You might be telling the world, 'look how dependent they are on me,' maybe a man, maybe a woman, 'look how dependent they are on me, I do everything for them', but the fact may be that you are emotionally dependent on them even though you are doing everything of a practical nature for them. So it is the emotional dependence. Not in objective reliances, it's all right to rely on somebody else to do something for you which you are not able to do for yourself and which needs to be done and which you can quite reasonably expect. There is nothing wrong with that, it is quite objective dependence.

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But subjective, i.e. emotional dependence is, again, if it is neurotic, something that you must get over. One must also, though, recognize that you need a certain amount of human contact, and I am not referring to contact specifically with the opposite sex. But before you can develop as an independent human being you need to be objectively dependent, at least when you are small, when you are a child. Otherwise it is difficult to be independent. If you leave the child alone too early in life then that will only cripple the child's emotional development, probably make him more dependent later on in life.

So one must be careful not to apply this too extremely or cruelly. For quite a long time we do objectively depend upon other people, even emotionally. But if it is just a normal human, an objective dependence, that's all right, but eventually we must be able to grow even out of that.

V: What about the other way around, where one perhaps has a Mitra or a Friend who shows a great deal of affection and warmth towards oneself?

S: Well sometimes the line of division between what is objective dependence, as I call it, and subjective dependence is very difficult to detect, exactly where one ends and the other begins. But there is a difference, a distinction between the two things. You can expect quite reasonably as a human being, a certain amount of consideration and warmth from others and this is necessary to you, just as an ordinary human being. So there is this possibility without it being a neurotic dependence. But when you have to have it all the time and you are very unhappy if you can't have it in the way that you want it, then that becomes subjective and neurotic.

You might like to be with a certain person but if you can't bear to be away from them and always clinging on to them and always hanging around them, can't bear to be separated, then that becomes neurotic.

V: In a sense that someone with whom one does develop a real friendship one feels very close to all the time whether you..., you feel the sort of current of their thought and being to some extent.

S: That's true.

V: So how can you say they are separated or independent, or should they be anyway in that sense?

S: You mean physically separated?

V: No, not particularly, is it in a sense wholesome or even right?

S: It isn't so much that they are even interdependent, but you are just on the same wavelength, which is a different development and you don't need to be together, necessarily. Sulochana was going to say something. You seemed to be quite disagreeing.

Sulochana: It was something about dependence when small. Children are only physically dependent on their parents.

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S: No, I think they are emotionally dependent too in a healthy way at the beginning, when they are very small. They say that babies that are brought up without any love and affection, they are stunted.

Sulochana: Yes, but I meant that they are not dependent on something coming from the parents all the time...

S: Yes, but the suggestion isn't that even when it is healthy that you need it all the time, but you need it sometimes.

Sulochana: But I don't see how you can not be.

S: It is just a fact that very small children or babies, especially, are brought up without any affection they just don't do well, they even die.

Sulochana: Without anyone there, if they are alone in the woods?

S: Yes, even if they are well looked after, hygienically handled and all that and fed regularly but there is no human attention and warmth and love, for want of a better word, they don't even survive sometimes. That's what I call the objective dependence.

(end side 1)

Sulochana: It seems it's confused with a kind of clinging, they don't cling.

S: Well right, this is why I distinguish between what I call objective dependence and subjective dependence. The subjective dependence is the clinging. So babies do objectively depend, yes, they need objective warmth, objective love and if they get that they won't cling and they will grow up healthy. But if they don't get it they are more likely to cling.

Sulochana: People say though that they are getting lots and lots of attention and warmth which they are not.

S: They may just be getting external attention but not real warmth, yes.

V: This is where, it corresponds with the case of small babies being separated from their mothers in hospital for instance, shortly after the child is born, instead of being given straight to their mothers as would seem to be natural, for a couple of days they are looked after by the nurses.

S: Yes, it seems so stupid. One really wonders why these things happen. Because the mothers sometimes say, so I have heard (V: They get very upset) ... not only get very upset, when they actually get the child they can't take to it, they can't even feed it just because of that short break of a couple of days. One just wonders why these things are allowed to happen. It seems to be a matter of common sense, you just keep the baby with the mother.

V: It's also suggested to them that they may not be able to feed the baby which is a terrible thing to say.

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S: Yes, it really seems ridiculous.

V: You sometimes get babies, you get the reverse situation where the babies won't accept the mother, the warmth of the mother.

S: Do you think that really does happen? Assuming that it is a healthy baby and a healthy love.

V: It happened with me, I never let my mother handle me.

S: Ahh, what about when you were a baby.

V: Not right from the word go apparently.

V: Previous life.

S: Must be.

V: When you were very very small, you couldn't move, she would hold you, how could you control that.

V: This is only what I have been told, it was right from the word go, almost ...

V: 'You've never wanted me, right from the very beginning, you've never wanted me, I know' (laughter)

V: You weren't thinking of your mother in ...

S: You must have been a sweet baby.

V: Weren't you known as the old man?

V: They called me old man ... the nurses, because apparently I just used to lie and stare at the ceiling. It was in a nursing home.

S: Perhaps you were just a very happy and positive child and you just didn't need that, maybe you were quite complete in yourself.

V: What happened! (Laughter)

S: You felt that you were just being interfered with, and hugged and smothered and all that sort of thing in a messy sort of way.

V: You've just forgotten.

S: But anyway, to come back to the point that I was making, the fact that we mustn't be emotionally dependent upon others as adults in a neurotic way, doesn't mean that the average human being doesn't quite objectively depend on others and quite reasonably depend on others, other human beings, for a certain amount of emotional warmth, sympathy, friendship and so on. All of which is necessary to human development.

V: Up to what sort of age, is it possible to [486] say or to generalize?

S: I really don't know enough about children to be able to say. But I wasn't thinking about children specifically, adults, ordinary adults need, quite objectively, a certain amount of friendship and contact and sympathy from others. The only thing is it should not be neurotic dependence. It should be something that you should be able to do without, at least from time to time. But in the name of independence you shouldn't deprive yourself of objective emotional support which you actually need for your development.

V: It's rather extreme, isn't it?

V: It's difficult to know where the balance lies.

S: You may not know the exact fine point of balance but if you get into a rather extreme situation you will certainly know.

V: What you mean, when the people you are with are quite unable to give you the sort of support that you know you need?

S: No, I wasn't thinking that. But the great test is, can you go away and be on your own for a month and be perfectly happy, that's the test. If you can you are a healthy human being and are just drawing from others quite objective and quite reasonable emotional support.

All right let's go on.

V: What about travel ... ?

S: Well travelling, I think just idle wandering hither and thither, restlessness. Expose yourself to all sorts of temptations. It is well known in Buddhist circles that people never break the precepts so much as when they are on pilgrimage.

V: Even going down to Purley from Aryatara, there is always a cake shop.

S: Hmm, to say nothing of those who go down to Aryatara. (laughing)

On we go then.

"Geshe Cha-yul-pa said, "Maintain pure Moral Practice, as it is the foundation of the path of liberation and enlightenment. Practice Bodhi-mind, for it is the vital force of that path. Always make effort to accumulate merit and wisdom, for they are the ladder up that path. Always rely upon the spiritual teacher, as he is the guide on that path."

S: There is one quite striking expression here, 'practice Bodhi mind for it is the vital force of that path.' It is a very good way of thinking of the Bodhicitta, as a vital force that is inspiring and moving all your activities.

V: I remember you saying in one of your lectures, I can't remember which one, Bhante, but about the vital force [487] being, or the view that vital.., of the nature of life as depending upon vital forces. Being in some sense force.., what was the point there?

S: It was simply that the philosophical conception of vitalism, that is to say the doctrine of Bergson and others in the twentieth Century, did certainly not have the depth and spiritual significance of the Mahayana conception of Bodhicitta even though it was an advance from a purely mechanical explanation of things. That was from the lectures on the higher evolution of man, there was the mechanistic explanation of existence and the vitalistic. I said that the vitalistic had certain positive features but it didn't go far enough, didn't go as far as the conception of Bodhicitta.

All right I think one more precept and then we had better close for the morning.

"Geshe Cha-yul-pa said, "Object and subject are like sandalwood and its fragrance. Samsara and Nirvana are like ice and water. Appearances and Voidness are like clouds and sky. Voidness and habitual thoughts are like the ocean and its waves."

S: The object and subject are inseparable, this is what it means. Just like sandalwood and its fragrance, because sandalwood is fragrant itself. Samsara and Nirvana are like ice and water, this can be misunderstood, of course. It can be interpreted in a very substantialist sort of way, one has to take the meaning in the spirit of it rather than the word. "Appearances and Voidness are like clouds in the sky. Voidness and habitual thoughts are like the ocean and its waves".

In other words we think in terms of pairs of opposites but these pairs of opposites don't reflect any actual duality in existence itself.

V: I think the ice and the water one is very good. In fact I have been using this in ... meditation. I think it is very good because it shows that point that it is essentially the same substance but a different phase.

S: But I think that is the sort of thing that we must be careful about taking literally. It is all right as an analogy, all right if we take it poetically, a figure of speech, but not that there is an actual substance that undergoes these transformations otherwise we get into real difficulties.

V: It is significant that he uses just images in this one, just to give a feeling.

S: Yes. Perhaps we shouldn't analyse it too much, just think about sandalwood and its fragrance, ice and water, clouds and sky, ocean and waves, and not conceptualize it too much.

I think we are making rather slow progress but probably from tomorrow we shall move on to the remaining work much more rapidly.

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"Geshe To-lung-pa said, "If you desire liberation from the depths of your heart, you must follow the holy rather than the clever teacher. You must follow the one who devotes himself to the Teaching rather than the one who explains it, the one who is humble rather than the one who has great position, the one of faith rather than the one famous for his intelligence. There is no harm if you do not know the Teaching, but misfortune will come if you follow those whose actions are contrary to the Dharma."

S: So what relevance do you think this has now, can you think of any particular application? Even among the Tibetans, apparently there were, there certainly are at present, some who were Geshes, very learned in the teaching but who in a sense didn't really believe it. I remember Dhardo Rimpoche telling me how he had known in Tibet very famous Geshes who knew all the scriptures but who were very sceptical about karma and rebirth, for instance. And didn't believe in incarnate Lamas and even used to scoff at the incarnate Lamas quite openly and say that they didn't believe in them and that they were just little boys who had been somehow picked out and designated incarnate Lamas and they knew nothing of the Dharma compared with the Geshes.

So you have got the learned class, as it were. What do you think that corresponds to now?

V: The Buddhist society.

S: No! I wasn't thinking of that at all, I wouldn't regard them as learned (laughter) No, I was thinking of the scholar, the academic approach to Buddhism. People who certainly know the text and in a sense know the teaching, but there is no faith. In modern times such people often have the monopoly of exposition. They may be clever and they may be able to explain the teaching very well but they don't really believe in it and they don't really practice it or try to practise it. Sometimes one is expected to accept such people as authorities.

V: How is faith demonstrated in practice?

S: By practice, you go for refuge, you observe the precepts, you meditate, you observe right livelihood, etc. Vajrabodhi is, or has been rather up against this in Helsinki there is a young professor at the University who really considers himself as the authority in Finland on Buddhism. He looks rather askance at Vajrabodhi, how can he know anything about Buddhism he's only a Buddhist, he is a blind follower, he hasn't a scientific objective, impartial knowledge about it. He really considers himself the authority and he is not at all happy about Vajrabodhi actually teaching Buddhism when he hasn't got a degree in that particular subject. He doesn't know Sanskrit and Chinese, and he thinks that Vajrabodhi has got really no right to be talking about Buddhism at all.

V: And Vajrabodhi thinks the same of him, presumably.

S: Yes. And when Vajrabodhi tried to get his translations [489] of my Three Jewels accepted by a Finnish publishing house he was told that they would prefer a book on Buddhism that was not written by a Buddhist because they wanted an objective account. And we accept this sort of thing, it's in so many different fields.

V: I think it is more, I think it is encouraged and preferred.

S: Yes. In this country it is not so bad, the academic does not have the prestige that he has on the continent, in many parts.

V: I can't understand that a person could actually, say a scholar who obviously has very widely read the subject and also has his own life to contend with, how it can't affect him. I can't understand that.

S: It really does seem extraordinary, doesn't it? But they seem to regard it just as so much grist for the academic mill, as raw material for theses and books and articles. This is one of the things that really struck me when I first came into contact with Buddhist scholars, that is scholars in Buddhism in India, was how completely out of keeping their attitude towards their subject seems to be with the subject itself. They were so intolerant, had such hostility towards one another. It really shook me, in a way there seemed to be no feeling for the Dharma at all, in most cases, there were a few exceptions but most scholars seemed to be totally insensitive towards the Dharma as such, it's just a sociological phenomenon.

V: One would have thought that it might even serve as a vehicle for communication, at the very lowest level. But even that is apparently not so in this case.

S: No, and they often used to get involved in really side issues. They might have been quite important from a historical point of view but not from the Dharma point of view. Like the date of Ashoka's accession, they really get involved in that and absorbed and so on.

No doubt it's quite good to know the date of Ashoka's accession, it does help tie up a lot of history of Buddhism but they wouldn't have that sort of feeling and that sort of interest about some purely Dharma matter.

V: Is this the very fact of having the faculties that enable one to be a scholar, is it that that goes against the Dharma, if you like, is it that that makes them blind?

S: No I think you can't blame the individual scholar, he's in a way also himself a victim, he's been trained in a certain way, he's been brought up in a secular culture which does not explicitly recognize spiritual values. And he is, by virtue of the fact that he is an academic, a man of somewhat developed intellect if not intelligence. I noticed in the case of quite a few of these scholars a highly developed critical intellect and completely underdeveloped emotions, a lot of negative emotion.

V: This is what I was trying to say, that is it [450] the very fact of using that faculty to that extent which in fact blocks them from having a feeling for the Dharma?

S: It could be, it could be that their whole academic training has been intellectual.

V: But there have been in the history of Buddhism, people with very well developed intellects and very strong faith. (S: Yes) So the one doesn't necessarily cancel out the other.

S: No. So one can even say that these academics are not people of real intellectual capacity, real intellectual capacity is a quite different thing. I don't think you will ever get real intellectual capacity on the part of a one-sidedly developed person.

V: What do you mean by real intellectual capacity?



S: Creative intellectuality, like that of Plato or Kant or Nagarjuna. An academic is not an intellectual, usually, very, very rarely is an academic an intellectual. There is no original thought, no creative thought. He is just a purveyor, a turner over of historical fragments.

V: He's more of a sorter out.

S: A sorter out, as Dr Johnson said, 'a journeyman of literature'.

V: The creative intellect, then, is one that is able to synthesize.

S: Yes, and to interpret, and recreate, represent.

V: So as a real intellectual is creative, therefore he must have a very strong feeling.

S: I think so, an integrated feeling element, and probably you can say the word intellectual has been greatly debased and it means someone who has had a University education and is rather clever at manipulating ideas. But this is not a real intellectual, it is a debased usage of the word, he is just a rather clever person who has been to University, he's not really an intellectual.

V: What about the people in the West who do write about Buddhism, and who are scholarly like Conze and Guenther, are they actually ... as well?

S: They certainly are Buddhist and they have got more feeling for their subject than most, but even they are not integrated. I mean Guenther, he was one of the people who shocked me at the beginning. His sweeping views on all other Buddhist scholars that I cared to mention, I was quite taken aback. For instance, I mentioned, 'well Professor so and so, what do you think of him?' 'He is a complete ignoramus', this was the first time I met Guenther, which was in 1950. I said, 'what do you think of Dr so-and-so's work', he said 'he doesn't know a thing', 'and Professor so-and-so' 'he doesn't know single word of Sanskrit.' Well actually the chap had translated texts from the Sanskrit.

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V: Well if you read some of Guenther he can't even write good English.

S: Well he is an Austrian (V: Oh) (laughter) Conze writes very good English.

V: Is Conze not English then?

S: Not of English descent, though he was born in London, he was educated in Germany.

V: Have they actually taken any refuge? I know Marion Matics has taken ...

S: Well certainly Conze and Guenther consider themselves as Buddhists but how real the going for refuge is to them I just don't know, I can't say, but certainly they have got more feeling for their subject than most. The Buddhist scholars who in my opinion have had most feeling for their subject have been Tucci and Snellgrove, who was a pupil of Tucci and perhaps it is not without significance that Tucci is an Italian.

V: Is he still alive?

S: No. But you get a very great feeling from his work. And Grimm had great feeling for his subject too and was a practising Buddhist.

V: It seems that in all these cases, from the very limited and very little reading I have done of all them, that they are all to some extent bound by their Christianity. Or the theism.

S: Some are, some are not even bound by that. If a man writes a book about Buddhism from a

convinced Christian standpoint it has got some life in it, you can make allowances for his Christianity and deduct that. You can have a quite decent book about Buddhism written by a man who believes in some other spiritual tradition. But you can't have really a good book about Buddhism written by someone who doesn't believe in any spiritual tradition at all. Because then Buddhism is just a sociological, anthropological curiosity.

There is also the effrontery of believing that they can know all about Buddhism and understand it and expound it, without any feeling for it and without any practice of it. I feel more and more that we must protest against this attitude, that people who are professors of comparative religion and what not, they do not know anything about Buddhism, they are not authorities on Buddhism.

For instance, if you write a book on Buddhism and submit it to a publisher he will get it read. If it is a book on Buddhism where will he send it to be read, he will get some lecturer on comparative religion to read it and report back on it whether it is worthy of publication. He won't ask a Buddhist to read it, he'll ask an academic to read it.

V: So if it had elements of faith, probably the academic will react against it.

S: Yes, yes and will say this is a one sided book, it is [492] a prejudiced book, it is a biased book, it is not objective, it is not scientific.

V: You get this with Buddhist art, too.

V: Isn't this a misuse of the word objective?

S: By objective is meant an attitude which excludes all feeling, objective in this sense is quite alienated, you could say. 'This book has not been written by a computer', this is what they are saying when they say it is a Buddhist book and it is not acceptable it is written by a Buddhist, it is not objective, it hasn't been written by a computer, as it were.

I feel more and more, as it were, annoyed about this, I see it more and more clearly.

V: Have you had any more recent thoughts about what we should do about it, or what we can do about it.

S: I don't think, frankly, you can do anything at the present, only I can and this is one of the reasons I have started up this series of book reviews, which I hope to extend.

V: Are you going to review that book by Walpola Rahula?

S: Yes, I am half way through it, I had to break off to go to Helsinki, I hope to get back to it, it'll be a very lengthy one. (V: Good)

V: I felt a bit angry when I was ... had to go back to school and I thought there was some way of seeing that he had some instruction, Buddhist instruction and I thought that there was some law to say that one could insist that he should have this, but...

S: I am not sure about the present position.

V: ...but his headmaster, he had a degree in philosophy and he told me that of course he could instruct him, but being a Christian he would give that point of view, it seemed a bit inadequate.

S: I think, I may not be quite up to date but I think that the parent has only the right to request that the child should not attend religious instruction or morning prayers or whatever they have. I don't think you have the right to insist on instruction in the religion of your choice.

V: But that could only make it more difficult.

S: Though I think this, I am not sure of the present position because I know that the Hindu and Muslim and Sikh communities have taken this up and they are pressing for provision for instruction in their religion for their children in schools. So I think in some areas they do even provide a teacher, they bring in a ... or a Hindu monk from outside to take a class once a week. I think it depends, obviously, on the number of children involved. I am not so sure that you have the right to this, but some local authorities, I think, [493] I am not completely certain, make this provision at least in the interests of community relations but I am not sure what the position is as regards the law.

V: Manjувajra was asked to give some talks on Buddhism in the school he teaches in but then they discovered that he couldn't give talks on Buddhism in the school where he was a member of the staff. That somehow was against the rule, they could have brought a visiting speaker in but it was not possible for him to do that, to the sixth form.

S: Perhaps because they would be paying him, or they did pay him whereas you could invite someone from outside who wouldn't actually be paid. But I think we have, sooner or later, really to raise our voices against people who have simply this academic knowledge of Buddhism, we say Buddhism because that is the tradition we are concerned with but really it applies to all spiritual traditions, being regarded as authorities on that tradition, and we certainly don't accept them as authorities.

V: But are there many ...

S: In all universities there are people who hold lectureships and so on in comparative religion and who instruct on what is Buddhism, among other religions and who produce text books and so on. Admittedly it is not so bad in this country as some continental countries, probably Germany is the worst. And it is the German influence that is felt in Finland and Sweden in this respect, the academic is highly honoured, has great prestige, more than in this country.

Anyway this seems to be the contemporary application of the teaching here. It also puts me in mind of some of these very clever books on Zen, written by Western intellectuals, not after doing Zen training and practising meditation but just after reading Dr Suzuki's books, they produce a very clever book on Zen. Then they are regarded as an authority, 'oh you must read so and so's book on Zen it tells you really all about it', 'if you merely practice meditation then you have no right to say anything about Zen'.

V: You know on Subhuti's course that he did at Wye, which Colin Wiley was on, he now comes to the centre, I think the person in charge of the course asked Colin what he thought about it and he said that he really liked the Buddhism and he really wanted to get involved in it, and he was told to take it easy, one mustn't get personally involved, emotionally involved, it's just something to study. Subhuti was up against that, trying to communicate ... It's almost a fear isn't it?

S: This is the great difficulty, of wanting to make something a subject, not to become involved with it personally. There are certain things you shouldn't study, in a way you shouldn't study comparative religion, you could even say it is immoral. You should either be practising the religion or letting it alone, whatever the religion may be. What business have you to be studying practices of Red Indians in North America, it is nothing to do with you, really, you are just satisfying idle curiosity. You should get on to your own practice, follow your own traditions.

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V: But for people outside the movement though it may be an avenue that leads them to Buddhism.

S: Even so, it suggests a state of society in which there are no traditions and no practices.

V: Someone might be searching for something in all those religions that has something ...

S: Well this is the only thing that one can hope, but how much better it would be if, whatever books have to be written, were written by the actual followers of those traditions.

V: I have the feeling that the reason why Manjuvajra wasn't allowed to take the lecture in his own school is because teachers are not supposed to indicate any political or religious biases.

S: Unless you are C of E. C of E is all right, in other words we are being discriminated against, really.

V: Perhaps we could take it up with the race relations board.

V: I think there was quite a to do about it.

V: How important do you think it is that we become recognized as an official religion of this country with all the right ...?

S: I would prefer to avoid it, I think this is quite a point, I think this is quite dangerous. First of all I don't think it is good if we are regarded as a religion, and it is going to be very difficult to avoid this but if we can assure that this label is not attached to us, so much the better. If you become a recognized religion you tend to get incorporated in the establishment eventually. You send along your delegate and your representative to these inter-religious meets and so on and you get involved in all that and it is completely useless and a waste of time.

I remember that four years ago I agreed to take part in the proceedings of a committee that had been set up to report, it was a sub committee actually, on religious education in schools. So I thought to myself I will accept this invitation and be the Buddhist representative just to see, just to see. There were two Muslim representative, a Jewish representative a Catholic priest, Church of England clergyman, American Hindu Swami and me. And there were one or two others who appeared from time to time. But what struck me most of all was that everybody was the same, they all seemed to have the same attitude and the same background regardless of the actual religion they belonged to. They all had the same kind of suit, business suit, they all seemed to have a university background. They all seemed to have middle class attitudes and assumptions, they were all professional men and they all clearly regarded their respective followers as their flock, as their property. And you were virtually just having a Gentlemen's agreement not to trespass on one another's preserves, this is what it was amounting to. They seemed to have much more in common [than] there were differences.

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And I must confess that I felt completely antagonistic to their whole attitude and approach, though they were pleasant and friendly. I felt quite separate and quite different, that I was not into all that and didn't want to be, and I felt it very strongly.

V: In other the attitude was not to arrive at the truth, directed towards Enlightenment in the ultimate sense.

S: No, not at all. They all believed in the truth of their particular teaching and tradition, but they got together on a sort of professional basis. They were all members of the same sort of profession, they were all clerics, they were all clergy men of one kind or another. They had the same sort of professional interests.

V: Could you see any positive sides in that at all, that situation?

S: No, I felt more and more like having absolutely nothing to do with it. At best it was a bit of good community relations and not much more than that. For instance, the Muslim representatives were very, very concerned, the point that they were most of all concerned

about, so I gather, was that Muslim girls who went to schools should be compelled to cover their arms and legs, because it is against the Islamic religion that women should expose their arms and legs in public. This was their main point, and they wanted to get the support of all the other religious people for that, so that these girls could be kept within their fold.

I got the impression that it was [as] if to say, you help me keep my people under my control and I'll help you keep your people under your control. It was really just like this. But I must say that on one occasion the Catholic priest who seemed a bit more intelligent than the others, he piped up and said, 'why not let the girls decide for themselves'. And everybody looked at him, except me I hope, with absolute horror. The Muslim said, 'it's our tradition, it's our culture, we don't want these girls to get away from that, they have got to be brought up as Muslim girls, they mustn't be allowed to uncover their arms and legs'. Then somebody said, 'won't they feel different from the other girls?', 'well we can't help that they are Muslim girls'. So in the end it was agreed that they were Muslim girls and they had to be made to cover their arms and legs in school.

So I really felt that they were just sharing out the ecclesiastical cake, 'you keep to your bit and I'll keep to mine', a mutual non-aggression pact. It's really on that level, I just didn't like it at all.

The few times in the past that I have gone to inter-religious gatherings it is all like this, just all these professional religious people being nice to one another and it is so meaningless. You do meet the odd sincere person and nice person, truly nice person, but it's just such an unreal world. It is just the world of the professional cleric, and we just don't want anything to do with this, that's why we never send along representatives to these sorts of gatherings, the further away we keep the better.

V: It seems to be more in the realm of politics, really, than religion.

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S: Almost, yes.

V: It seems to be that it is something that is going to be difficult to keep up. It's all right while you're around and while ...

S: Also while we are small and unimportant and relatively unsuccessful, but what about when we get big and influential and known, we are going to be quite tempted?

V: And perhaps even in some way coerced, if there isn't sufficient strength.

V: How could one be coerced, do you think?

V: Well I don't know.

S: Well tempted, I think. You might even find in the future as I have said once before when someone said 'Bhante didn't really mean that, he didn't usually used to talk in that way, it must have been quite exceptional, don't know why he said that, might as well burn that tape!'

V: 'He's changed since then'.

S: Yes, right, 'that was a very early tape, he did that when he was only fifty, he got older and wiser towards the end of his life'. (laughing) 'A rather rebellious one, he's sobered down in later years

But actually I don't feel that at all, I feel as though I started off being rather sober and being a bit conformist as a young man and was inclined not to rebel and to agree and accept. And I always did at first, always believed everything I was told, but as I get older and older I feel less inclined to, to accept and sometimes to take things meekly. I feel more and more inclined

to rebel and not to compromise.

V: I wonder what you will be like in your eighties. (Laughter)

S: That's rather a dreadful thought isn't it?

V: Absolutely rampant ...

V: Some people will be terrified to see you!

S: Probably the Order will be terrified, 'here we are getting this nice little scene together and Bhante keeps coming along and spoiling it'!! (laughter)

V: 'You're getting too staid, you are getting to old'.

S: I think one must really watch it, especially as we become successful. It is all right when we are hanging about in Archway and most of our Order members are squatting in rather squalid conditions and we don't have very much money and no one really cares very much for us or about us. That's quite good, but as we get more successful, and we can't help that, then we have to be very careful.

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V: This could start happening as soon as we get these Bethnal Green bits going.

S: No, that's one of the reasons why Bethnal Green is a good place. It prevents you from getting the wrong ideas about yourself.

V: I don't mean about yourself, I mean other people getting ideas, and making ...

S: I think that it is good that people should see that we are successful, that we are succeeding on our own terms and even succeeding materially. But that we should not be seduced by them because their attitude towards us will change then and they will think that because we have got a bit of property or because we've got a big building we must be doing well and therefore they want to include us in the club.

I noticed this in India, even, when I acquired my Vihara, the attitude of people that I had known for years changed towards me. Even Buddhist monks, I was treated with a new respect when I arrived at the different Buddhist centres which I had not been given before, just because I had a building. I really noticed this.

V: So they become impressed by your new position which has a certain degree of power in it.

S: Yes, so it's all right even to make use of this, but one should not be taken in by it and not start identifying oneself with that position. It's quite a difficult thing not to be seduced, as it were, when you become successful into just joining the establishment, for want of a better term.

Anyway, let's go on, go on to the next precept.

"He also said, "Do not accept as truly existent appearances that are only imputed designations. Do not be attached to impermanent phenomena; do not grieve over the destruction of such illusory things. Do not weaken your opposition to fettering passions and desires. Do not follow the eight worldly concerns. Do not associate with bad company. Do not have great longing for your relatives. Do not weaken your respect and faith in the Lama and the Three Jewels. Do not be greatly attached to body and enjoyments. Do not weaken your one-pointed hearing, thinking, and meditating. Do not praise activity, gain, and renown. Do not weaken your resolute meditation. Do not lessen the compassion which unselfishly helps others."

(end tape 22)

S: This is all quite clear and straightforward, I think.

V: It seems to be much more on the negative side.

S: It does, doesn't it, do not. It is rather strange, as we mentioned before that Atisa and Drom were both very [498] positive and inspiring, and you could say creative, but the subsequent teachers, though saying very relevant things and very worthy things, seem to strike a much more negative note, on the whole.

V: It's like the change in term and spirit that can't..., that you get between the Udana and the Itivuttaka. Very much like that.

S: Yes indeed, we really noticed that on that former retreat didn't we. It seems such a pity and I wonder why this is.

V: Which; Kadampa; which Bodhisattva do they draw their specific inspiration from?

S: Well there isn't a specific one because it is a unified tradition. Atisa unified the two traditions, the tradition of ample practice and the tradition of profound wisdom. That is to say the tradition of Nagarjuna, which came from Manjushri and the tradition of Asanga which came from Maitreya.

V: Because what I was thinking was that, you've just blown it apart, but I was thinking that if they were drawing a lot of inspiration from Manjushri, you said in one of your lectures that those people who..., it is quite often very bad tempered people who get a lot of..., can have a lot of wisdom and penetrating insight. And perhaps that sort of emphasis, the more scholarly emphasis ...

S: But wait a minute we have forgotten one thing, we have forgotten that Atisa was a very great devotee of Tara, yes? And he stressed the Tara practice and it was his own main practice and from all that we know of him he was a very warm and kindly, affectionate sort of person, charming person. At the same time he had this tremendous knowledge and learning and deep understanding, scholarship. So one can hazard a guess or speculation that maybe, some of these teachers did not keep in contact with that aspect of the practice, or that aspect of his tradition.

This is only a guess, this is only a speculation, but something of that sort seems lacking, which was present with Atisa. We certainly know that in his personal practice, in his personal life he stressed the Tara practice and everything that it stands for very, very strongly.

V: It's like there is an imbalance in the five faculties.

S: Yes, right. (V: faith and wisdom) Well faith is here isn't it, but there is something, some other positive emotion than faith which apparently is not here.

V: What were the two Bodhisattvas you mentioned in connection with Nagarjuna and Asanga?

S: Nagarjuna and Manjushri, Asanga and Maitreya. These Bodhisattvas were the sources of inspiration for these two traditions, The Madhyamika tradition of Nagarjuna and the Yogacara tradition of Asanga.

So one does feel that that sort of element, that sort of [499] factor, which is represented in terms of the Bodhisattvas by Tara, is missing. They've lost it, apparently, judging just by these precepts, they have lost it since the days of Atisa.

V: He wrote things on Tara, didn't he?

S: He did. He wrote a number of works, there was one difficulty however. Put it this way, I mentioned that Atisa was advised not to propagate the Anuttara Yoga Tantras in Tibet, right? Because the Anuttara Yoga Tantras contained material, it was thought, which the Tibetans might well misunderstand and misuse. But the canonical source for the Tara cult is found mainly in the Anuttara Yoga Tantras, so it meant that that tradition of Tara practice was, as it were, deprived of its canonical support. And possible was undervalued for that reason, in the texts, in the scriptures that these people studied there was nothing about Tara. Though there were some works of Atisa about the Tara practice which were handed down.

But the fact that the tradition did not apparently have canonical support, no doubt weakened it, in any case.

V: So it has been lost, I mean how?

S: No, it does continue and subsequently became very, very important. But it is as though in this period that influence had disappeared.

V: So the Anuttara Yoga Tantra was taught in Tibet later?

S: Yes. It had been taught earlier but had become very corrupted and distorted so when Atisa came to Tibet to revive Buddhism, it was suggested, or he was strongly advised not to teach or to propagate the Anuttara Yoga Tantras.

V: What does Anuttara mean?

S: Supreme. There were two traditions of the Tara practice, one of the green Tara and one of the White Tara. The white Tara practice in any case there is no canonical basis, it is not found in any canonical scripture. It is based on the personal spiritual experience of a great Tantric teacher who then propagated that particular form of the Tara practice. (I think it was by Gisvarakirti, but don't write it down, I am not completely certain it was him)

V: What is the difference between the White Tara and the Green Tara?

S: It is difficult to say except that there are different practices associated with the two, and especially the White Tara is associated with the long life practice, not the Green Tara. The Green Tara was the original one, the original form. The White Tara was introduced later, but it is a very important tradition and quite powerful practice.

V: The long life practice?

S: The long life practice, yes. I did receive this initiation from Dhardo Rimpoche and we translated the entire text, between [500] us, so I have that with me. It is a very lengthy one, it is quite an elaborate practice.

But anyway, that is just my guess or speculation, that perhaps this particular tradition had dropped out and this possibly accounts for a lack of a certain quality in these last few precepts. There is definitely something missing.

Anyway let's go straight on and see whether this trend continues or whether anything else happens.

Geshe Nam-bar-pa said: "Without renouncing samsara's three realms, you cannot direct your mind towards liberation; meditate on the perniciousness of all samsara. Without controlling your desire, you will not cut off attachment to things; get rid of your belongings as you would empty a spittoon. You can not receive the blessings of the spiritual teacher if you do not conceive of your Lama as Buddha; strengthen this concept."



S: 'Get rid of your belongings as you would empty a spittoon'. This seems rather strong, as though you had a disgust and revulsion towards your belongings. One shouldn't take it psychologically perhaps, though in a way you can't help taking it like that.

V: I actually felt this the last time I tried to get rid of some of my rubbish. I didn't deliberately cultivate the attitude, but I found myself completely disgusted with it, I couldn't quite understand why.

S: Well maybe you just found them so troublesome.

V: I found it the same when I tried, unsuccessfully, I'm afraid, to throw out a load of old letters. All the sort of feelings associated with what they represent, which one is trying to overcome. This is why it is difficult, I think, if one is still under the influences of ...

S: Yes, it is emotional belongings that one can't get rid of. Well, let's go straight on. Most of this is quite familiar material, if we strike any new note then we will just go in that more deeply.

"Geshe Chim-pu-pa, when asked for a precept by a yogi, said, "Appearances are illusory; do not hold them as truly existent. The five aggregates are flesh and blood; do not hold them as mine'. Possessions are accumulated by the effects of former karma; do not make so much effort to acquire things. What you have been doing makes you miserable; limit your activities. Samsara is wretched; do not accept it as meaningful. Follow this precept now - do not say, 'I will do it in the future when the days are longer'."

S: That's all quite true and quite relevant, but again it is this somewhat negative emphasis.

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"Geshe Sha-bo-gay.pa said, "You have now obtained a human life which has leisure and opportunity and have found a spiritual teacher. At this time you have encountered the Mahayana teaching. Now you must prepare yourself for future lives and turn your steps toward liberation and Buddhahood.

"To prepare yourself for future lives, you must despise the concerns of this life, abandoning the ten non virtuous activities and taking up the ten virtuous activities. To obtain liberation, you must turn your mind from all of samsara. To turn your steps toward omniscient Buddhahood, you must practice Bodhi-mind.

"To produce these three attitudes, you must accumulate merit. If you do not accumulate merit, you cannot understand the Teaching. Although you may understand something, it will not be absorbed, while even the little understanding you have will dwindle and not be helpful. Furthermore, it is because in the past you have not accumulated merit and instead have accumulated its opposite that you have wandered in samsara. Even in this life, it is because you have not accumulated merit and have not abandoned non virtuous actions that things are not working out as you desire. Therefore, the root of all the Teaching is to accumulate merit and to eradicate sins."

S: What about this, 'if you do not accumulate merit you cannot understand the teaching.' What do you think that means?

V: That's samatha

S: That's samatha, yes. Merit here seems to stand for samatha, for the very heartily positive emotional state, at quite a high concentrated level. Unless you are in a really positive mood, and much more than a mood, a state of mind amounting to meditation, to samatha, you won't really understand the teaching, you won't be able to absorb it. If you are in a negative frame of mind, or if you are unconcentrated you can't absorb it. So punya seems to stand here for a positive mental state.

V: I thought actually samatha meant just concentration in a more mundane sense, not Insight.

S: Yes, but how does that contradict this?

V: Well you said that it was quite a high state and involving very ...

S: Well, yes, high as compared with our ordinary waking consciousness. Not concentrated in the sense of, say, concentrated on the book, but a very absorbed state, a very integrated state with all your energies flowing to a single point. And strong emotions of faith and joy and love and peace and so on.

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V: Wouldn't that be equivalent to the vipassana state?

S: No not at all, this is samatha, vipassana is far beyond that, vipassana is Insight and clarity and penetration to reality.

V: I'm still a little bit confused between those two levels.

S: Well they are not even exactly levels though you can certainly look at them in that way. But the samatha is a state of, as it were, mundane skilfulness, but you can fall from that. Whereas the Insight is something that you can't lose. Through that you are in contact with something unconditioned.

"Geshe Sha-bo-gay-pa said, "As the desires of this life cause all the misery of this and future lives, we must not seek the fulfilment of our desires. When we try to fulfil our desires, we are not happy. We become unsure of the direction of our life, and wrong speech, wrong mind, and wrong actions all surface at once.

"Therefore we must turn away from our many desires. When we are able to do this, we establish the beginnings of happiness and pleasure. The best sign of happiness in this and all future lives is not desiring or accumulating anything at all. When we do not desire gain, we have the greatest gain. When we do not desire reputation, we have the best reputation. When we do not desire fame, we have the greatest fame. When we do not desire companions, we have the best companions.

"If we are to sincerely practice the Dharma, we must entrust ourselves wholeheartedly to the life of a mendicant, for the ultimate mendicant is one who is entrusting himself to death. When we can produce this feeling, neither gods, men, nor devils can conquer us. But when we indulge in the desires of this life, we lower ourselves and make ourselves completely miserable. We bring censure on ourselves in this life and rebirth in lower states in future lives."

S: I have mentioned before how the orthodox Hindu monk when he gives up the world, he performs his own funeral rites. Do you remember this? So that he is literally dead, dead to the world, as it were.

"Therefore, when, not wishing our own happiness, we limit our criticism of others, humble ourselves, limit our desires, and avoid all activities that are not religious, we will then obtain enlightenment in the future.

"In short, we are always beginning what is not necessary to begin, realizing what is not necessary to realize, [503] doing what is not necessary to do. Though we say all this, if we do not actually turn away from the desires of this life, there is no way of seeking happiness now or in future lives. If we turn away from all desires, we do not need to seek happiness at all."

S: Any special point there?

V: You said that all fear comes from, basically, a fear of death, so if you can entrust yourself to death you can overcome all fear.

S: Yes, right. You stake your life, as it were, when you become a mendicant in the traditional way, because you rely for your food on whatever people may choose to give you. Probably that was even more difficult in Tibet than in India, there were far fewer people and habitations were very far apart. It probably was a real risk, then, to take up this sort of life, you might be stranded miles from anywhere and you might press on to the nearest house and find nobody there or even if there was it might be someone who knew absolutely nothing about Buddhism and didn't want to give you any food, didn't understand what it was all about.

V: Would it necessarily encourage the proper practice of metta? (S: What?) When one has to go begging, in other words, if one begs does that...

S: Well I would say more specifically it certainly encourages the practice or experience of gratitude. Because you need food very much, and you are dependent upon other people, others give you food and usually they give very happily and cheerfully, and you do feel very grateful for that. That is akin to metta, surely.

And the Buddhist tradition is that after you have received food, alms in your alms bowl, you recite a little verse of blessing on the house and on the people who have given you that.

V: I heard from somebody, Vessantara I think, that you'd been talking about the Anagarika status, and with us. Can you say a bit about it?

S: The Anagarika is the, as it were, informal monk. He hasn't technically been ordained, he is not technically a bhikkhu, but he is observing all the essential principles. But not the little frills of monastic life, as it were, he is not wearing the orthodox robe, he is not shaving his head, but he has no social responsibilities, he is not married, he is devoting his whole life to the Dharma. So actually he is a monk, this whole idea of being technically not a monk, I think, is really quite ridiculous. If you are living the life you are a monk. But this is what an Anagarika is regarded as being currently. An unordained monk.

V: Does that apply to Anagarika Dharmapala?

S: Yes, he was styled Anagarika Dharmapala and he was living like this.

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V: But he did, he did take full ordination eventually.

S: He did, when he was old and crippled and useless. But so long as he was hale and hearty he didn't take ordination. Because after all he was from Ceylon and he came to the conclusion that if you wanted to work for the Dharma you couldn't be an ordained monk because there were so many petty restrictions which got into the way of your preaching the Dharma, even. Which is really ridiculous, but that was the position and it still is to a great extent. One rule is that you can't ride in a horse drawn carriage if you are a monk. But Dharmapala was operating from Calcutta in the days of the old ecca(?) the horse-drawn carriage which was the only means of transport within Calcutta so it would have meant he couldn't have got about quickly if he had been a monk. He wouldn't have been allowed to ride in a horse drawn carriage.

And he wouldn't have been able to speak to women, one of the rules is that you shouldn't speak more than one or at the most two sentences, about the Dharma even, to a woman if you are a monk. This obviously limits your effectiveness. You can't therefore speak to a mixed audience.

V: Is this just the Ceylonese

S: No, it's general Theravada.

V: Is it also Mahayana?

S: In theory yes, but in practice a lot of this is modified by the superimposition of the Bodhisattva vow. That in the interests of your Bodhisattva activity you can suspend the observance of the monastic rules. Your Bodhisattva vow takes precedence.

V: An Anagarika, is that something you can become in the Theravada tradition, it's not necessary...?

S: Yes, it's not a very strong tradition or very established one, but it is certainly known, at least. There have been a few others apart from Dharmapala. Like Anagarika Sugatananda, Francis Story (?) he was an Anagarika.

V: Govinda calls himself Anagarika doesn't he?

S: Yes, but that is not quite correct now. Some people are not quite happy that he uses that style still.

V: Is he technically a Lama?

S: Well no you can't be technically a Lama. Tibetans never use Lama as a sort of title in that way, Lama means guru and this is not a mode of address. Tibetans are usually a bit puzzled as to why Lama Govinda calls himself Lama Govinda, they can't quite understand this, it isn't a Tibetan usage.

V: When you say the Bodhisattva vow allows one to suspend the Vinaya, do you mean the whole of the Vinaya?

S: Actually, if pressed they would say yes. For instance there is the case of the famous Mahayana monk in Tibet who [505] assassinated the King who was persecuting Buddhism, so they would even go to the extreme of saying that you can commit what would seem to be murder in the over-riding interests of the Bodhisattva vow. Which is a very, very dangerous sort of thing to say but if pressed they would say that in principle it could even mean that. But obviously one has to be most careful about that sort of statement or interpretation. But if pressed they would say that, that if you are a real Bodhisattva you may be called upon to break any of the lower precepts, the Hinayana precepts.

Like, for instance, the story about that we read about the monkey Bodhisattva, who married the demoness when she threatened to commit suicide unless he married her, he broke his vow just to save her from committing suicide. That was the Mahayana approach, as it were. But the Tibetans themselves have got such a strict and firmly established tradition that this is not abused, it is not misapplied, but it could very easily be in the West where there isn't that sort of tradition.

Certainly for the Mahayana the Bodhisattva vow is of over-riding importance. Certainly no Tibetan Buddhist would ever use that as an excuse for being careless about vows or precepts of various kinds.

V: The Bodhisattva vow would in itself include the monastic discipline, in a sense, wouldn't it? To give the Dharma to all beings.

S: Yes, but the point here is that in fulfilment of your Bodhisattva vow you may think it necessary to break, or as they would say, suspend or transcend some of the provisions of the monastic code.

V: Sure, yes I know but it is not really as if there are two completely different codes The Bodhisattva vow is...

S: Not really, though they are formulated as different codes, but not really. This is why Mr Chen used to say very strongly, very emphatically that you should not speak of the Bodhisattva being willing to break the Hinayana precepts, he says that he transcends them, he does not break them. He may appear to be breaking them, but he is actually transcending them, but again even that is quite a dangerous statement.

V: Padmasambhava is a very good example of that.

S: Yes, and there is a very good discussion of this whole topic in Evans-Wentz' introduction. It is one of the best things that I think Evans-Wentz has done, it is a very serious consideration of this whole question of the relativity of ethics. In his introduction to the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation, there is a whole section on this. It's very well thought out and well presented.

All right let's carry straight on, we are near the end of the chapter and also near to our supper time.

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"Geshe Sha-bo-gay-pa also said, "Without controlling yourself, do not wish to control others. Without having knowledge yourself, do not wish to teach others. One who has great faith avoids wrongdoing. One who takes pleasure in Voidness does not cling to ego. One who has great wisdom knows the difference between Dharma and non-Dharma. One who is wise understands the Dharma. One who is concerned about even the slightest sin is also concerned about the greater sins. One of benevolent mind has ceased from doing harm. One not able to live alone must be able to get along with others. One who wishes to be holy does not allow his patience to weaken. One who now gives many gifts does not lessen his liberality when he has fewer means. One who is debased does not give lofty teachings. One who has a good teacher does not act badly. One who is happy to learn Dharma is also happy to practise it. One living in isolation does not mingle with others. One who seeks goodness has few desires. One who wishes to obtain liberation is not addicted to the eight worldly concerns."

S: One has a feeling that the precepts, by this time have become a little mechanical, they seem to lack a certain vigour. Anyway we get quite a bit of vigour in the next one, the last one I think it is, so let's go on to that.

"Finally, Geshe Sha-bo-gay-pa chastised himself: 'You old fool - you wish for high teachings, though your nature is low. You charlatan - you desire to improve others, but do not improve yourself. You sham - you act as if Dharma were meant only for others to follow, and not for yourself. You blunderer - you have charged others to act correctly, but act incorrectly yourself. You shiftless bum - each rise precedes a greater fall. You politician - you make extensive promises but abbreviated application. You rascal - you seek fettering passions, and at the same time pretend to apply their countermeasures. You coward - you are fearful of others seeing your faults and hope that they will see only your good qualities.

"You involve yourself with your relatives instead of cultivating spiritual friends. You involve yourself with fettering passions instead of cultivating their antidotes. You leave practice for future lives instead of cultivating it in this life. You involve yourself with those who help you rather than cultivating those who harm you.

"You idiot - you harm others, not knowing you harm yourself. You do not know that to help others is to help yourself. You do not see that misery and harm which come to you are conducive to practising Dharma. You do not see that desire and happiness are non conducive [507] to practise of Dharma.

"You say to others that practising Dharma is very important, yet do not follow the Teaching yourself. You despise others who are sinful, yet do not stop your own wrongdoing. You see the slightest faults in others, yet do not perceive great faults in yourself. You soon stop helping others when you get nothing in return. You cannot bear to see other teachers receive

respect. You are subservient to those in high position while contemptuous of those beneath you. Talk of future lives is not pleasing to your ears. You act holy and disdainful when corrected by others. You want others to see your virtues and are content when they do not see your faults. You are satisfied with a good facade though what is inside is not so good.

"You like to be given things. Not seeking happiness within yourself, you seek it externally. Having vowed to learn Buddha's Teaching, you learn worldly affairs instead. Though you agree with the advice of the Bodhisattvas, your actions are preparing you for hell. Though you have dedicated your body, enjoyments, and virtuous activities of past, present, and future for the benefit of all living beings, you refuse to give up your ego. You like sinful friends, forgetting that they lead to ruin. You do not know that the anger of a spiritual friend is helpful.

"Do not waste time in pointless debate. Do not build castles in the air, increasing your cravings. Do not delight in dangerous activities. Do not do many things which senselessly hinder virtuous work."

"Feeling self-reproach, he scolded himself in this way."

S: This is a bit more lively, isn't it, a bit more vigorous?

V: It seems quite genuine.

S: Yes it does, doesn't it, has a very genuine ring about it? It suggests that it is all right giving precepts to others but what about giving a precept to yourself. It is quite a good precept for teachers to read to themselves, when they do their own little puja in the evening after taking their classes and what not.

V: I got a real lift out of reading it in New Zealand.

"This is the lineage of Atisa's teaching, the heartfelt speech of many holy beings These precepts were collected from here and there by the venerable Tsun-ba-je-gom.

S: So, any impressions or comments about that whole collection? Precepts collected from here and there?

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V: Some of them good, some of them not so good.

S: Well, all good but not equally applicable.

V: It did have a trend of going gradually from really inspired, imaginative trend to something quite mechanical, lists and things.

S: Yes, and emphasis on abstention from this and abstention from that.

V: Almost like the pull of the conditioned.

V: In the early ones...

V: I think there are so many here, it would almost be better if they'd just given you six, and there you are. In a way I felt he almost gave us too many of them.

V: The early ones seem to apply to now better than the later ones, which seems to lose their efficacy.

S: They definitely lose something.

V: It's almost like they lose the initial energy that's gone into them, from ... the first teacher.

S: Yes, Drom does very well doesn't he?

V: Well he's like the second in the line, it seems like something is lost as it goes down. Is this general until somebody pops up, another original person and then carries on teaching?

S: It seems so. It seems so, just as in the arts, some are really creative and really spiritual geniuses and others are just plodders, who can hand on what they have been taught but eventually they start reproducing it a bit mechanically and there is not so much life in it as before. Then someone else has to come along and either revive the old teaching or precept, or introduce something entirely new, at least in form, from his own experience.

V: Yes. It seems that it is the experience that dwindled.

S: It seems to me not even just that. It is just a simple matter of losing contact with positive emotion. I think it is almost as simple as that, and this seems to me what the Tara figure stands for, at least psychologically. The Tara figure stands for much more than just positive emotion but in terms of practice, probably there is a very definite connection, do you see what I mean?

V: It upholds an emotional richness, doesn't it ... ? (S: Yes, right)

V: I'd like to ask a question. A long way back you made a statement ( ... ) that you had now become convinced that arising of the Bodhicitta was not an individual affair and a number of times I've [509] felt, yes. But for the life of me now, I can't find any 'reason' (inverted commas) for this. Can you explain this?

S: Well not an individual affair in the sense that isn't anybody's personal property. It is as though the Bodhicitta arises in you but it isn't your Bodhicitta. It's not that different people have got different Bodhicittas, it's one and the same Bodhicitta.

Just like the comparison I gave was, that the moon reflected in different pots of water, it is more like that. So in a sense there is only one Bodhisattva.

V: You gave the impression when you said it originally that one person sitting down and doing his training couldn't arrive at that, it had to be from a community ...

S: I think, certainly within the Western context it is more likely to arise in the midst of that sort of devotional atmosphere that is generated when there are a number of people together. It's as though it is very difficult for just one person to generate that intense emotional positivity just by himself. Certainly not impossible, I think it can be done, but I think it is more likely to be done when there are a number of people together. It may be even three or four or five friends. It doesn't have to be a big assembly or anything like that. It is as though between them they can generate a more powerful force of positivity, especially in connection with the puja and devotions, than can just one person singly. Though an exceptional person certainly could generate that degree of positivity.

V: Are there any Bodhisattvas that combine equally an element of Manjushri and an element of Tara?

S: Well by virtue of the fact that you have got different Bodhisattvas at all they do embody separate aspects.

I mean, you couldn't combine all those aspects, artistically and convincingly in a single Bodhisattva form.

V: Perhaps just in the Buddha.

S: Perhaps just in the Buddha, but even in the case of the Buddha it would have to be either peaceful or wrathful, or predominantly wise or predominantly compassionate. Perhaps a very, very great artist could suggest all of these, but that would be very difficult, wouldn't it, if not impossible.

So this is why I think it is good to be acquainted with a number of different Bodhisattva figures, it gives you a better impression of the richness of the content of the Enlightenment experience. Or the richness of the Bodhicitta which has so many facets and each facet is an individual Bodhisattva, as it were.

So what one mustn't think is, that the Bodhicitta is just like a thought or a volition arising in someone's mind, just like any other thought or volition arises, as an extension of your mundane individuality, part of that, the property of that. It certainly manifests in dependence upon that but it goes beyond that.

V: ... the transcendental.

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S: It is transcendental. It is a little bit like H.G. Wells' God the Invisible King, which is nothing to do with God in the Christian, theistic sense, it is rather unfortunate that he uses that word. I originally got a copy of that back which I think is out of print, one or two of our friends have been reading it. Buddhadasa has got it at the moment, you've seen it haven't you?

V: ...

S: He, by a coincidence found another copy in Norfolk at the same time as I found one in Glasgow, that's strange isn't it?

V: I remember you recommended that.

S: It is very easy reading, and it describes among other things an experience that H.G. Wells had, an experience of his own, which seems very much like an experience of the Bodhicitta. Certainly he was a man very devoted to the public good, very sincere, very genuine, very honest and with no orthodox Christian religious ideas at all. He thought of himself as a scientist and a rationalist, though he did have, in his life, very definite spiritual experiences. One of these experiences was apparently of this sort of order, and it gave rise to his conception of God the Invisible King. Which is a very Bodhisattva like figure, of limited power and limited knowledge but working and striving for the good. You can co-operate with this figure, which he calls the captain of mankind. It is not God, he did not create the universe and he is not responsible for things, but a higher spiritual force which he experienced as a personality which is working towards a higher goal for the whole of humanity. It seemed a very clear statement, practically of the Bodhisattva ideal, and he seemed to have had an actual experience of this. Quite amazing really.

So you don't find Buddhism, even Mahayana, just in Mahayana texts. You can find it in ordinary human life and in the experience of literary people, poets also.

V: You seem to find it even more in some of these people than in some orthodox Buddhist writers.

(S: Yes, right)

V: That suggests then that the Bodhicitta is something that comes and goes. That it is, say an experience, that ...

S: Well, it's like the vipassana, it's a flash of Insight

(end side 1)



But subsequently it can become a permanent faculty, that is prajna. In the same way you can have a momentary uprising of the Bodhicitta and you don't continue to experience it but as time goes on it becomes more and more frequent until it is always there and then you really are a Bodhisattva. You are the Bodhicitta incarnate, though not the only incarnation of course. You are allowing that Bodhicitta to function fully and freely through you all the time.

V: It explains a lot about the Greek heroes, [511] doesn't it? Say, in touch with the gods, and I don't think it means in the sense of devas that I think are devas.

S: Superior powers, superior forces, you are possessed by them, inspired by them. When the ancient Norse warrior went berserk, he was possessed by the spirit or the god of war, completely possessed. And in the same way when the bard became possessed, usually of some goddess who sang and hymned, he was completely inspired then, possessed by that particular divinity. The muse had taken him over. It's a bit like that, though this is on a somewhat lower level, and the Bodhicitta and the Bodhisattva represent a much higher level of taking over.

V: A higher level of taking over or a higher power that takes over?

S: Well that's what I mean, a higher power. But you have to be on a higher level yourself to be able to be taken over by that higher power. If you are just receptive on a lower level you will be taken over by some spook or ghost or even Mara.

V: You reckon that's all right on the higher sense? I mean there is nothing ...

S: But of course one mustn't take it too literally, as being taken over. It isn't in the psychological sense, it's in a much subtler sense. When you are in a very highly positive mood as in a sort of samatha state, it's as though you open yourself to all the positive forces in the Universe and they reinforce your positivity. Not that you are taken over in a literal sense. When you are healthy you take in health, you absorb health, more the healthy forces in the Universe.

Anyway I think we had better close there, it's seven o'clock, and talking of health there seems to be a good smell coming from the kitchen.

#### Chapter 4. The Essence of Good Explanation. Praise of Munindra

"These last four chapters are representative of the teachings of Tsongkhapa. The first, The Essence of Good Explanation, Praise of Munindra, praises Sakyamuni Buddha for his teaching of Voidness as the import of dependent origination. This is followed by Tsongkhapa's short root text, The Three Principles of the Path, and a later commentary in the form of instructions for meditational practice. The third selection is Tsongkhapa's concise summary in verse of the teachings of the unified Sutrayana and Tantrayana paths as brought to Tibet by Atisa. The fourth presents the stages of this path from the view-point of reliance on the Lama."

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V: What is the Sutrayana?

S: The Hinayana and Mahayana are sometimes called Sutrayana. That is to say the teachings of the Hinayana sutras and the Mahayana sutras as contrasted with the teachings of the Tantras.

"At one time Tsongkhapa was studying the controversy between the Prasangika and Svatantrika tenets of the Madhyamika, striving to obtain final insight into the nature of existence. He retreated to a hermitage, for he was not yet satisfied with his understanding of the intent of Buddha. There he made intense prayer, unifying the Lama and Manjusri. One night Nagarjuna and his five principal spiritual sons Aryadeva, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka,

Candrakirti, and Santideva - appeared to him in a dream. All were sitting and discussing the meaning of the Teachings when one of the sages, who was of bluish colour and slightly larger than the others, came forward holding in his hand a volume on the Madhyamika. With it, he made the gesture of blessing Tsongkhapa.

"When Tsongkhapa awoke, he began to read Buddhapalita's commentary on the Mula-madhyamika-karikas, and, as evidence of the blessing, he effortlessly obtained certain, pure realization of the Prasangika system. His realization was completely different from what it had been before, and by it he completely destroyed all false objectification of phenomena and all habitual thoughts leading toward the extremes of eternalism or nihilism.

"Inspired by his realization, he composed in one morning The Essence of Good Explanation, Praise of Munindra. In it is expressed the highest teaching of the equivalency of dependent origination and Voidness."

S: Any particular point arising there, from that little introduction?

V: Does the Lama here mean Tsongkhapa himself?

S: No, it means the Guru, it means the form of Guru Yoga, unifying the Lama and Manjushri, unifying his guru and the Bodhisattva Manjushri, who of course is the inspirer of that whole tradition. In other words he put himself spiritually in touch through his own Lama and all the Lamas of the tradition with the original fountain head and source of inspiration of that whole lineage.

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V: What are karikas, Bhante?

S: Verses. That is one of Nagarjuna's chief works, the verses on the Madhyamika, verses on the Middle path.

V: The blessing, the gesture of blessings?

S: I don't know whether any special mudra is intended, if so it is probably something like that. Perhaps he made the gesture with the volume, it is not quite clear.

V: What does it mean by, they put the book on top of the head, I read that ...

S: This is to show respect, because the head is called the Uttara anga, the highest member and if you show respect with the head then you are, as it were, truly humbling yourself.

V: Is that this particular school?

S: No, this is general Indian tradition. Again this is more Indian than distinctively Buddhist. It's the typical Indian way of showing respect, lowering the head, putting the head under something. If you put your head, which is the highest part of you under the book, it means you are totally submitting to the book. The book is on top and you are underneath.

V: Is that why sometimes Indians fall on the floor in the front of gurus and ...?

S: Yes, because it is bringing the highest right down to the lowest, as it were. Again this is a very common part of general social life.

Right, we'll carry on with this hymn of praise. I suggest we go right through it once, because it is a quite impassioned hymn, and then after that go through it verse by verse.

The Essence of Good Explanation, Praise of Munindra

(note: Munindra is an epithet of Sakyamuni Buddha, meaning chief of sages.)

Namo Guru Manjughosaya

S: That is the salutation to the Guru Manjughosa, that is to say the Bodhisattva Manjughosa who is the inspirer of this whole tradition and from whom Tsongkhapa has received the understanding that enables him to comprehend conditioned co-production and the void.

V: What's the distinction between Manjushri and Manjughosa, is there one?

S: Some say it is iconographic, if you have the book, The perfection of Wisdom to the heart that is Manjughosa, if you have it on the lotus to the side that is Manjushri. I think I've got it the right way round, but it is the same Bodhisattva.

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"I bow down to the highest of speakers, The fully accomplished Buddha, Who showed the truth of dependent origination: No production, no cessation, No eternalism, no nihilism, No going or coming, No sameness, no diversity, Complete pacification of ego-reflection. (1)

I bow down to him who by realization and speech Is the omniscient one and the peerless Teacher: The conqueror who from his realization Has shown dependently linked origination.

Ignorance is the root Of all worldly deterioration. Buddha saw this and, to reverse it, Spoke the truth of dependently linked origination.

At that time, how could intelligent ones (2) Not understand That very key of your Teaching, The path of the realization of dependent origination?

As this is so, as praise to You, the Protector, Who can find anything more wonderful Than your speech of dependent origination?

"Whatever depends on conditions, That is empty of self-nature." What good precept is there that is More amazing than this speech?

The immature who hold on to this (3) Strengthen the bonds of extremism, While to the wise this very thing is the way To cut the net of ego-reflection.

As this doctrine is not seen in any other teaching, You alone are called Teacher": This word of praise used among the faithless Is like calling a fox a lion.

(1) These first eight lines are the beginning of Nagarjuna's Mula-Madhyamika-karikas and indicate the eight aspects of Voidness.

(2) Blo-dang-ldan-pa, Bodhisattvas.

(3) Who hold on to the view of dependent origination.

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Wonderful teacher, wonderful refuge, Wonderful speaker, wonderful protector. I bow down to the Teacher Who eloquently taught dependently linked origination.

You, the benefactor, To help living beings, Spoke out this incomparable proof (1) For the realization of Voidness, the essence of the doctrine.

How can those who see This system of dependently linked origination As contradictory or unproved Understand your Teaching?

You, seeing that Voidness Is the import of dependent origination, Saw that activity is correct

and is Not contradictory with voidness of self-nature.

If one sees the reverse of this, Then there can be no action in Voidness And no Voidness in that which has action; Thus one falls into a terrible abyss.

Therefore highest praise is given To the vision of dependent origination in your Teaching; There is neither absolute nothingness Nor existence by self-nature.

Non dependence (2) is like a flower of the sky, (3) Therefore non dependence (4) does not exist; If something were to exist by self nature, (5) that existence Would contradict dependence on cause and condition.

As, therefore, there does not exist any thing Other than that which has come forth dependently, It is said that there does not exist any thing Other than that which is void of self-nature.

Self-nature is unchangeable. If things had any self-nature Ego-reflection would be unchangeable And passing from sorrow (6) could not occur.

(1) Dependent origination.

(2) Bltos-med.

(3) i.e. is non-existent.

(4) Ma-brten.

(5) Ngo-bo.

(6) Nirvana.

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"Therefore, "Free of self-nature" Was spoken (1) again and again with a lion's roar Amidst the assembly of the wise. Who could challenge such speech?

There does not exist a bit of self-nature, And it is correct that the order of things is That, dependent on "this", "that" comes forth. These two aspects are non contradictory there is no more to say.

Thus, by reason of dependent origination One does not rely on an extreme view. This good speech by you, the Protector, Is the reason you are the Peerless Speaker.

All is empty of self-nature, (2) And effects come forth dependently; These two realizations are complementary They do not hinder, but assist each other.

What is more beautiful than this? What is more wonderful than this? There is no other praise Than to praise you in this way.

Enslaved by ignorance, Some challenge you; It is not surprising that they are impatient At the sound of no self-nature.

Others, though accepting dependent origination, The valuable treasure of your speech, Are impatient at the roar of Voidness. At them I am surprised.

Such people hold self-nature By the very term "Peerless dependent origination," The door which leads to no self-nature. (3)

(1) By Buddha.

(2) Ngo-bo.

(3) These two verses refers to the Cittamatras and Svatantrikas-Madhyamika, who accept that phenomena exist by self-nature, using as proof dependent origination, i.e. that things come out depending on their source. In the Prasangika-Madhyamika system dependent origination is used as the proof that phenomena have no self-nature.

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"By what method can they be led To that good path which is so pleasing to you, The unsurpassed entrance Well travelled by superior Aryas?

Self-nature, noncomposed, (1) non dependent, And dependently linked, composed, dependent; How can these two come together In one form, without contradiction?

Therefore all things which come forth dependently Are from the first completely free of self-nature; Yet they appear to have self-nature, And thus you said they are like a magician's illusion.

From this one can well understand The statement (2) that even those Who would oppose what you taught Cannot find any reasonable fault in the Teaching.

Why? This explanation Puts far away the possibility Of exaggerating or discrediting Objects seen and not seen.

This path of dependent origination, Which is the reason your speech is seen as peerless, Also creates certainty Of the soundness of your other statements.

Seeing the import of existence, you taught it well. Learning what you taught, One gets rid of all troubles And transmutes the root of ills.

One who is disinclined to your Teaching, Though he wearily perseveres, Invites one fault after another By his firm belief in egoism.

Most wonderful! When the wise Understand the difference between these two, (3) How could they not respect you From their hearts?

(1) Noncomposed here indicates unchanging.

(2) By Nagarjuna and others.

(3) Between following and not following the teaching of Buddha.

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"I do not mention many of your Teachings, For even a rough understanding Of even a portion of what you spoke Will bestow great bliss.

Alas, my mind is obscured by ignorance. Though I have long gone for refuge, I have not found even a portion Of the great accumulation of your excellence.

Yet, when the flow of life is about to cease, And I face the lord of death, I will feel myself fortunate To have this slight faith in you.

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Of teachers, the teacher of dependent origination, Of wisdom, the wisdom of dependent origination: In these, like a powerful conqueror in the worldly realms, You are without peer in your perfect understanding.

All that you have spoken Initiated from the view of dependent origination And is for the purpose of passing from sorrow; You have no actions which do not bring Peace.

Wonderful your Teaching! All who listen Can attain Peace; Who could disrespect upholding your Teaching?

Victorious over all opponents, Free of all internal contradiction, Fulfilling the two purposes (1) of mankind ... In this system of yours my delight increases.

For this purpose you offered Your body, your life, Your precious family, your perfect enjoyments, Time and time again throughout innumerable aeons.

Seeing your excellence I am like a fish drawn to a hook, Drawn to that teaching which came from your heart; What misfortune not to have heard it directly from you.

(1) Attainment of the high positions of men and gods, and attainment of perfect enlightenment.

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"By the strength of that distress, Just as a mother's mind Always dwells on her precious child, My mind is always with the Teaching.

Then, as I contemplate your speech, You, the Teacher, completely surrounded by a net of light, And shining with the glorious marks and signs, (1) Speak out with the beautiful voice of Sarasvati.

Contemplating what was thus spoken, The image of Sakyamuni in my mind, Though only a reflection, Helps me as moonlight soothes the torment of heat.

Although this good system Is so wonderful, ... People who are unskilled in it Vie among themselves like tangling vines. (2)

Having seen this, I myself Followed after the skilful With manifold effort, Seeking again and again the intent of your Teaching.

At that time I studied many canons From my own sect and from the sects of others; (3) My mind was tormented Again and again by a web of doubt.

You predicted that the commentator On the system of the peerless vehicle (4) Which abandons the extremes of existence and non-existence Would be Nagarjuna, whose commentaries are a lotus garden.

Increscent sphere of undefiled knowledge, Traversing unimpeded across the sky of scriptures, Dispelling the darkness of heart of extreme views, Eclipsing the stars of wrong speech ...

(1) The thirty-two and the eighty distinguishing marks of a Buddha.

(2) Bal-ba-dza.

(3) Prasangikas and all others, Buddhist and non-Buddhist.

(4) Prajnaparamita.

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"All is illumined by the rosary of moonbeams Of good explanation of the Eminent Moon. (1) When by kindness of the Lama I beheld this, My weariness was relieved.

Of all actions, The highest is that of Speech; As this is so, it is from this viewpoint That the

wise should follow Buddha.

Following the Teacher, I became a monk And my practice of his Teaching was not so bad; I, a bhiksu making effort in a yogi's deeds, In this way respect the greatest Sage.

As I met with the doctrine of that peerless Teacher By the kindness of my Lama, I dedicate this virtue that all beings Might be upheld by a spiritual teacher.

May the teaching of the benefactor be undisturbed By the wind of false concepts until samsara's end. Having understood the nature of the Teaching, May all be filled forever with belief in the Teacher.

May I not for even an instant be remiss In upholding in all my lives, though it cost my life and body, This good system of Sakyamuni Which illumines dependent origination.

May I spend day and night considering The way to propagate this achievement, Accomplished with great effort And immeasurable hardship by that superior Guide.

When I make effort in this system with pure high resolve. May Brahma, Indra, and the World Protectors, Maha-kala and the other Guardians, Assist me always without fail.

May I and others attain The Tathagata's body, Attendants, life span, and sphere, As well as his extraordinary signs.

(1) Candrakirti - Moon-famed. Candrakirti wrote many commentaries on the works of Nagarjuna, and it was through study of these works that Tsongkhapa attained great realization. The lotus garden of Nagarjuna's commentaries refers to the gunda lotus, which blooms in the light of the moon.

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"As the Teacher visited this world, His Teaching illumines like rays of the sun. By brotherly accord between followers of the Teaching, May there be the good fortune that the Teaching stays long."

S: Now what general impression do you get from this?

V: A tremendous sense of gratitude (S: Yes)

V: Inspired (S: Inspired)

V: No doubt (S: No doubt)

V: Faith (S: Faith and?)

V: Reverence. (S: Reverence)

V: Devotion

S: Devotion. It is also somewhat reminiscent of Shantideva in as much as there is this combination of intellectual penetration or wisdom, and faith and devotion. In the same person, in the same work. And perhaps he isn't quite so impassioned as Shantideva but he does have that characteristic in a general way of combining wisdom with devotion.

And what about the teaching, what do you think he is trying to say about dependent origination? What are some of the things, at least, he is trying to say about dependent origination? What do you gather from this work about dependent origination?

V: Non-dual.

S: But non-dual in what sense?

V: It destroys the extreme views.

S: Yes, right.

V: It's at the very heart of the teaching, everything else revolves round it.

V: It says all there is that needs to be said.

V: He's also pointing out that the doctrine of voidness is just the full development of that...

S: Yes, this is in fact his main point. This in fact was the point that was cleared up for him by his spiritual experience on this particular occasion, after which he wrote this hymn. The non-duality of dependent origination and voidness.

V: In what sense... obviously one would have to understand this ultimately from the point of view of Insight, to understand their non-duality, but can you say something about it?

S: Well it seems to me that Tsongkhapa, in fact, has put it as clearly as it can be put. It can hardly be put [522] more clearly, but there were two or three verses that seemed to emphasize this even more than the others. Or at least to bring out a certain practical import more clearly than some of the others. 'You, seeing that Voidness is the import of dependent origination, saw that activity is correct and is not contradictory with Voidness of self-nature. If one sees the reverse of this, then there can be no action in Voidness and no Voidness in that which has action, thus one falls into a terrible abyss'.

So what does he mean basically by saying that Voidness is the import of dependent of origination. In what sense is Voidness the import of dependent origination?

V: That that's what we should, in some sense, be aiming at?

S: Yes, but in what sense is dependent origination...?

V: That our activity should be Void, should be selfless, egoless.

S: It's getting quite near. In what way is dependent origination Void?

V: It seems to be contradictory but he says they don't contradict one another, the two don't contradict.

S: Yes, he is saying this, so how does he connect them? How is dependent origination the same as Voidness?

V: Dependent origination is a conceptual expression of the Insight experience.

S: Yes, but even more clearly than that?

V: Because things are dependent they don't have a self-nature.

S: Right, because things are dependent they don't have a self-nature. So he is controverting the view that the things which are dependent have a real existence. And that one real existence is dependent upon another real existence. He is pointing out that if things are dependent, to that extent they have no self nature, no real existence. And this absence of self nature in things which are dependent, this absence of self nature is the Voidness

Voidness is not a separate principle, apart from the dependence, or apart from the dependent origination, Nirvana is not separate from Samsara. The water is not separate from the waves.



This is what he is essentially getting at in this way.

V: You could in fact apply this to many other doctrines, not just dependent origination. I mean you could say the same thing, presumably, also about anatta or even impermanence.

S: Well anatta and impermanence are all aspects of dependent origination, one could say. I mean, if there was no impermanence you couldn't have one nidana arising and another passing away. To say that things are anatta is applying dependent origination, including the Voidness to the [523] so called individual.

So, Tsongkhapa is saying also, as it were, that one must not think of Voidness as something separate from the dependent origination, separate from mundane existence. It is the truth of mundane existence, the unconditioned is the unconditioned nature of the conditioned.

V: Could you say that again?

S: That the unconditioned, for instance, does not exist as a separate principle, as is sometimes suggested by the language, at least of the Hinayana. But it is the unconditioned nature of the conditioned. That is to say the conditioned in its depths, as it were.

V: Is that the same thing as saying that the conditioned, in fact, is beyond all descriptions, beyond all conceptual formulations?

S: No it isn't, because you described it as dependent origination.

V: Like you said the other night in the meditation, you said the unconditioned was, as it were, behind the conditioned.

S: Yes, that is a very crude way of putting it indeed. But possibly better put it in that way than not put it at all. If you take that literally you think of the unconditioned standing behind the conditioned, just like a man standing behind a tree. Whereas it isn't like that at all, the Voidness is not a separate principle above or below or underneath dependent origination. The two are identical, there is no duality.

This is why Tsongkhapa can't understand why the Hinayanists, who accept dependent origination can't accept the Mahayana teaching of Voidness. He says that it logically follows. Where does he say that, he says it a bit ... 'Others though accepting dependent origination, the valuable treasure of your speech are impatient at the rule of Voidness, at them I am surprised'. He is referring to the Hinayanists, and even some Mahayana schools.

But to come back to those other two verses. 'You, seeing that Voidness is the import of dependent origination, saw that activity is correct and is not contradictory with Voidness of self nature.' The fact that there is a Voidness of self nature does not mean that everything comes to a standstill, in fact if there was not Voidness things would come to a standstill. It is Voidness which makes action possible. 'If one sees the reverse of this then there can be no action in Voidness' In other words no Bodhisattva life. 'And no Voidness in that which has action, in other words, you are bound for ever if you are bound at all, you can never get free. 'This one falls into a terrible abyss'.

V: There were times when everything was Void?

S: No, no, everything always is Void. Not that there is a Void first of all and after that Void everything comes, and those things, of course, are not Void. This makes the Voidness a cosmic principle in the past, which is not the Buddhist point of view at all.

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V: There always was greed, hatred and delusion in existence?

S: Yes, in the sense that you go back and back in time, you never come to the beginning. But also one must look at that a little more closely, because if you go back and back in time, what is going back and back in time?

V: Your conditioned mind.

S: Conditioned mind. Where the conditioned mind is, you will find greed, hatred and delusion.

Also the difficulty arises because we think of time as something objective, out there, and not just as part of our structure of perception and consciousness. The same with space.

V: I was trying to find where we went wrong then.

S: Well you are going wrong this very minute! I mean there is not much point in tracing back to the past because you will be tracing it back to the past with that very same mind which is wrong this very minute.

So because it is wrong now it will be wrong then, it is the mind itself or that particular attitude which is wrong. There is not much point in tracing it back to the past to try and find where it went wrong. It goes wrong here and now.

V: I know, but to wake up to the fact here and now, where we are.

S: Well you just wake up to the fact here and now, it is like going on a long journey into Brighton in order to come back here.

V: Looking at the second verse again, 'If one sees the reverse of this'. I don't quite understand what is meant by that.

S: The reverse of what is stated in the previous verse. If one holds to the opposite view, that Voidness and dependent origination are two quite separate things. And then if you identify activity with dependent origination and non-activity with Voidness then if you end up with this sort of completely dualistic position, then one who realizes Voidness cannot act, i.e. a Buddha or Bodhisattva, and one who is involved with conditioned co-production can never become free, can never act.

V: I still can't see how the unconditioned is the same as Voidness. I can see how something doesn't have a self nature, but it's conditioned. But I can't understand this unconditioned thing.

S: Originally the term is asamskrta, which means not put together, incomposite. Perhaps it is best to look at it in that way. If it is not something made up of parts, as a conditioned thing is or a compounded thing is. So if a thing is not made up of parts it can't undergo any breaking up of, or breaking up into those parts. So therefore it is eternal, it is indestructible. This is how the Hinayana [525] looks on the unconditioned or the uncompounded.

But this is a bit philosophically naive so usually the Mahayana speaks in terms of the Voidness and of Voidness as being inseparable from the conditioned co-production. The Hinayana does not speak of the unconditioned as being the depth of conditioned, though it does suggest it in its doctrine of the Three Doors of Liberation. That if you penetrate into unsatisfactoriness, then you enter Nirvana by one of the three doors, I think this one would be the door of the ... If you penetrate to another aspect of the conditioned you emerge into the unconditioned by another door. That suggests that by going deeply into the conditioned you reach the unconditioned, but this is not explicitly or systematically stated by the Hinayana, but it is certainly suggested.

But what the Mahayana, what Nagarjuna and also what Tsongkhapa is saying is that we are not to think of the absolute or the Voidness as something separate, as a sort of separate

principle on its own. Because also, you mustn't identify the Voidness with this life, or with the Samsara from the point of view of the Samsara, merely giving the Samsara as you experience it here and now the label of, well this is the Voidness. It must be an actual Insight or an actual experience.

V: What I find very difficult to fathom is that it seems that one can get at it intellectually, by simple verbal analysis. But there is obviously more to it than that.

S: Certainly there is, but an intellectual understanding can be a correct intellectual understanding, this is one of the great points in Buddhism, as it were. That the correct intellectual understanding becomes the basis, in meditation, for the development of Insight. And the Gelugpas attach very great importance to this correct intellectual understanding. Not all schools do attach the same importance to that, but the Gelugpas very strongly maintain that unless you have beforehand the correct intellectual understanding, then when you try to develop Vipassana, or Insight, you will not succeed. Or else it will be distorted, or a bit awry. So therefore, according to them it is very important to have this very clear and correct intellectual understanding, before you take up the practice of vipassana. Otherwise your practice will only reinforce a wrong view.

This doesn't mean that it has got to be very sophisticated and scholarly, it can be very simple, but it must be clear and of the nature of a definite intellectual understanding. Again I am using this word intellectual, trying to purge it of its more unpleasant associations.

V: It seems that what happens when one has a relatively clear intellectual understanding, it sort of satisfies the mind, the discursive mind and then it just dies away or stops.

S: Therefore one needs to revert to it after a spell of samatha and contemplate it, and by contemplating the content of the clear intellectual understanding you open yourself to the Insight of which the intellectual understanding is a reflection on its own level. Just as, you can say, that if you develop love and compassion, then you make possible the [526] development of the Bodhicitta. What you have to do is to open yourself to Insight. In the same way if you develop the intellectual understanding, when that is backed up by samatha practice and experience, then you open yourself to the development of Insight.

V: It's a sort of preparatory basis. Otherwise the Insight would have a devastating effect, quite a shock.

S: Yes, and also what is the use of meditation which will back up a miccha-ditthi. Some miccha-ditthis get very powerful support from meditation.

V: Can you give an example of that?

S: Well, someone thinks, 'I'm god'. He has come to that conclusion. So he gets into very deep meditation, gets on very well and experiences great bliss and peace. 'Well of course I am experiencing bliss and peace, because I am god, it is natural that I should experience that great bliss.' So his experience in meditation reinforces his wrong view.

V: Someone I had contact with recently had a similar kind of experience, in that they have been involved with divine light and started practising meditation. She made this tremendous discovery that she was eternal and that she had always been and that she always would be. It's the same kind of thing.

S: So therefore it is very important to have the experience of samatha, so that intellectual understanding can be transformed into Insight and also to provide, as it were, the raw material to be transformed into the Bodhicitta. But it is equally important to have the clear correct understanding so that when you do develop samatha, then you are actually transforming your understanding into Insight and not just strengthening a wrong which will continue to hold you back.

(End tape 23)

V: There seems to be a great reluctance, from what I experience, when concentration deepens, to share one's awareness with other people. It's as if one is trying to grasp at something and the mind is continually trying to grasp at a thing.

S: Perhaps this then is the wrong approach, you should just look, rather than try to grasp, just see. But as I said the Gelugpas attach very great importance to this point, that there must be the preliminary intellectual preparation. Some Theravadins attach great importance to that too, and some even go so far as to say, perhaps a bit extremely, that you shouldn't take up meditation until you have got a really clear intellectual understanding of the doctrine, otherwise you might just reinforce your wrong views.

Maybe that is rather extreme. It also depends on whether you are in contact with teachers who can explain the doctrine to you clearly. And when I say explain the doctrine, I am not thinking here in terms of a scholarly understanding or studying many books, but just a very clear and correct intellectual understanding of certain basic things.

V: I'm still not quite clear where the end [527] of an intellectual understanding comes and where Insight begins. There are some things that I think I understand that I can't verbalize, and I don't know if that means that they are intellectual or not.

S: I think one has to be very careful about this inability to verbalize. I think that usually if one has a definite understanding one will be able to communicate that. I tend to be a bit suspicious if people say, 'I understand but I just can't explain it'. I think one can if one tries, although it may be difficult. You also need, sometimes, the right person to explain it to, it isn't just a matter of explaining it into the air or in the abstract. But if you establish the right sort of communication, if you are on the right sort of wavelength with somebody else, you can explain.

V: Does that mean that what one is trying to explain is still an intellectual understanding?

S: No, what I am saying is that if you can't explain your understanding, it means that your understanding is not yet clarified, it is more like a vague feeling or a hunch. Or even maybe a sort of prejudice in some cases, it's something you feel very strongly and you can't explain it, you can't justify it but you say, 'well I know how it is but I can't put it across'. It really means that you can't demonstrate it.

V: It's not really fully conscious, actually, is it?

S: It's not really fully conscious, well perhaps you don't allow it to be because that will be to expose it. Perhaps you don't want it to be exposed, you prefer it to remain a bit unconscious, so that you can say 'I understand it in my own mind but I just can't explain it'. I think one should be quite careful of that.

V: I think quite often people say, 'I have an intuitive understanding of this', and because they can't explain it it is an intuitive understanding ...

S: It very often means that they have an inner resistance to the opposite.

V: The opposite?

V: Sorry, I don't understand that.

S: For instance, supposing someone says, 'I just know, I just really do know, I understand', for instance, 'there is God, but I can't prove it, I can't just tell you why I think this, I just believe it, I just know it'. But actually the position is that they have an inner resistance to accepting that there is no God, in that sense. (V: I see) But they cannot justify that.

V: It's also ... I think a reluctance or an inability for people to really, as you said, to really think things through. They have the feeling, perhaps, about something or other, a vague understanding but to really get it crystal clear and really sharp, in other words to put it into words. This is why writing is very good, it helps you to [528] really see just what you do know.

S: At the same time, of course, one mustn't go to the other extreme, and someone isn't necessarily of a better understanding because he seems to verbalize very easily and freely. But very often when we say that we understand but we can't express it, it is not really an understanding it is more like a feeling, or even, as I said, a sort of prejudice

V: This point about where intellectual understanding ends and Insight begins, isn't really..., I mean one is in a different dimension.

S: Yes, the criterion is that if it is an actual Insight then you act upon it. For instance, if someone says, 'I know that the world is going to end in a weeks time, I just know this, it is going to end in a weeks time', but if you find them making preparations for a holiday next year, well you won't believe that they really know that. But if they really do know something then they will act in accordance with it.

So, if someone says, 'I know that I have no ego, that is my actual experience,' then you find them acting very selfishly, then you know that they have no Insight into that, or at least very, very little. Certainly not a complete Insight.

V: Well what is faith then?

S: Faith is more like ones emotional response to something which you experience as higher than yourself. And obviously you don't understand it, because it is higher than yourself you can't comprehend it but you are in contact with it to some extent. You don't know it but you feel it is there. But faith isn't belief, not in the Buddhist context anyway.

V: Do you think that you would be able [to] explain your faith to someone else?

S: You can't completely explain your faith, because if you could explain what you have faith in it wouldn't be faith it would be knowledge.

V: So there is a point where one can't verbalize.

S: You can't verbalize your faith, not in conceptual terms. You can communicate, you can make someone feel your faith, but you can't conceptualize it.

V: In that case it is more a question of the other person having faith in you.

S: Or at least being open to you, and on your wavelength, as it were. So we can communicate sometimes a feeling, quite genuinely, but that is quite different from communicating or sharing an Insight or an understanding.

V: There is quite a few things that need defining. Maybe that would be defined gradually as we go on talking, but it is things like, faith, conceptualizing, communication, verbalizing. They all seem to..., for me anyway, I find very difficult to distinguish. I tend to get them mixed up.

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V: It seems that one can detect a certain sort of reluctance for people to share themselves in their manner of speech. If they are really open people, the way they speak will to some extent or other reveal it. (S: Yes)

V: Presumably there are different levels of intellectual understanding, that deepens as you

familiarize yourself with this...

S: I think we probably have to rehabilitate the word intellectual. It was originally a very respectable word and was distinguished from reason. In the middle ages, for instance, the intellect was corresponding more or less to the Greek 'nous', that is a higher faculty which saw things directly by way of a sort of intellectual intuition, without going through reasoning processes, and which saw them correctly and clearly. This is what intellect meant in the middle ages. It was considered a much higher faculty than reason.

V: So, could that be equivalent to Insight?

S: In a way, though there are differences.

V: Isn't it rather similar just to when you demonstrate something, it is immediately obvious what is happening, one doesn't actually have to say anything about it? (S: Yes)

V: I just feel totally confused, actually.

V: Intellectual and reasoning as being two different things?

S: Reasoning is a process but intellectual intuition, to use that expression, is something direct, you just see.

V: That seems to be a contradiction to me, those two words.

S: That's just because of the modern usage. But it is very unfortunate that in modern usage we do not have a term corresponding to the medieval intellect or the ancient Greek nous. We've lost that.

V: Why not call it intuition, that's the way I understand ...

S: But intuition is much too subjective, and allied with subjective emotion, very often. It's also got a quite different meaning in psychology.

V: I think that itself is a corruption of the term, in my experience. The way I have come across it used it has been in a very, quite a higher, pure sense, without being alloyed with feelings, personal feelings.

S: No, I don't think that is the way in which it is generally used.

V: I think the way Jung uses it in his classification of types is meant.

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S: Well there again it is not in higher sense, because it is just a type, it is something that you are born with. Whereas this higher faculty, intellect or whatever you call it, is something which transcends differentiation of types.

V: More like a direct perception.

S: More like a direct perception, yes.

V: Perhaps reason is something you do and intellect is something you have. Is that too vague?

S: You could say, 'and intellection is something you have'. You intellect, directly. Reasoning is going from here to there, your major and your minor premise and your conclusion. But to intellect means to just (sound) and go like that.

V: But that doesn't necessarily mean that one is able to express it verbally, an intellectual

understanding could be ...

S: Yes, as I said before, I am rather doubtful about that intellectual insight which claims not to be able to express itself. I think you can express it.

V: But maybe it would be through another medium than speech, perhaps through a drawing.

S: You might be able to, though again I rather doubt that. I think probably, unless perhaps in very exceptional circumstances, speech and concepts are the natural medium.

V: Perhaps one could make a distinction between a reasoned understanding and an intellectual understanding. Because you arrive at the reasoned understanding through the medium of words, whereas the intellectual apprehension is the direct experience, which is then communicated through words.

S: Yes, yes you could say that.

V: What is the difference between intellectual and Insight, intellectual understanding?

S: You mean Insight in the Buddhistic sense? (V: Yes) Well it is also in relation to the object, for instance you could be, say, studying history and you could develop an intellectual insight into the process of history, but this would not be, in a sense, a spiritual thing. But if you were, say, reflecting on the nature of Nirvana and you developed a real Insight into that, then this would be a spiritual Insight.

V: Perhaps we ought to refer to, as the spiritual Insight, more as prajna, it would be a bit more ... When people talk of intellectual insight they could use just insight. (S: Mmm)

V: Then as you said that, then I felt a little bit clearer. Because I can't understand, maybe because of my previous use or understanding of intellectual, I can't understand how intellectual can be a direct experience. But [531] if you say the word insight, and then I think, 'Oh yes, I understand what you mean'. Not insight in the sense that you are taking it, like prajna.

V: Insight would seem to involve all the faculties. It's not something which can be separated from any of the faculties.

S: Yes, there is great confusion in our terminology. Because we have also got the word understanding which can be used in various ways. But the main point I was making was that we seem to have lost a cognitive term, if you like, for something above and beyond the reasoning process, and which cognizes directly and sees into directly, without going through those reasoning processes. But there was a word 'gnosis', which was a Greek word, but that has got occult associations now, so maybe that is not a very clean word any longer.

V: The word apperception used to be used, didn't it? Or wasn't it in quite the same sense?

S: Apperception is more like direct sense apprehension. Kant speaks of the transcendental unity of apperception, for instance Kant uses the word transcendental in a quite different sense than we use it.

V: But I am sure the word insight would be more appropriate. I hate take it away from the way you use it but I think that in the English language the term insight would be much more appropriate to what we are talking about.

S: Probably, or intellectual insight, you could say.

V: It's intellectual insight and spiritual insight. Two different...

S: Yes, but they are allied. Sometimes you can't really tell where one ends and the other begins, and I think the point was made on a previous seminar, I don't know if anyone was there, that you can actually develop an insight, in the Buddhist sense, by virtue of your very patient and sincere and persistent intellectual inquiry. Was anyone present on that particular seminar? This possibility is not excluded.

The intensity of your intellectual drive and the energy you put into it results in a sort of unification of energies analogous to a sort of meditative experience. And you can see then, with a genuine intellectual cum spiritual insight, or the intellectual insight leads into the spiritual insight.

The only thing I don't like about this word insight is that it is 'in', it suggests looking within as distinct from looking without.

V: It's both really, isn't it?

S: Well ideally, yes.

V: One perhaps experiences it within although it is looking out.

S: Mmm, for instance vipassana means seeing, passati is simply to see, it is the ordinary word for see, and vi is a [532] very emphatic prefix. Really to see, this is why I render it as vision, and samyak drsti, or samma ditthi as perfect vision.

V: ... just calls it vision.

S: Vision. Though as vision suggests some object which is seen, but still vision is quite good, perfect vision comes quite near and it is quite a good translation for samyak drsti.

V: I think we should use prajna a lot more...

S: Yes, use prajna a lot more.

V: ... and just let it be absorbed.

V: But isn't that the continuity that we often call, part of your insight, prajna is ... ?

S: Yes, but don't forget there are three kinds of prajna. There is the prajna which comes by hearing, by reflection. So you could say that the cinta-mayi-prajna is the intellectual insight, and the bhavana-mayi-prajna is the spiritual insight. And the suta-mayi-prajna is simply, well it is hardly insight at all, it's intellectual insight in the debased modern sense of the term. We probably want another term, we could say just understanding, theoretical understanding. It's not even that, it is more like understanding the words without understanding the meaning. Do you see what I mean?

V: You mean you could learn something, you could learn, say, a science...

S: Without understanding the principles of science, yes?

V: Is that what the word compute means, to compute something?

S: To count, computer means the counter. Do you see what I am getting at? So going from the top you could have, spiritual insight, which is Bhavana-mayi-prajna and then intellectual insight, which is cinta-maya-prajna and then the first which we don't really have a proper term for.

V: Theoretical understanding.



S: It is, theoretical understanding, more or less covers it.

V: Mechanical understanding.

S: As I said, it is an understanding of the words, without a..., you understand the meaning of the words separately, but you don't really understand the meaning of the whole statement.

V: Head learning?

S: You could say head learning, it's ear learning actually.

V: It's a bit like school exams, from what I can remember.

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V: Parrot.

S: No, it's more than that. It's more like being stuck at the level of words. It's a literal understanding rather than understanding of the meaning.

V: And this is by hearing.

S: This is by hearing. (V What was the other?) Then there was intellectual insight and the spiritual insight. You have certainly got the words correct, you have received the message, as it were, the words, even the ideas but you have just received them passively. You have heard them, you have sort of understood them, but there is no creative understanding.

V: You haven't added to it.

S: No, it's not even..., you have not appropriated it, you have not assimilated it.

V: I suppose in a sense that wisdom on this level you couldn't really articulate in your own terms, you would have to regurgitate.

S: You could only regurgitate, yes.

V: Yes, that's what I meant by adding to, you have to add yourself to it.

S: Yes, you couldn't contribute anything.

V: What was the Sanskrit for that one?

S: The lowest one, that is suta-maya-panna or sruta-mayi-prajna in Sanskrit.

V: This intellectual intuition you are talking about, is that, say, a great scientist who comes up with something like the special theory of relativity, is that on that level?

S: I think you could say that. I think probably intellectual intuition comes out very powerfully in the case of the higher mathematics, with which of course advanced science works.

V: It's something that ... it seems to synthesize ... or transcends the concepts ...

S: Yes, I think you could certainly speak of intellectual intuition, yes.

V: Would it also apply to the insight that one may obtain on reading a sutra, for instance?

S: Yes, you could have, even, if you were deeply concentrated and very devoted you could even have a spiritual insight on reading a sutra. But an intellectual insight you could have perhaps fairly easily, just by being quite and concentrated and taking it very seriously.

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V: But I am still a bit confused on the general difference between prajna used generally and vipassana.

S: Put it this way, the term vipassana is used much more within the Theravada context and the term prajna more within the Mahayana context. So this alters, a little bit, the content.

V: It would approach the middle one, really wouldn't it, cinta-maya-prajna. (S: Which?) Vipassana.

S: No, that is spiritual insight, vipassana, quite definitely.

V: And what about Prajna Paramita, the highest goal in the spiritual?

S: You could say that prajna in the Hinayana sense corresponds to vipassana.

V: Which prajna is that then?

S: But prajnaparamita is vipassana, though the term is not used in this connection in a purely Mahayanistic sense, especially as regards the understanding or the realization of Voidness, again in the Mahayanistic sense.

V: Is that still with spiritual insight, but it's a specific kind of...

S: It is a much broader and richer and deeper insight. In the same way that the Mahayana itself is broader and deeper and richer than the Hinayana.

V: So really vipassana doesn't directly relate to any of those three levels of prajna?

S: It relates to the third.

V: Could you clarify about hearing, reflecting and whatever the last one, how they ...

S: You mean how they correlate with other terms. That is quite difficult because all the terms are used in different ways in different contexts. It is not that they have got one set meaning.

But vipassana usually means the spiritual insight which at first is momentary and flashlike, but which gradually builds up into a permanent faculty. When it becomes a permanent faculty it is generally spoken of as prajna. And when you add the Mahayana dimension to that prajna, it becomes prajnaparamita.

V: And what does, in this context, ... mean?

S: Heaven only knows! (laughter)

V: It seems to me Bhante we really need, quite urgently a pretty comprehensive glossary of all these terms.

S: Perhaps we do.

V: There doesn't seem to be anything that...

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S: There can't be clear thinking until there are definite terms.

V: There is quite a lengthy discussion in the Bodhicaryavatara seminar which will be available at the end of the year.

V: On these terms?

V: You do actually, in the meditation section go into all this stuff, and into satri (?) as well.

V: Just have it all tabulated if possible.

S: I am a bit suspicious of over-systematic tabulations, but certainly a rough correspondence can be worked out.

V: It seems, I've been trying to listen rather carefully to your definitions and put them in lists, but they don't..., I get the feeling that if you actually try to write them down in a list like that you would miss the real import of them...

S: Yes, that may well be.

V: ... but it still might be worth trying.

V: However you write them down you can miss the import of them...

S: But the main thing is that Tsongkhapa here is concerned with the elucidation of a spiritual insight in terms of an intellectual insight. He's giving you a conceptual transcription of his experience, in other words, and he's doing it very adequately. And the Gelugpas have always insisted very strongly on this aspect of the Dharma, this aspect of the practice. That you should be very clear in your understanding of the Dharma. You should have a clear intellectual insight as the basis, eventually, for your development of spiritual insight, wisdom, call it what you will.

But muddled thinking does not lead to Enlightenment.

V: What ... the Nyingmapas have to say about that?

S: The Nyingmapas certainly do not go in for muddled thinking, but they don't have the same emphasis on this intellectual insight arising out of the study of the texts of the Madhyamika that the Gelugpas do.

V: The expression here is very simple, too.

S: It is simple.

V: Really simple, really good.

S: I think probably in this country there is so much of woolly thinking, especially in Buddhist circles, though in other circles too, the pseudo-liberal circles and so on. That we really do need to insist on clarity of thought and the importance of the intellectual insight.

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V: It's very difficult sometimes in a class situation when you have got people who bring their confused thinking in...

S: It is very difficult indeed.

V: ... you get caught up in it and you just can't explain, no matter how ...

S: It sometimes takes a week or a month to sort out just a few statements that are meaningful.

V: I don't think I am trying to justify muddled thinking because I recognize having that, it's just what I felt that I understood from some of your lectures about, say, the mind transcension (?) of the Jinas, that at a higher level than concepts and words there would be symbols and

images and that eventually of course it was ineffable anyway.

S: Yes, but the emphasis must be on the eventually. I am only saying that people shouldn't take refuge in that word ineffability prematurely. Certainly that eventually there comes something ...

(break in tape)

I am not saying that there is no such thing as the ineffable, I am only saying that you should not use the word ineffable to cover up your own inadequacies of communication with regard to something which can, in fact, be communicated. It may mean that you need more skill in your medium or it may be that you need a more determined effort and so on.

I am not saying you personally, but people who take refuge in this word ineffable prematurely. And sometimes it is quite irritating, you say 'what do you really mean by that?' And they say, 'I just can't tell you, I know, but it is just beyond words', and it is some quite simple matter.

V: If somebody could express it through a painting, would that be just as clear, or just as sound a way of communicating those words?

S: If it was really a communication, if you really did communicate.

V: I think also though, that if you could express it in a painting, you could express it words ...

V: No.

V: ... well surely there must be some kind of equivalent. You can't communicate the experience, but I would have thought that you could have...

S: But what do you mean by express?

V: I think it is possible, but say if somebody is inadequate at doing that but finds maybe another media, well then for them it is easier to do it that way. We are talking about things that can be explained ...

S: Probably you can say that words are the most precise and versatile of all human means of communication.

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V: And that words even are used by ordinary people.

S: Well, just words, why as used by ordinary people, even extraordinary people have used words! For instance, it has been said that if you look at a dictionary that you will find such fine shades of difference of meaning are expressed by different words. Whereas in usual communication we blur these distinctions, so our communications become less precise, more vague. But the words are there, the differentiation is already there in language in many cases, but we just don't make use of them.

It maybe that to communicate or express something we need to have recourse to a whole system of thought, and then that means we have to learn that system of thought, as it were. Learn that language before we can express, before we can communicate.

V: I take it that you are not saying, Bhante, that all that the Buddha is teaching is experience of Enlightenment, can, if you are clever enough the words can be expressed...

S: It is not a question of words, clever enough with words. You have got to apprehend it in thoughts first.

V: Well even that, can the experience if you are agile conceptually be transmitted?

S: But what do you mean by expressed. When you say expressed to you mean give to people some glimpse, or some hint of the actual experience and point them in the direction of the experience? You can't give them the equivalent of the.. you can't give them the experience just in words. But the words can point in the direction of the experience and that is what you mean by expression.

V: Do you think that.., to get back to the point that I was trying to make, would you accept what I said or do you think that it is not the case, that you if you have an experience, no matter how inarticulate you are generally, you don't have that particular gift, you should somehow be able to communicate through that medium something to which you can give expression in another medium, such as painting.

S: I tend to think that experience is naturally self-communicating. It's like saying, 'I like somebody very much but I just can't express it, I don't know how to express it'. But if the liking is there and you are a normal healthy person the means of expression will be there too. I think it is very much like that. Unless you are deaf, dumb and blind, but even deaf, dumb and blind people find some means of expression, like Helen Keller.

V: In a sense though you could say that if you haven't.., to the extent to which you can communicate and you do communicate is the extent to which you actually experience that.

S: There is some truth [in] that.

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V: I heard an interview on the radio with the members of a string quartet, I don't know, this may be fatuous, but it connects with what you were saying, and they were asked how they rehearsed. And they said that it wasn't a question of when we rehearse a piece we don't say, 'this piece of music is supposed to expressing such and such emotion and such and such an insight and you are not expressing it', we say, 'you are playing too soft or too loud or too fast or too slow, 'because if we could put it into words there would be no point in playing it.

Would you agree with that?

S: Not necessarily. Some people have, for instance, painted and also written poems, and written [painted?] a painting and written a poem on the same subject. Like Rosetti or like Blake.

V: But I don't think that is ... analogous actually. What I have in mind is that you could use the argument that you can't., ... about your experience and so you have got to do it in this other way. But if you can't or at least you can't communicate the experience not even necessarily through words but just by your presence, even. Perhaps not using very clever words but what your presence, your existential presence, your experience brings to those words. If you can't communicate that directly then you are not going to be able to communicate that through a painting either.

S: It's as though the expression is actually part of the experience itself, or at least an extension of it. That you can't think in terms of, say, having something to express and the expression as something quite separated from what you wanted to express.

For instance if you take a Shakespeare play, well what is that, is it that Shakespeare has something that he wants to express and then the play expresses it? No, it is all one thing, when he wrote the play it was experience and it was expression.

V: But you can't really separate yourself from the experience.

S: Or the expression from the experience.

V: So you could say that the Buddha's teaching was an extension of his experience. (S: Mmm)

V: I must say that I found myself bound to disagree about when we were talking about music. I think that musical experience is basically of a different order than conceptual experience, I don't think it can be related. I don't think you can say that if you had at your disposal sufficient understanding and experience that you could automatically write it out in words. Like for instance a Beethoven sonata.

S: That isn't being said.

V: They are both combined in ... sound and ...

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V: It sounds to me like again you are separating the music from the experience, or that expression of that experience from the experience. The experience is just there and it will be communicated in what way ever.

V: That's not..., I think I remember saying that through a certain experience you get through music, you go away and you break down that experience that you've just had, through a ... of music.

V: Talk about particularly the relationship between musical expression and verbal.

S: I think you have to make a distinction here between what could be called passive experience and active experience, or creative experience. When you are on the receiving end someone communicates his experience to you. That is not experience in quite the same sense as when you have an experience within yourself, originating within yourself which you feel you want to express.

V: I'm not sure that I was saying that, I just thought about, for instance if a man had a great creative experience and expresses that naturally in musical terms, I don't think that same experience could express in words, even if he was a poet.

S: You are making that same illegitimate distinction or division.

V: I don't understand that distinction.

S: It's not that you have an experience in the abstract and you think, well, shall I put it into music or shall I put it into painting, no, that doesn't happen. Unless you are just thinking about the possibility of experience or expression, but if you have an actual experience it either just flows into music or flows into painting or it flows into poetry.

V: But if it flows into music can that same experience...

S: But you are saying the same thing, you are coming back to the same thing.

V: I really haven't got that ...

V: Presumably it could be, like the very next day the guy could be walking out in the garden and he would suddenly have the same experience and this time he would just put pencil to paper.

V: Then it wouldn't be the same experience. No, there's...

S: If the expression is the experience, you find that. For instance when you write, you don't have an experience and then you write it out, except in a very sort of vague way, no, when you have written it out, in a way the experience itself has developed and you experience

more, you experience more as you write. It is just a little seed to begin with, [540] just the end of a thread and you gradually pull it all out.

V: Maybe one can't talk about creation as experience in that way, about musical compositions ... maybe that is not experience in the sense that we talk about an experience of life.

S: I think what one mustn't do is to separate the experience from the expression and then think in terms of having the experience but you can't express it. When you express it, to the extent that you can't express it you are not having the experience.

V: Alienation.

S: Well, no I won't say that, that would be very extreme, but it may be some blockage or conflict, something of that kind.

V: Presumably if a person has all their faculties about them and, forgetting about training, obviously one can train in a particular thing, one can train one's hands to do certain things or train one's tongue, but presuming a man has all his faculties about him, experience will explode out of all the different faculties, through them.

S: There is also the question, what is the nature of the experience, that you are allegedly wanting to express. Sometimes, when people are unable to express, as they say, what they experience, they don't know what they are experiencing.

V: The words occurred to me too, how personal, that's always an element in it. There is an element of the realization that one isn't cut off from the rest of reality, whether it is the reality of sound, light or touch, of all, of any one of the faculties, that they are all interconnected, all interrelated. One thing flows into another.

(end side 1)

S: I think I didn't make that, I didn't make my point clear. What I mean, just to give a concrete example, something I have actually come across. You are discussing something with someone and he perhaps disagrees with you, so one says, 'what do you really mean, what is your point of view?' and he says, 'I know, I know very well what I want to say, I understand it in my own mind but I can't express it.' I read that situation, or have read that situation sometimes in the past as meaning, or as being that actually he feels very strong resentment because his point of view is being questioned. What he can't express, or is afraid to, is his resentment. Do you see what I mean?

I mean, his ideas are actually very confused, there is no question of expressing those because they are not clear enough to express, but they represent a rationalization or a sort of obstinacy, if you like. So there is no question of them being expressed. But the fact that you, as it were, challenged or that you have disagreed means that he feels quite frustrated, but he feels unable to express that frustration for, as it were, social or whatever reasons. Then he says, 'I know what I want to say but I just can't express myself'.

V: Breaks off the communication.

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S: Yes, breaks off the communication.

V: What should he do?

S: Well the only thing he can do is to try to see the situation and that may take a long time, you can't always point it out on the spot.

V: This generally happens, does it not, if you say something to someone that is generally

opposed to where they are at in some way or another, if it challenges their way of life then it suggests, or in fact points out very clearly that there is a necessity to change. And they realize that change is uncomfortable or will require effort.

S: For instance I was listening on the radio some time ago to a little dialogue which quite struck me, let me see if I can get the details. Someone went along, I think it was to a sale at Harrods, the BBC man went along and people were buying skins of rare animals, animals which had been listed as in danger of extinction by some wild life bodies. So he was interviewing people who were buying these skins and he was pressing them as to their reasons for buying the skins when they knew that the animal was in danger of extinction. They couldn't give a reasoned answer so they usually said something quite abrupt and almost rude and broke off the communication. So probably, if you pressed them further they would have said, 'I know what I mean, but I can't express it, I know why this is justified but I just can't say'. And all they could in fact say was; I mean one man said to a woman 'if this goes on this particular species is going to become extinct. What have you got to say to that?' She said, 'well that's just too bad'. And he tried to pursue the issue and all she said was, 'I don't care, I don't think about it'.

But if you have been in the position to press and press, they couldn't have actually given a reason but they might have said 'I know my own mind, I know in my own mind why I think it's all right, but I can't express it'. But what they would have been unable to express is their resentment at being cross examined like this and their attitudes questioned, their selfishness questioned, their indifference questioned.

V: Could you say what resentment is there, I am still ... about there, I mean, what is it?

S: What is resentment? (V: Yes) Well do you ever feel resentment, or what people call resentment?

V: I can't if I don't know what resentment is, do you see what I mean? I can't tie it up with my feelings in that way.

S: Anybody else can describe what they mean by resentment?

V: It's something left from not being able to.., or not having expressed a negative emotion, hatred, dislike of someone. You haven't been able to., you have side-stepped the issue and you haven't communicated to that person in [a] direct way so it builds up.

S: Or haven't expressed it in any way.

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V: Yes, and you then do express it through resentment.

S: Yes, but it is a very diffuse expression, in your general attitude and behaviour, you become very sour and gloomy and sullen.

V: Sullen, yes.

V: Doing something reluctantly, saying, 'well I suppose that I have to'.

S: You don't want to but you don't say it, you have to do it but at the same time you do it but you don't do it. You do it in such a way that you express your unwillingness to do it.

V: What it is really an expression of is division in ones nature, isn't it. (S: Yes)

V: It usually seems to result from the feeling that someone has prevented you from doing something or from ... something. (S: Yes)



V: And it comes about by not expressing one's negativity.

S: It need not be negativity, you can resent someone just frustrating you but you can't express that frustration. You may be wanting to do something quite positive and they don't let you and you feel quite resentful that they don't allow you.

V: So it's more unexpressed frustration?

S: It's more like unexpressed frustration, one could say. But of course frustration does build up into dislike and to hatred and then the situation becomes one of not being able to express that. And the more it builds the more strong it becomes and the more resentful the resentment becomes, until it can end up in a very gloomy, negative state indeed. Of even silent, unexpressed, absolute hatred, in the end.

V: Ahh, I've definitely experienced it then! (Laughter) But I haven't ... that word.

V: It occurs to me, actually, that we are always expressing ourselves all the time, and it is not a question of having the experience and expressing them, if you are blocked you express that. (S: Yes)

V: (Unclear)

V: Well you can see it in someone, the way they look is an expression of what they are.

V: Your whole life is an expression of such ...

S: But when someone says that I know what I mean but I can't express it, I think, usually they haven't thought it out to the point of having a meaning to express. There is just a vague move in a direction of meaning.

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V: Or else, maybe one is expressing it but the other person questions the expression.

S: There is that possibility too.

V: Often people have a kind of emotional response about a situation or some particular thing which they are aware of and yet they haven't quite got the intellectual equivalent of it. And so, often they express that, that I feel something is wrong but I am not quite sure what it is. People often say...

S: But then you should give a correct expression, not say, 'I know what is wrong but I can't say it, explain', but say 'I just sense, I pick up, I have a feeling', and then that becomes quite acceptable.

V: That you haven't worked it out yet.

S: Yes, right. But if you say that I know there is something wrong but I don't know what it is, I can't say what it is, well that is a bit misleading.

V: Because you don't know. (S: You don't know)

V: I think you hit it on the head when you said that it is usually a matter of just not knowing what one feels.

S: Mmm. So, what you think is what you are trying to express is sometimes not what you are actually trying to express or unable to express.

V: It's just that you are not really in touch with what you really feel, or really think.

S: Yes, so that when you say 'I know what I mean and I know what I believe, but even though you disagree with it, it's simply that I can't express what I believe', it's more likely that you don't know, but what you want to express is your resentment at being questioned or disagreed with.

Or just your reluctance to accept that other proposition or that other point of view.

V: So, you didn't like the word 'openness', the other day but I can't think of any other word; it is a question of being open, saying what you feel, which may be completely fatuous, but still being open to change.

V: What does fatuous mean?

S: Stupid. Well, it's more like a combination of stupid and silly.

Anyway, we have strayed rather a long way from Tsongkhapa. It was simply all arising out of the point that Tsongkhapa was expressing his own spiritual insight in very clear conceptual terms, in terms of intellectual insight. I therefore mentioned that this is characteristic of the Gelugpa tradition as a whole, that they do insist on the need for intellectual insight as a basis for the development of spiritual insight, when you take up meditation.

Anyway, let's go back and if there are any individual verses that anyone wants to say anything about we can deal with that, then it will be coffee time.

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V: Can you say what would be meant by 'ego-reflection'?

S: 'While to the wise, this very thing is the way to cut the net of ego-reflection.' I suspect that this is a reference to Yogachara thought, where the so called ego is said to be only the reflection of the Alaya in manus.

V: The what?

S: The Alaya, the store consciousness, the universal consciousness, if you like, in the manus, the individual mind.

V: When it says, 'the immature will hold on to this', it says 'will hold on to the view of dependent origination, strengthen the bonds of extremism'. Does that mean, seeing dependent origination as separate from the Voidness?

S: One could say that, but it means being, as it were, attached to it, not using it as a means of origination.

V: But as a thing in itself.

S: ... but as a dogma, an end in itself.

V: Can we just go back to the introduction passage before the verse? It is interesting that one of the teachers appears blue, which is the Void colour, traditionally.

S: Yes.

V: It's also the colour of Mahakala or Vajrapani, spiritual energy, breaking through spiritually.

V: Well Vajrapani is blue because he comes from the Vajra family which is ... blue.

S: It could, of course, be a blue-black tint, such as some people do actually have in India,

especially in the south. Like the colour of the blue lotus.

V: What such as the pictures you see in India of Indira and ... , you actually get people with that colour?

V: And Krishna?

S: Not really, not quite, no, not that colour, it is just a sort of tinge, that the skin reflects a blue gleam, as it were.

V: You see some Africans, where it is quite distinct.

S: Africans, yes, much more than Indian. Slightly metallic.

V: A bit like the bloom on a grape (laughter)

S: Yes, that's true, yes.

V: How can you use dependent origination as [545] a proof that phenomena exist by self-nature? Page 180, the first note.

S: That they do not exist?

V: No, it says, 'These two verses refer to the Cittamatras and Svatantrikas-Madhyamika, who accept that phenomena exist by self-nature, using as proof dependent origination, i.e. that things come out depending on their source.'

S: That there is an actually existent thing arising in dependence on another actually existent thing. But Tsongkhapa says that the very notion of dependence and of dependent arising is destructive of the notion of self-existence, of really existing.

V: I suppose that is true in a relative level, if you like, on a... I suppose you can say that that other postulation is true on a relative level, on a psychological level. (S: What do you mean?) Well, that people do exist, for example.

S: Ahh, yes, but you must understand what is meant by existence in this context. Existing absolutely, unchanged, having real existence.

V: (Unclear)

V: They really got a bit off the point, didn't they, those two schools?

S: Well according to this interpretation, anyway.

V: In other words, what is taken as being the essence of the fruit of the..., by Tsongkhapa of the reality of things is their changeability ...

S: Their not having absolute reality.

V: The proof of that isn't the change?

S: It's not so much that the proof of the indication of that I mean nothing which is changing can be absolutely real. But it doesn't..., it isn't completely non-existent, not absolutely illusory, that is the other extreme. So things which arise in dependence upon other things are not to be regarded as existent or as non-existent. In this way, dependent origination is a middle path, and since they are neither existent nor non-existent they are empty from another point of view. That is empty of existence and non-existence as absolutes.

V: This is the point at which my mind ceases to relate to the context, because when we talk about equivalents of something being illusory and having existence it seems like I can understand as far as something is changeable, therefore, it is illusory, but then when you ...

S: Well it comes back to the original four illustrations that Geshe Wangyal gave. Maybe you are a natural Abhidharmika and for you impermanence just means changefulness. And if that is a sufficient practical basis for you, fair enough.

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V: Yes, I would have been much happier if I had never even heard the terms existence or non-existence!

S: Anyway, any further points arising out of this hymn? The main emphasis is clear enough, there is no duality between dependent origination and the Voidness.

V: Just a little point here, Bhante, the fact that you have teacher and Teacher with capital 'T'...

S: That's just a mistranslation of course, in Tibetan there is no distinction of upper and lower case.

V: What do you think of this idea of having a capital? It is obviously done as a token of respect.

S: The Teacher meaning it as the title of the Buddha?

V: I mean that fact that they have it in a capital.

S: Well titles usually are in capitals.

V: What about the Teaching.

S: Teaching? Well presumably it corresponds to Dharma.

V: But sometimes they have His with the capital.

S: Well it is just a sign of respect. It is a question of whether one wants to follow that usage or not.

V: Who are the 'world protectors'?

S: The Lokapalas, guardian deities of the four quarters. Sometimes called the four guardian kings. Vaisravana, Dhrtarastra, Virudhak and Virupaksa.

V: Are they the ones on the Mandala that guard the four corners?

S: Yes, and you see two of them very often on either side of the entrance to a temple or monastery.

V: I always thought that they were ... that were on the threshold.

S: Ahh, as regards the Tibetan Gompas, the ones you see on either side are two of the Lokapalas, but in Ceylon, for instance, you do get two Dharmapalas who are not Lokapalas.

V: What's a ... ?

S: The guardian of the gate.

V: What's the significance of ...

S: Well the Lokapalas are the four gods of the kamaloka whose duty it is to guard the four quarters.

V: From what, in what sense are they guarding?

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S: Evil influences, bad spirits and so on, particularly. So one can regard them as powerful, natural forces associated with the four directions.

V: It says; 'Of all actions the highest is that of Speech'.

S: It's a bit akin to what I was saying, that the highest form of communication is the verbal, in the sense that it is the most versatile.

V: Then it says, 'as this is so, it is from this viewpoint that the Wise should follow the Buddha'. At the top of 185.

S: It is not very clear but it suggests that the Buddha has made the fullest use of that particular means of communication and has given the most adequate expression to the fullest insight. Not like a Pratyekabuddha who remains silent.

The Buddha is the best communicator, as it were.

V: What does the phrase come from ... ? 'Those who speak do not know, and those who know do not speak.'

S: This is from the Tao Ching. It is not always true, is it? It doesn't fit in at all, it is too general. Some people who do speak do know. As someone said later on, 'if it is true that those who speak do not know, how is it that Lao Tzu', that is the author of this verse, 'wrote a book of five thousand characters?'

V: It's a Taoist koan!

S: You are self contradictory in even saying it, that those who know do not speak, do you know that?

V: To what extent may one express wisdom by speaking?

V: I think quite obviously it suits ... situations.

S: I think one really has to really beware of glib sayings and glib quotes like that. This is quoted quite frequently 'those who know do not speak'. So you have to be very silent, you just sit there knowing it all.

V: It's almost as obvious as the statement 'I am telling a lie'.

V: Maybe it comes into this thing of people who go on talking about Voidness and things like that, whereas someone who is sitting...

S: Well it is true that sometimes it happens that someone who knows does not speak. But the fact that you do not speak is not a sign that you know, and that is what it suggests.

V: I think this is where this phrase is coming in, is, that he is actually saying at that point, that there are no words to communicate that..., you can't be talking while experiencing. (S: No!?) Well, true (laughter)

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V: I can't understand that speech is the most versatile means when it is limited by language. Is

it?

S: What do you mean by limited by language? Speech is language.

V: I mean that it is not universally understood, you have to know one language or another language. Whereas music could be universally understood.

S: But you can't convey abstract ideas through music. Through speech you can convey emotions, you can convey images, you can convey abstract ideas. Through, for instance, through painting you can convey a mood, an emotion, a form, a figure, but you can't convey abstract ideas.

Through music you can convey an emotion but not a thought, you can't convey a philosophy through music. But through words you can do all these things.

V: Also the voice has all the qualities of music, at least potentially. It has rhythm and pitch.

V: Beethoven said, 'music is a revelation higher than all philosophies'...

S: But also he had to incorporate words in the last movement of his last symphony, he had to fall back on words.

V: (Unclear)

V: Painting can be like writing, that is like words.

S: What do you mean, like writing?

V: The sign, the shape of the brush strokes in painting.

S: But then they can't convey abstract ideas.

V: Can symbolically, surely. An abstract idea can be shown by ...

S: Words can convey a symbol as a symbol and abstract ideas as abstract ideas. So in that sense it is more versatile.

V: ... like on the Tantric path, when you talk about, the symbols..., the way I picked it up was that they were even higher than any conceptual ideas ... abstract. They were, as it were, closer to reality.

S: But also the people using them were closer to reality.

(Tea Break conversation)

S: It wouldn't be doing anything extra, as it were.

V: Does that come originally from Indian tradition or ...

S: In that sort of explicit form it is definitely Chinese or Japanese, from China or Zen. But you could say the Indians also just sat. They didn't make a point of it, or a special practice of it.

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V: Unclear

S: Yes, I've done a little sorting out as regards meditation in that lecture, but it seems that we need much more sorting out. And English is very vague in this way, it is very good for poetic

purposes, but it isn't very precise.

V: What is, say, the distinction between prajna and Jnana?

S: Very difficult to say. You can only say that prajna is used in certain contexts and Jnana in another. For instance, the five Jnanas, these are personified by the five Buddhas. It is the same root, 'jna', to know, Jnana and prajna.

V: Some people seem to indicate that Jnana is actually higher than prajna.

S: I have sometimes suggested that, but it is not always. For instance in ... you have got a list of a number of different Jnanas, I think nine Jnanas, sometimes ...

V: Certainly within the context of our language we talk very much of Jnana as being definitely a bit higher than prajna. I think we had a long discussion over the five Jnanas, and this point was brought up and gone into there, in fact.

S: There is that suggestion, in as much as in the context Mahayana, the term Jnana is used mostly in connection with the five Buddha Wisdoms. Which is the highest level, as it were. Whereas the term prajna is used much more generally. As when we have the three prajnas.

V: Yes, Jnana is more specific.

S: More specific, yes.

And there is a Jnana-paramita, in the list of ten, one of the last four is Jnana. It is apparently further on than prajna. I have gone into this in the Survey. So if you regard the Ten Paramitas as successive steps, as is usually done, then Jnana is higher than prajna.

Anyway we seem to be getting on quite well now.

V: Wasn't the Yogachara also known as the Jnana-vada.

S: Yes, but they are not exactly the same. I am not going to go into the difference now. In any case I have indicated it briefly in the Survey, it is all there, though not fully, but at least enough.

One can also say with regard to speech being the highest of all actions, that speech is, in the Vajrayana context, at least, not necessarily just verbal. Speech also stands for communication in general. So one could paraphrase it, 'of all actions, the highest is that of communication.'

V: Is it precisely the same as what is meant by the Tibetans, when mudra is suggested, is it the same?

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S: Well mudra is a form of communication.

V: It seems to have more to do with actual physical gesture than with other elements.

S: When one speaks of body, speech and mind it is not just speech in the vocal sense, but communication generally, or mutuality.

They will say that they know quite well why it isn't possible, but they can't quite express it. That would be quite a good example, that they know it is impossible, but they can't tell you how. They know that it hasn't really been proved, despite all those proofs, but they can't communicate or express their understanding that it hasn't actually been true.

This is what some of them virtually say, they are convinced that it will be shown to be

impossible, but they can't quite communicate how.

V: Because they don't want to, presumably.

S: This is what I was saying, what you are unable to express is not what you think you are unable to express. What they are unable to express is their unwillingness to give up their traditional materialism.

V: Scientists have actually proved that ...

S: Yes, too much weight on the wings, they've proved it, it's true. The little tiny wings beating so many thousand times a second could not possibly support the weight of the body of the bee, it has been worked out (laughter). But every little bee that flies refutes it.

V: A whole mass of aerodynamic genius.

V: There is a very good example of that, what we have just been talking about in Dr Johnson, you probably know it. When he refutes, someone says..., everybody is convinced that the theory of the insubstantia... some person's theory about the insubstantiality of matter.

S: It's Bishop Berkeley's, that's right, and he said that nobody can actually demonstrate that it is untrue, and Johnson struck his foot against the stone and said, 'I refute it thus'; which didn't refute it at all, because what Berkeley was denying was not the sensation of solidity, but the interpretation of a material substance behind the experience of solidity, according to him it was a mental substance.

V: ... is apparently convinced by his reputation.

V: Would that be the manus, in ... terms?

S: Well it's the Vijnanavada that really discusses this, rather than the Yogachara. It would be a vijnapti, a mere idea.

(End of tea break)

S: All right then on to page 189

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## 5. THE THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE PATH

"The second work of Tsongkhapa's translated here is a short root text, The Three Principles of the Path. These Three Principles are Renunciation, Bodhi-mind, and Right View. The root text is accompanied by instructions for meditation written in the early nineteenth century by the Fourth Panchen Lama, Tenbay Nyima.

"This use of root text and commentary is integral to the Tibetan system of transmission of the Teaching. Root texts are usually relatively short poems, difficult to understand, but easily memorized. Although the author of a root text will sometimes write a commentary on his own text, most of the commentaries have been made by later scholars. They usually follow the root text line for line or verse for verse, explaining and clarifying the meaning.

"This commentary gives comprehensive instructions for meditation, from the Six Preparatory Practices to the final dedication. Following each relevant section the author has quoted the verses of the root text."

S: So let's read the root text straight through and just discuss it very generally, and then we can go through it again with, and in the context of, the commentary. This will give us a quite different slant on it, in as much as the commentary is written from the standpoint of actual



practice.

In the case of the previous work, the hymn of praise to the Buddha, to Munindra, we just had the text itself, but as Geshe Wangyal points out in the Tibetan tradition a text of this sort would be firmly embedded in a commentary which will give instructions for actual practice. But this is quite important. So, let's just read through the little text and just discuss it very generally and then see it in the context of the commentary, which also gives instructions for meditation.

"The Three Principles of the Path

I bow down to the venerable Lamas.

I will explain as well as I am able The essence of all the Teachings of the Conqueror, The path praised by the Conqueror's offspring, The entrance for the fortunate ones who desire liberation."

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S: The conqueror is, of course, the Buddha, the conqueror's offspring are the Bodhisattvas.

Listen with clear mind, you fortunate ones Who direct your minds to the path pleasing to Buddha, Who strive to make good use of leisure and opportunity And are not attached to the joys of samsara.

Those with bodies are bound by the craving for existence. Without pure Renunciation, there is no way to still Attraction to the pleasures of samsara. Thus, from the outset seek Renunciation.

Leisure and opportunity are difficult to find. There is no time to waste: reverse attraction to this life. Reverse attraction to future lives: think repeatedly Of the infallible effects of karma and the misery of this world.

Contemplating this, when you do not for an instant Wish the pleasures of samsara, And day and night remain intent on liberation, You have then produced Renunciation.

Renunciation without pure Bodhi-mind Does not bring forth the perfect bliss Of unsurpassed enlightenment; Therefore, Bodhisattvas generate excellent Bodhi-mind.

Swept by the current of the four powerful rivers, Tied by strong bonds of karma, so hard to undo, Caught in the iron net of egoism, Completely enveloped by the darkness of ignorance,

Born and reborn in boundless samsara, Ceaselessly tormented by the three miseries ... All beings, your mothers, are in this condition. Think of them and generate Bodhi-mind.

Though you practice Renunciation and Bodhi-mind, Without wisdom, the realization of Voidness, You cannot cut the root of samsara. Therefore, strive to understand dependent origination.

One who sees the infallible cause and effect Of all phenomena in samsara and Nirvana, And destroys all false perceptions, Has entered the path which pleases the Buddha.

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Appearances are infallible dependent origination; Voidness is free of assertions. (1) As long as these two understandings are seen as separate, One has not yet realized the intent of the Buddha.

When these two realizations are simultaneous and concurrent, From a mere sight of infallible dependent origination Comes certain knowledge which completely destroys all modes of

mental grasping. At that time the analysis of the Profound View is complete.

Appearances refute the extreme of existence, Voidness refutes the extreme of non-existence; When you understand the arising of cause and effect from the viewpoint of Voidness, You are not captivated by either extreme view.

Son, when you realize the keys Of the Three Principles of the Path, Depend on solitude and strong effort, And quickly reach the final goal!

(1) Of existence or non-existence.

S: Is there anything about this text in general? We'll be going into the verses individually in the context of the commentary. Any general impression?

V: A sense of strong exhortation about it.

S: Mmm, no words wasted.

V: It's like precepts, in that respect. (S: Yes)

V: I've heard some of these phrases before, like, 'tied by strong bonds of karma', there's that verse in the Manjughosa ...

S: Ahh, that's right, yes.

Let's go on to the commentary, then, where we will encounter the verses again and they will be described and explained in detail.

"The Three Principles of the Path

Om svasti. Compassionate, holy, and reverend Lamas, I bow down at your feet and go to you for refuge. By your great mercy, may I follow you always."

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S: Here is the introductory salutation.

"Herein is the practice of the three guiding Principles of the Path, the special precepts which the protector Manjusri gave directly to the great Tsongkhapa, King of Dharma of the three realms. These three Principles condense the essence of all the Teachings and their commentaries into stages of practice for an individual. The instructions for practice have two parts: what should be done in the actual session, and what should be done between sessions. The actual session consists of preparation, (1) subject matter, and dedication.

Clean and dust the room in which you are practising, and place an image of Buddha or some other religious object before you. Make pure offerings. Sit in the meditation posture, and repeat the Refuge three times:

I go for refuge to the Lama. I go for refuge to the Buddha. I go for refuge to the Dharma. I go for refuge to the Sangha."

S: Superior assembly is the Arya Sangha.

"To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Superior Assembly, I go for refuge until enlightenment is reached.

As you say this, visualize rays of light and ambrosia of five different colours streaming from the objects of refuge. This light and ambrosia are antidotes which enter the minds and bodies of all living beings and purify defilements, sins, madness, and sickness, as well as their latent

tendencies, which have accumulated from beginningless time. Feel that you are under the protection of the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha). Then generate Bodhi-mind by repeating:

Through whatever merit I have accumulated By Giving, Moral Practice, Patience, Effort, Meditation, and Wisdom, May I attain Buddhahood for the sake of all living beings.

(1) There are six aspects of preparation: 1) clean the room where you are practising, placing any religious objects of meditation in front of you; 2) make pure offerings; 3) sit in the Buddha's meditation position, and repeat the Refuge, etc.; 4) imagine the field of assembly in front of you; 5) offer the mandala and perform the seven branches of purification and accumulation; and 6) make prayer to realize the purpose of your meditation.

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"And pray:

By the roots of virtue which come from Giving, Moral Practice, and Meditation, which I have done, had others do, or rejoiced at others doing, may I obtain complete perfect Buddhahood for the sake of all living beings. I will do this. For this purpose I will learn the deeds of the Bodhisattvas. Bless me, Lamas and gods, that I may be able to do this.

By strongly requesting this, you please the assembled Lamas and deities; a duplicate image separates from each of their bodies, and by dissolving into you, transforms you into the body of Lama and Buddha. Rays of light radiate from your body purified into Lama and Buddha. This light shines upon all living beings and purifies them. You should have the intense feeling that you are establishing all beings in the high position of Lama and Buddha. This is said to be the special precept of the oral lineage of Wen-sa (dben-sa), the meditation that generates Bodhi-mind through actualizing the path and its final goal."

S: Let's just go into that a little bit, what we have done so far. It hasn't been explicitly mentioned in the commentary, though it is mentioned in the foot note, that after the going for refuge one visualizes the Refuge Tree, and when it says, 'as you say this, visualize rays of light of ambrosia of five different colours streaming from the objects of refuge'. It means the objects of refuge seated on the Refuge Tree which you have visualized before you. There's a lecture about the Refuge Tree, in the Tantric series.

V: So this is, in a sense, the first foundation Yoga?

S: In a sense, yes. These are all standard procedures, by the way, except the one which he mentions as a special precept for the oral lineage of Wen-sa. I'm not quite sure what that is, whether it is a place or whether it is the name of a person.

V: Is that like metta coming through those objects of refuge and being allowed to flow through you?

S: In a way, in a way, but it is more like a sort of blessing. In some other practices, this is still a very elementary level, in some other practices the light and ambrosia of five different colours would represent the five Wisdoms, the five Knowledges, the five Jnanas. But that would be premature here.

'By strongly requesting this you please the assembled Lamas and Deities'. It's, as it were, a response from the other side. There is your very strong faith and devotion, and that causes the assembled Lamas and Deities to be pleased, you visualize them as pleased, and then because they are pleased these duplicate images separated from them and then dissolve into one. They, as it were, give themselves to you.

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V: Is this the Lamas that you visualized in the Refuge Tree?

S: Yes, Lamas and deities. Of course, there may be some hundreds of them if you visualize the Refuge Tree in detail.

Anyway there is no need to go into everything in too great a detail, we just want to get a general idea of the context of the practice.

Let's go on to the Four Immeasurables, which are, of course, the Four Brahma Viharas.

"Then contemplate the Four Immeasurables; equanimity, love, compassion and joy:"

S: I'm not sure why equanimity is put first here, this is quite unusual.

"All living beings, our aged mothers, are wandering helplessly in samsara. What is the cause of this? They wander in samsara because of desire and hatred, and therefore they are miserable.

"If all beings were in a state of immeasurable equanimity, free from desire and hatred, how wonderful it would be! May they achieve this state. I will establish them in this state of immeasurable equanimity. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this.

"If all living beings possessed happiness and the causes of happiness, how wonderful it would be! May they possess them. I will cause them to have happiness and the causes of happiness. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this.

"If all living beings were free from misery and the causes of misery, how wonderful it would be! May they be free from these. I will free them from misery and the causes of misery. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this.

"If all living beings dwelt continually in the happy lives of men or gods and in the bliss of liberation, how wonderful it would be! May they be inseparable from these happy states. I will cause them to be inseparable from this great happiness. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this!"

S: So this summarizes the practice of the Four Brahma Viharas. Usually, as my friend Mr Chen always used to say, Tibetans just skipped this over, just reciting a little verse. But if one does the practice properly one should actually practice the Four Brahma Viharas, or at least the first one.

So there is the going for refuge, which is elaborated in the slightly Tantric style, and then, of course, the development [557] of..., then the practice of the Four Brahma Viharas leading on to the arising of the Bodhicitta. This is the sequence here, you see that?

Even before the going for refuge there is the making of offerings. So first of all the making of offerings, then the going for refuge, including the visualizing of the Refuge Tree with all the Lamas and Buddhas on it. Then the practice of the Brahma Viharas and then the development of the Bodhicitta. This is a quite usual sequence, for a Tibetan meditation cum devotional practice.

V: When you say, the practice of the Brahma Viharas, you mean reciting certain verses?

S: The Tibetans usually just recite a few verses describing these four, but actually one should practice them. (V: Which, how?) Or at least the first one, it is not enough, really, just to recite the words.

V: Metta, in other words. So one would then do the metta, say.

S: Do the metta bhavana, yes. Though the Tibetans do not usually do this.

V: Is there any reason or ... ?

S: Well you could say, if you wanted to look at it more positively, that amongst the Tibetans there is quite a lot of positive emotion anyway, and they are doing all this in the shrine, maybe in the monastery and there is a strong atmosphere of devotion. So perhaps they can dispense with the actual practice of the metta bhavana, but we certainly can't.

V: You said the metta, yet in fact there are four Brahma Viharas.

S: Yes, but I said practice all four Brahma Viharas or at least the metta, even if you don't practice the other three, at least practice the metta. If you practice all four this is going to take you four hours, which is all right if you are in retreat, but normally you won't be. And in any case, the metta is the foundation of the other three.

Let's go on then.

"Praying very strongly, imagine a rain of ambrosia falling on all living beings, purifying their defilements."

S: This ambrosia is, in a way, the metta, karuna, mudita, upeksha.

"To generate Bodhi-mind as it is specifically taught here, think, "For the benefit of all living beings, my aged mothers, no matter what happens to me, I will attain as quickly as possible the precious position of the completely perfect Buddha. With this aim, I will enter into the meditation of the three guiding Principles of the Path."

Repeat this prayer again and again.

The objects of refuge then dissolve gradually into light, merging inward from the outer limits of the holy assembly. This light dissolves into Tsongkhapa, who is seated in the centre."

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S: He being, of course, the guru par-excellence for the Gelugpa tradition. Nyingmapas would visualize Padmasambhava in that position. Kagyupa is Milarepa or Vajradhara. Sometimes the Gelugpas visualize Vajradhara too, but Tsongkhapa more usually.

"Tsongkhapa then melts into light and dissolves into your forehead between your eyebrows. Feel intensely that you have been blessed by all the objects of refuge.

In order to visualize the field of assembly, clearly imagine in the vast space in front of you the extensive wish-fulfilling jewel tree, its branches laden with leaves, flowers, and fruit. On its top are one hundred thousand lotus petals, and upon them eight magnificent lions hold up a magnificent and resplendent throne. Your own kind root Lama, appearing as the great Tsongkhapa, King of Dharma, is seated on a cushion of sun and moon and lotus."

S: In other words the author is giving a description of this Refuge Tree, Tree of Refuge, though the actual practice of visualizing has been done earlier, it is not quite in sequence.

"His clear white face is smiling with pleasure. He is wearing the three religious robes and the golden pandita's hat, and his hands, at his heart, form the mudra of Turning the Wheel of Dharma.

Each hand holds the stem of a blue lotus. Upon the blossoming blue lotus at his right shoulder, the wisdom of all the Buddhas is embodied in the form of a flaming sword. Its light fills the world and the flame that burns from its tip consumes all ignorance. Upon the blossoming blue lotus at his left shoulder is a volume of the Prajnaparamita-sutra of One Hundred Thousand Verses, the sole mother of all Buddhas of the three times. On its sapphire pages are glowing letters of burnished gold, from which shine rays of light, clearing away the

ignorance of living beings. These letters are not just shapes, but speak out in a clear tone the stages, path, and final goal. They proclaim the way of acting for the benefit of all living beings, beginning from the first arising of Bodhi-mind to the twenty seven great deeds of a Buddha. Merely by holding this image in mind, you are arousing your inclination to the Mahayana path.

Seated in the heart of Tsongkhapa is the Conqueror Sakyamuni and seated in his heart is the Conqueror Vajradhara. In each pore of Tsongkhapa's body are countless Buddha-fields and from each of these, innumerable rays of light shine in the ten directions. On the [559] tip of each ray appear an inconceivable number of Buddhas, equal to the number of beings in samsara. The actions of each Buddha are for the benefit of all these living beings.

Tsongkhapa is seated in the middle of a five-coloured rainbow in the full-lotus position, and upon a ray of light that radiates upwards from his heart are many Lamas, beginning with the root Lama who actually revealed this teaching to you and rising to the Conqueror Vajradhara at the top. Except for the Conqueror Vajradhara, all are actually your own root Lama, yet they appear in the form of Manjusri, orange in colour, whose right hand holds aloft a flashing sword and whose left hand holds at his heart a book that has as its nature radiant light. From Tsongkhapa's heart a ray of light emanates to his right. Upon it are seated, on moon-lotus cushions, the Lamas of Maitreya's lineage of the extensive deeds of love and compassion. Upon a ray of light emanating to his left, are seated the Lamas of Manjusri's lineage of the profound view of Voidness. On a ray of light extending directly in front of Tsongkhapa are seated the Lamas with whom you have actual Dharmic connection.

Surrounding Tsongkhapa, a multitude of Yidams, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, dakinis, and protectors of the Dharma are seated on lion thrones. On jewelled stands in front of each of them, their own teachings appear as books that have radiant light as their actual nature. On the crown of the head of each in the holy assembly is a white om; on the throat of each is a red ah; and at the heart of each a blue hum. From the hum, light radiates in the ten directions. This light invites Wisdom-beings, like those on whom you have been meditating, to come from their dwelling places. These Wisdom-beings dissolve into those of the holy assembly. Feel intensely that by this, your Lama has the nature of the Three Refuges - Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Then, generating yourself as a deity, make offerings of pure water, fine cloth, and so on, to the field of assembly. Having done this, when you meditate on the path your mind will become clear and you will be purified of defilements.

Then offer the Seven Branches of Practice (1) and the mandala.

(1) The Seven Branches of Practice are bowing down, making offerings, confessing sins, welcoming all virtuous activities, requesting the Buddhas to turn the Wheel of Dharma, praying to the Teachers to remain in the world, and dedicating merit."

S: This is the seven fold puja, as it were.

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"These are the keys of accumulation and purification, which increase merit and clear away sins. In this way meditation is furthered and obstructions disappear.

Begin with obeisance. Bow down and recite whatever names you know of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and lineage Lamas. Then say:

I respectfully bow to all Spiritual Teachers, Who, moved by compassion and by skilful means, illumine This best gate for the fortunate travelling to liberation, This eye through which all the glorious scriptures are seen.

Then continue with the Seven Branches of Practice:

I bow down with pure body, speech, and mind  
To those lions among men, The Tathagatas of  
the three times In the ten directions of the world.

By the power of enlightenment-wish in the deeds of Samantabhadra, I mentally manifest all  
the Buddhas, And with images of myself as numerous as bits of dust in a field, I humbly bow  
down to all those Conquerors.

Upon each speck of dust sit countless Buddhas, Each surrounded by Buddhas and  
Bodhisattvas. I feel that all spaces Are filled by Buddhas in this way.

Expressing all the wisdom of all the Buddhas, By oceans of sound, all the music of speech,  
And by inexhaustible oceans of praise, I glorify all the Sugatas.

I offer to the Buddhas Fragrant incense, fine butter lamps, Aromatic balms, ornate umbrellas,  
and sounds of cymbals, Beautiful flowers, and precious rosaries.

I offer to these Conquerors Fine silks and rare perfumes, And mounds of fragrant, coloured  
powder equal in size to Mount Meru, In a specially formed arrangement.

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By the power of faith in the deeds of Samantabhadra, I lay before all the Conquerors  
Extensive and unsurpassable offerings; I bow down and make offerings to all the Buddhas.

Recite this softly and bow down. At this time confess the sins you have committed against  
each of the three vows, (1) and, bowing down as many times as possible, recite this prayer  
from Confessions of Sins:

I bow down to the thirty-five Buddhas of Confession. May they and all the Tathagatas,  
Arhants, and fully accomplished Buddhas who are enjoying well-being in all the realms of the  
ten directions of the world, show compassion to me.

I confess without withholding or concealing, all sins great or small, which I committed  
myself, had others commit for me, or welcomed others doing, in all births in endless samsara  
- in this life, in former lives, and in lives to come. I confess these before the Blessed Buddhas  
- those who have wisdom, the all-seeing eye, power, valid insight, omniscience, and  
understanding. Henceforth I will be bound by this confession.

I dedicate toward the perfect enlightenment of all beings, all virtuous deeds great or small,  
that I have done or will do in all births in endless samsara - in this life, in former lives, and in  
lives yet to come. As the blessed Buddhas who came previously, as those who have not yet  
come, and as those abiding in the present, completely dedicate their virtuous work, so I  
completely dedicate mine.

Continuing with the Seven Branches of Practice:

I confess individually All the sins I have done With body, speech, or mind Because of desire,  
hatred, and ignorance.

I rejoice at and will follow All virtuous deeds done by any living being, By the Buddhas of  
the ten directions, by Bodhisattvas, By Pratyekabuddhas, by those still learning, and by those  
with no more to learn.

(1) The three vows are the vow of individual liberation, the vow of the Bodhisattva, and the  
Tantric vow; they precede Renunciation, Bodhi-mind, and Right View.

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I request those lights of the ten directions, All those who through the stages leading to  
enlightenment Have gained the freedom from attachment of a Buddha, To turn the peerless

Wheel of Dharma.

I pray with folded palms To all those desiring to enter Parinirvana To remain with us for innumerable aeons And bring happiness and benefit to all living beings.

I dedicate to the perfect enlightenment of all Even the smallest virtue accumulated By this obeisance, offering, confession, Rejoicing, entreaty, and prayer.

Imagine the field of assembly before you, and repeat this softly. Then offer the mandala:

Golden land, filled with incense and strewn with flowers, Mount Meru and the four continents ornamented by sun and moon-imagining all this as a Buddha-field, I offer it. May all living beings find enjoyment in this pure land.

Imagining myself as a world ruler, I offer all virtues of the three times, all enjoyments of body, speech, and mind, of myself and others, and the precious and glorious mandala like that offered by Samantabhadra, to the Lama, Yidam, and the Three Jewels. By the power of their great compassion, may they accept this and bestow in me their blessings.

Idam guru ratna mandala kam niryatayami.

S: This is the standard mantra for the mandala offering. It means, Guru, this precious mandala accept. Or, I offer, would be more literal.

"Saying this, offer the mandala. Then recite this prayer of the three great purposes, which was taught by Tsongkhapa himself:

May I put an end to all mistaken states of mind, from not respecting the spiritual teacher to apprehending an ego in persons or phenomena.

May I easily produce all right states of mind, from respecting the spiritual teacher to apprehending the truth of egolessness.

May I surmount all inner and outer obstacles.

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Recite this three times. Then recite the following prayer to the Lamas of this lineage:

I pray to the Conqueror Vajradhara, Protector of samsara and Nirvana, Who does not abide in the extremes of either. By his wisdom he has cut the bonds of samsara, By his compassion he has thrust aside the joy of Nirvana.

I pray to the protector Manjusri, Whose wisdom-body encompasses All the treasure of wisdom of Buddhas More numerous than particles in a miraculous Buddha-field.

I pray to the feet of Pabo-Dorje Who, after years of deep wishing-prayer, Cleared away his web of doubt When Manjusri appeared to him.

I pray to the feet of the glorious Lama, Tsongkhapa, Who understood by reasoning the reality of the Two Truths, And by the power of unified method and wisdom Manifested the three Kayas of Buddha.

I pray to the feet of the sage of Jambudvipa, To Gen-dun-drup, lion of the excellent path. With resplendent mane of one hundred thousand teachings, He dwells in the garden of the scriptures of Buddha.

Bless me to always and without effort Generate faith by merely remembering The kind lamas, who are the root of all excellence, Of all worldly and spiritual well-being.



May I attain the pure mind which unquestioningly Depends on the spiritual friend who strives for awareness, Who speaks honestly, who desires liberation from his heart, And who, having subdued himself, lives peacefully with few desires.

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May I achieve non attachment, Turning my mind completely from honour and gain, Thinking, "The time is short," for it is not mere words That death is certain, but its hour unknown.

May I naturally produce compassion, Turning from pursuit of selfish joy To contemplate the pain of all wretched beings, Each of them my own kind mother.

May I understand the thought of those holy men, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, father and son, Who expounded the meaning of profound dependent origination, The only medicine for the illness of the two extremes.

Having set forth this prayer, may all roots of virtue Past, present, and future, of myself and others In birth after birth Cause only supreme enlightenment.

May they not ripen for even an instant As those things not conducive to enlightenment: As desire for fame or advantage, Companions, enjoyments, honour, or gain.

By the blessings of the Conquerors and their wondrous offspring, By the truth of infallible dependent origination, And by the power of my strong high resolve, May I accomplish the objective of this wishing-prayer.

Pray strongly, that you may quickly realize the Three Principles of the Path.

S: So we've come quite a long way, gone through quite a number of practices, we still haven't got to the verses of the text. So what do you think that means?

V: A lot of preparation.

S: Yes, a lot of preparation, it is mainly building up ones faith and devotion and creating a devotional atmosphere. Generating positive emotion.

V: It's an amazing practice.

S: Yes, it's quite standard and this is what one gets in connection with any sort of visualization, and so on.

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V: This reminds me of one of the sections of the Udana when Sariputra talks to the dwarf, Bhaddiya, then when he is in the right, malleable state he starts teaching.

S: Yes, otherwise if you just read the text straight away you may understand it, you may have, even, a good intellectual insight but it won't become spiritual insight. Intellectual insight becomes spiritual insight only in association with these very positive emotions carried even to the point of meditation, samadhi.

Right, there is a bit more before we actually get to the text, but let's go back over the ground we've covered so far to see if there is anything that needs explanation. We can't go into it in very great detail, partly because we have no time and partly because there is no point in going into it in detail unless one is actually going to practise it.

V: How long would one take to do a practice like this, generally speaking, the Tibetans, would they be spending all day?

S: A couple of hours, that is not spending too much time on it, going through it fairly rapidly,

it would be a couple of hours.

V: It somehow seems much more.

S: You can certainly make it much longer, quite easily.

V: If any of us were to do a Refuge Tree would we use Padmasambhava?

S: Can't generalize about that, it depends on the individual and the particular practice.

V: It's not just a case of taking this and substituting different names?

S: Well, the principle of the Refuge Tree is the same, but whether you were to put Tsongkhapa or whether you were to put Padmasambhava would depend on whether the practice had come down through the lineage which comes from Tsongkhapa or that which comes from Padmasambhava.

Sometimes there are practices which, at least in a general way, come down through both.

V: So even the Refuge Tree is a preparation?

S: Oh, yes. The Refuge Tree is just the more elaborate, Tantric way of going for refuge. It brings out the faith and devotion much more and makes it much more of a practice.

V: Did visualization practice begin in India in the Mahayana or was it specifically Tibetan?

S: No, it's certainly not specifically Tibetan, you get them in the Mahayana sutras and you get the Chinese doing the visualizations, too. You even get them in some forms of Japanese Buddhism, though not the best known forms.

V: On page 202 when you are doing confession, in line 'Henceforth I will be bound by this confession'. What does that mean?

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S: That is to say you will not commit again the offences which you have confessed. This is, as it were, your last confession, after that you won't need to confess any more.

V: Is Gen-dum-drup the sage of Jambudvipa?

S: I'm not sure who that is. Gen-dun is Sangha, it could be Sanghabhadra, but I am not sure. It's evidently an Indian teacher of that lineage, but I am not sure who that is.

V: Who is Pabo-Dorje?

S: That is, apparently, Tsongkhapa's own teacher, or at least his ... teacher.

V: Vajradhara, goes back through the line, as it were, past Shakyamuni to Vajradhara, what does it mean by that?

S: Vajradhara being the Dharmakaya, or symbolizing the Dharmakaya. For the Gelugpas, as also for the Kargyupas, Vajradhara does stand for the Dharmakaya. With the Nyingmapas it is either Amitabha or Samantabhadra.

V: That's strange, I thought the Kargyupa would be Amitabha. (S: Why?) I thought that was more associated with it ...

S: No. All right let's carry on.

"There are two parts to the subject matter of the teaching. The first is to increase understanding of the Path and to resolve to meditate on it; and the second is the actual way to meditate.

Continuing to visualize the assembly of Lamas and deities in front of you, contemplate as follows: "Faith in the Lama is the foundation of all excellence. It is the fundamental root of all present and future good, and the basis of the common and superior Siddhis. Reliance on a holy spiritual teacher is the way to produce, maintain, increase, and accomplish all the stages and paths. Therefore, in the beginning learn to rely on the spiritual teacher, for this is the root of the Path."

Rely on the spiritual teacher in thought and deed. To rely on the spiritual teacher in thought, clearly visualize in the space in front of you those who have shown you the Teaching, and think:

These spiritual teachers of mine are actually Buddhas, for the completely perfect Buddha proclaimed in the Tantras that in this degenerate age, the Conqueror Vajradhara would appear in the form of the spiritual teacher and act for the benefit of all living beings. Thus, my spiritual teachers [567] are all the Conqueror Vajradhara manifesting himself in different embodiments. He appears as the spiritual teacher in order to guide those who did not have the good fortune to see and hear Sakyamuni Buddha.

Not only are my kind root Lamas actually Buddhas, but their kindness surpasses that of all the Buddhas; for the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who came previously left me behind, unable to subdue me. My kind root Lama, unable to bear this, because of his compassion took up the deeds of the Conqueror; even those Buddhas who came previously did not express any teachings that were more profound.

In order to obtain a single verse of the Dharma, it was necessary for the Teacher Sakyamuni to undergo inconceivable hardships. He put one thousand iron nails into his body, and at another time he used his body to burn a thousand lamps. He gave up all enjoyments without regret: his son, his queen, his body, whatever he had. By the kindness of my root Lama, I need not undergo such hardships. If I am able to meditate on the Mahayana, which is complete and without error, these profound precepts are able to quickly bestow upon me rebirth as a man or god, liberation, and full enlightenment. My Lama has taught me these precepts as freely as a father instructs his son. I can never repay his kindness.

Meditate in this way until tears pour forth from your eyes and the hairs of your body stand on end."

(End side 1)

S: So what does that suggest?

V: Rapture.

S: Rapture - priti, yes. So this is quite important, because you are going up the sequence of the positive Nidanas. So the text, or the commentary, rather, is saying, that one should be so deeply moved, or so profoundly stirred by these reflections and visualizations and all the other practices that you have been doing, that you reach the stage of ecstasy. And all this, of course, is building up to, the 'study' (inverted commas) of the text.

V: Knowledge and vision of things as they really are.

S: Right, yes. The text then becomes a support for the development of knowledge and vision of things as they really are. Just as we use the metta bhavana as a support for the Nidana contemplation, in the same way here, a very much more [568] elaborate, preliminary practice is used as a support for the development of insight and wisdom, on the basis of the study or

contemplation on this particular text. You see the principle? We did it in a very, very simple form but it can be made much more elaborate, much more rich and also much more effective.

So you see the scholar or the academic just gets hold of the text and just translates the text according to a purely theoretical understanding, not to say dictionary knowledge, without going through any of these preliminary practices, without having any of these sorts of attitudes.

Carry on then.

"Also rely on the spiritual teacher in your deeds: learn the three ways to please him. Bring him offerings, respect him in body and speech, and do as he instructs. As the last is the most important, firmly resolve, "In order to do as my Lama has taught, I will practice the Three Principles of the Path in which are included the meanings of all the scriptures and commentaries."

How can the meaning of all the scriptures and commentaries be included within the Three Principles of the Path? The main concern of all the scriptures and commentaries is to free disciples from samsara and establish them in Buddhahood. To obtain Buddhahood, it is necessary to learn method and wisdom. The guiding principle of method is Bodhi-mind, and the guiding principle of wisdom is Right View.<sup>(1)</sup> To produce Bodhi-mind and Right View, you must renounce samsara, for if you do not desire to liberate yourself from samsara, you cannot produce the love, compassion, and Bodhi-mind which desire to liberate other living beings.

The guiding principle of method, by which the Rupakaya is attained, is accumulation of merit. The key, root, and essence of all accumulation of merit is Bodhi-mind. The guiding principle that is the cause of attaining the Dharmakaya, mind of Buddha, is accumulation of wisdom. The key, root, and essence of all accumulation of wisdom is Right View. Thus all the keys of the path are included within Renunciation, Bodhi-mind, and Right View. This is the teaching which the Protector Manjusri delivered with great care to the renowned Tsongkhapa, King of Dharma.

As the foundation of all merit is reliance on the spiritual teacher, you must experience this from the first.

The root text states:

I bow down to the venerable Lamas."

S: So now we come, at last, to the text.

(1) Wisdom which knows the nature of existence, Voidness.

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"This line indicates all the practices of preparation which have been previously outlined."

S: You notice that, all that has gone before is by way of commentary in 'I bow down to the venerable Lama'. (laughter) So this line indicates all the practices of preparation which have been previously outlined. Otherwise you are not even ready to look at the text.

"Think, 'Before I meditate on the path, I will first produce some understanding of its entirety and then meditate systematically on its levels and categories.'" One should firmly resolve to keep to this meditation. As the root text states:

I will explain as well as I am able The essence of all the Teachings of the Conqueror, The path praised by the Conqueror's offspring, The entrance for the fortunate ones who desire liberation.

Listen with clear mind, you fortunate ones Who direct your minds to the path pleasing to Buddha, Who strive to make good use of leisure and opportunity And are not attached to the joys of samsara.

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There are three parts to the actual way of meditation. These are the meditation of Renunciation, the meditation of Bodhi-mind, and the meditation of Right View.

The meditation of Renunciation reverses attraction to this and future lives. Concerning this life, the root text states:

Leisure and opportunity are difficult to find. There is no time to waste: reverse attraction to this life.

Contemplate the importance and difficulty of obtaining leisure and opportunity, the uncertainty of the time of death, and the misery of the lower states of being.

Continue to visualize the Lamas and deities in front of you, and contemplate the importance of leisure and opportunity. Think, "To have leisure is to have the time to practise the Holy Dharma; to have opportunity is to have all the favourable conditions for practising the Dharma. Therefore, this life of leisure and opportunity [570] is very important. Relying on it, I can achieve Giving, Moral Practice, Patience, and so forth, which will cause my future happy birth as a man or god. In particular, by the three vows, I can quickly obtain perfect Buddhahood in one short lifetime, even in this degenerate age. Therefore, having obtained this life of leisure and opportunity, which is so important and so difficult to find, I will utilize its essence without wasting it senselessly. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this."

Continue to visualize the assembly of Lamas and deities before you, and contemplate the difficulty of obtaining leisure and opportunity. "Most men and other living beings are usually involved in the ten non-virtuous activities, which are obstacles to obtaining leisure and opportunity. Very few accomplish those things that are necessary in order to obtain a lifetime of leisure and opportunity; those are: to lay a foundation of Moral Practice, to assist it by Giving and the other Transcendences, and to dedicate it by stainless Prayer.

"For lower beings - four-legged animals and such - even to obtain rebirth in the happy states of men or gods seems almost impossible. Even among beings who have been reborn in those happy states, to have obtained leisure and opportunity is as rare as a star in the daytime. Therefore, as I have obtained such a life, which is so difficult to come by, I will make good use of it without wasting it senselessly. I will rely continually on the Lama and Buddha, and, practising the essence of the Mahayana teachings as taught by him, I will obtain perfect Buddhahood in a single lifetime. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this."

Concerning future lives, the root text says:

Reverse attraction to future lives: think repeatedly of the infallible effects of karma and the misery of this world.

First consider the infallible effects of karma, and then consider the miseries of samsara. Continuing to visualize the assembly of Lamas and deities, contemplate as follows:

Buddha has said, "Virtuous actions as causes give rise only to happy effects; they do not give rise to misery. Non virtuous activities as causes give rise only to misery; they do not give rise to happiness. Furthermore, even very small virtuous or sinful deeds give rise to extremely great happiness or [571] misery. Without virtuous or sinful deeds as causes, there will be no experience of happiness or misery. If virtuous or sinful actions as causes meet no obstruction, happiness or misery will certainly come forth, as the force of actions done will not have been exhausted."

Thus I will have firm faith and confidence in the teaching that actions done have great force depending on their field, motivation, substance, and context.(1) I will learn to accept what is good and reject what is not; I will avoid defiling the three doors of body, speech, and mind even slightly by the ten non virtues, and will strive to the utmost to achieve the ten virtues. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this."

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Then consider the general misery of samsara. Continuing to visualize the assembly of Lamas and deities before you, contemplate as follows:

Once I have taken rebirth in samsara by the influence of karma and fettering passions, I will not be free of suffering. As friends become enemies and enemies become friends, I cannot be sure whether someone will help or harm me. No matter how much I indulge in the joys of samsara, I am never satisfied. Instead my attachment increases and brings unbearable misery. No matter how fine my body, I must give it up; this happens again and again; for we are enveloped in the womb over and over with no apparent limit to our births. As in the end I must certainly give up whatever good things of samsara I have obtained, there is no security in obtaining anything. There is no security in companions for I must go alone from this life to the next. Having obtained this life of leisure and opportunity, I will achieve, no matter what occurs, the excellent position of Lama and Buddha, who have abandoned the misery of samsara. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this.

(1) There is a difference in the effect of an action, depending on how it is done in relationship to these four. Helping or harming a Bodhisattva has greater effect than helping or harming an ordinary person (field). Actions done with the motivation of helping others have greater effect than actions done with the motivation of helping yourself (motivation). A fine gift is better than a poor gift (substance). Actions done in conjunction with a vow have greater effect than the same actions done without a vow (context).

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Now consider the particular miseries of samsara. Continue to visualize the assembly of Lamas and deities and contemplate as follows:

Once I have taken compulsive embodiment, (1) I will not be free of misery. What need even to mention the three lower states? If I take embodiment as a human, I face the misery of hot and cold, hunger and thirst; of separation from friends and contact with enemies; of seeking but not finding the things I desire, and having what I do not desire descend upon me; and I face the misery of birth, old age, sickness, and death.

If I take embodiment as a demigod, I will be unable to bear the glorious prosperity of the gods. I will feel the torment of jealousy, and warring with them, physical misery will descend upon me."

S: Demigod meaning an asura.

"If I take embodiment as a god of the desire realm, I will fight with the demigods and experience the misery of dismemberment, killing, and being killed. Also, when struck by the five portents of death, (2) I will experience the misery of knowing that I must lose this prosperity and return to lower states of being.

Even if I take embodiment as a god of the higher realms of form and formlessness, I do not have the power to remain there once the impetus of good karma is exhausted, and I will experience the misery of falling to a lower state of being.

In short, taking compulsive embodiment is the framework for birth, old age, sickness and death in this life, and for the misery of misery and the misery of change in both this and future lives. Merely by taking compulsive embodiment through the influence of former actions and

fettering passions, I find myself in a state of conditioned embodiment. (3) Therefore, no matter what occurs, I will obtain the high position of Lama and Buddha, who have freed themselves from the misery of samsara and compulsive embodiment. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this.

(1) Nyer-len gyi phung-po: embodiment taken compulsively by the power of karma and fettering passions. (2) These five portents of death that eventually come to a god of the desire realm are: dust gathering around his body, sweat coming from his armpits, fading of his garlands of flowers, his body smelling bad, and dissatisfaction with his surroundings.

(3) Conditioned embodiment ('du-byed gyi phung-po) indicates the third of the three miseries, the pervasive misery of conditioned activities (khyab pa 'du-byed gyi dug-bsngal), and thus by merely taking compulsive embodiment we have entered into misery.

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"When you no longer desire the enjoyments of samsara, and are nauseated by them as a prisoner is nauseated by his prison, you will produce a strong and ceaseless longing for liberation. This is the indication that you have attained the mind of Renunciation. The root text says:

When you do not for an instant Wish the pleasures of samsara, And day and night remain intent on liberation, You have then produced Renunciation.

Renunciation 'without pure Bodhi-mind Does not bring forth the perfect bliss Of unsurpassed enlightenment; Therefore Bodhisattvas generate excellent Bodhi-mind.

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To generate Bodhi-mind you must first achieve equanimity toward all living beings, and then meditate on the seven causal precepts. Begin by picturing in front of you a living being who has neither helped nor harmed you. Think, "From his own point of view he desires happiness and does not desire misery. Therefore, I will be free from attachment and aversion; I will not feel close to some and help them, while feeling distant from others and harming them. I will learn to have equanimity toward all living beings. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this."

S: This is a little bit like the beginning of the fifth stage of the metta bhavana.

"When you feel equanimity toward that person, picture a living being who is attractive to you. Try to feel equanimity toward that person. Think, "My partiality is due to the influence of attachment. It is because I have previously desired attractive beings that I have again been born in samsara." Control your desire and meditate.

When you feel equanimity toward that attractive person, picture a living being who is unattractive to you. Try to feel equanimity toward that person. Think, "Because there has been discord between us, I have generated aversion to him and so lack equanimity." Thinking that without equanimity there is no way to generate Bodhi-mind, control your aversion and meditate.

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"When you feel equanimity toward that unattractive person, picture both a being who is very attractive to you, and a being who is very unattractive to you. Think, "These two are the same in that each, from his own viewpoint, desires happiness and does not desire misery. From my viewpoint, even this one to whom I now feel close has been my enemy countless times. This one toward whom I now feel hostility has been my mother countless times and has protected me with mercy. Which one should I desire? Which one should I hate? I will have equanimity and be free from attachment and aversion. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this."

When you feel this equanimity, extend it to all living beings. "All living beings are the same,

in that each from his own viewpoint desires happiness and does not desire misery. From my viewpoint, all living beings are my relatives. Therefore, I will learn to have equanimity and be free from attachment and aversion; I will not feel close to some and help them, while feeling distant from others and harming them. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this."

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"Once you have developed the mind of equanimity, begin the first of the seven causal precepts for generating Bodhi-mind. Continue to visualize the Lamas and deities in front of you and contemplate as follows: "Why are all living beings my relatives? As there is no beginning to samsara, there is also no beginning to my births. In passing through these lives, there is no form of living being which I have not taken countless times and there is no country or region where I have not been born. Of all beings, there is no one who has not been my mother innumerable times. Each has been my mother in human form countless times and will become my mother again."

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"When you have fully experienced this truth, contemplate the kindness which living beings have extended to you when they were your mother. Continue to visualize the lamas and deities in front of you and picture the clear form of your mother, both when she was young and when she was old. "Not only is she my mother in this life, but she has cared for me in lives beyond number. Specifically, in this lifetime, she mercifully protected me in the womb, and when I was born she put me on soft pillows and cradled me in her arms. She held me to the warmth of her breast. She welcomed me with compassionate smiles and looked at me with happy eyes. She cleaned my snotty nose and wiped away my excrement. [575] Even my slightest ailment gave her greater misery than the thought of losing her own life. Scorning all afflictions, torments, and abuse, not considering herself at all, she provided me as well as she could with food and shelter. She gave me infinite happiness and benefits, and protected me from measureless misery and harm." Contemplate her very great kindness, and then in the same way contemplate the kindness of your father and others close to you, for they have also been your mother countless times."

S: Notice you don't contemplate the kindness of your father, as such, but contemplate father as also having been a mother. Why do you think that is?

V: Fathers are normally much stricter.

S: More distant, yes. There isn't a natural closeness to father.

V: Would it be the reverse for a woman?

S: No, because it is the biological closeness.

V: But the kindness of your father.

S: Kindness, yes, father might be more kind, but I don't [know] whether we take this word kindness too literally.

V: I think mother is a quite a natural thing.

S: It is a more natural thing, you have to learn who your father is but you don't have to learn who your mother is. You can accept anyone as your father, it is much more difficult to accept anyone as your mother. Mummy says, 'that's Daddy', then you begin to recognize Daddy as a separate personality only sometime later. You've only got Mummy's word for it. (laughter)

V: As you gravitate towards the ...



V: In my particular case my father is my stepfather. Even when it was pointed out to me at a fairly early age it didn't change my feeling, he was my father.

S: Yes, but you can hardly do that with mother, because mother has to be mother right from the beginning. Unless a new born baby is taken from one woman and given to another, but then the new mother, unless under very exceptional circumstances will not actually feel as though it is her own baby. Well it will not be her own baby and there will be some difference, however kind she may be, there won't be the same sort of instinctive feeling towards the baby, to a degree anyway.

V: There must be quite a strong attachment because the mother has carried the baby for nine months inside.

S: Yes, right. So therefore the relationship with the mother is regarded as the norm for the close human relationship.

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"When you have fully experienced this truth, meditate on living beings toward whom you feel impartial.

"Though it now seems that they have no relation to me, they have been my mother times beyond number, and in those lives they protected me with kindness."

When you have experienced this truth, meditate on those living beings who are now your adversaries. Picture them clearly in front of you, and think: "How can I now feel that these are my enemies? As lifetimes are beyond number, each has been my mother innumerable times. At the times when they were my mother, they provided me with immeasurable happiness and benefits and protected me from misery and harm. Without them I could not have lasted even a short time and without me they could not have endured even a short time. We have felt this strong attachment times without number. That they are now my adversaries is due to bad karma; at another time they will be my mother who protects me with kindness."

When you have fully experienced this truth, meditate on the kindness of all living beings.

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"Then meditate on repaying the kindness of all living beings, your mothers. Continuing to visualize the Lamas and deities in front of you, contemplate as follows:

"From beginningless time these mothers have protected me with kindness. Yet as their minds are churned by the demons of fettering passions, they have not obtained independence of mind, and are crazed. They lack the eye to see either the path to the high states of men and gods or the path to Nirvana, the Assuredly Good. They are without a spiritual teacher, the one who is a leader of the blind. Continually pummelled by the discord of wrong acts, they slip toward the edge of the terrifying abyss of rebirth in samsara, especially its lower states. To ignore these kind mothers would be shameless. To return their kindness I will free them from the misery of samsara and establish them in the bliss of liberation. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this."

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"Then meditate love. Picture a person to whom you are strongly attached, such as your mother. "How can she have undefiled happiness when she does not even have the defiled happiness of samsara? What she now boasts of as happiness, slips away, changing to misery.

She yearns and yearns, strives and strives, desiring a moment's happiness, but she is only creating causes of future misery and birth in lower states of being. In this life as well, weary and exhausted, she creates only misery. She definitely does not have real happiness. How

wonderful it would be if she possessed happiness and all the causes of happiness! May she possess them. I [577] will cause her to possess happiness and all its causes. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this."

When you have gained experience of this, continue to meditate, first picturing other persons who are close to you, such as your father, then picturing a person toward whom you feel impartial, then an adversary, and finally all living beings.

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"Then do the meditations of great compassion and high resolve:

My kind fathers and mothers, whose number would fill the sky, are helplessly bound by karma and fettering passions. The four rivers: the river of desire, the river of existence, the river of ignorance, and the river of dogmatism, sweep them helplessly into the currents of samsara, where they are battered by the waves of birth, old age, sickness, and death. They are completely tied up by the tight and difficult-to-remove bonds of various kinds of karma. From beginningless time they have entered into the iron trap of holding the concepts "I" and "mine" in the centre of the heart. This trap is very difficult for anyone to open. Enshrouded by the great darkness of ignorance, which obscures judgement of good and bad, they do not even see the path leading to the happy states of being. Much less do they see the path leading to liberation and enlightenment.

These wretched beings are ceaselessly tortured by the misery of misery, the misery of change, and the pervasive misery of conditioned activities. I have seen all beings, my mothers, wretched, engulfed in the ocean of samsara. If I do not save them, who will? If I were to ignore them, I would be shameless, the lowest of all. My desire to learn the Mahayana would be only words and I could not show my face before the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Therefore, no matter what, I will develop the ability to pull all my kind, wretched mothers from the ocean of samsara and to establish them in Buddhahood.

Think this, and generate a very strong and pure high resolve.

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"Finally, meditate Bodhi-mind. Ask yourself whether or not you can establish all living beings in Buddhahood, and reflect, "I do not know where I am going; how can I establish even one living being in perfect Buddhahood? Even those who have attained the positions of Sravaka or Pratyekabuddha can accomplish only the minor purposes of living beings, and cannot establish beings in Buddhahood. It is only the perfect Buddha who can lead beings to full enlightenment. Therefore, no matter what, I will obtain peerless and completely perfect Buddhahood for the sake of all beings. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this."

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"Once you have produced Bodhi-mind, there are limitless ways to practise the activities of the Bodhisattvas. In brief, be motivated entirely by Bodhi-mind, and with pure and exact reasoning, generate deep realization of the nature of the Two Truths. Then develop in your mind each of the Six Transcendences: Giving, Moral Practice, Patience, Effort, Meditation, and Wisdom. When you have gained experience of them and thus increased your strength of mind, practice all Six Transcendences within each Transcendence (i.e., the Giving of Giving, the Moral Practice of Giving, the Patience of Giving, the Effort of Giving, the Meditation of Giving, the Wisdom of Giving, and so forth). In this way all the meanings of the Mahayana sutras and commentaries are included in the Six Transcendences. The deeds of the Bodhisattvas are not other than these.

Bodhisattvas must first learn to subdue their own nature by practising the Six

Transcendences. Then in order to benefit others they practice the Four Ways of Assembling. Thus these Four are taught separately from the Six Transcendences. These Four are: giving gifts to the disciple, kind speech, acting for the benefit of the disciple, and oneself acting according to one's teaching. However, these Four are at the same time included among the Six Transcendences. Giving gifts is included within the Transcendence of Giving. Kind speech is included within the Giving of Dharma. Activities for the benefit of the disciple and oneself acting according to one's teachings are included within the Moral Practice of working for the benefit of living beings.

Thus decide, "In order to quickly obtain perfect Buddhahood for the sake of all living beings, I will practice the precepts of Bodhi-mind, having generated the mind which wishes for enlightenment in order to free all living beings from samsara and establish them [579] in Buddhahood. Then, generating the mind which actually enters this path, I will practice the deeds of the Bodhisattvas, these Six Transcendences, and the Four Ways of Assembling. Lamas and gods, enable me to do this."

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"During the actual session, develop Bodhi-mind and its precepts as much as possible. Between sessions, having learned to conjoin all activities of the three doors - body, speech, and mind - with Bodhi-mind, clearly reflect love, compassion, and Bodhi-mind in all that you do. If all activities are conjoined with Bodhi-mind, even if it is only a contrived Bodhi-mind, whatever you do will become the means of perfecting the accumulation of merit and wisdom.

In former times, King Prasenajit asked Buddha: "I desire to be able to practise the Mahayana without neglecting administration of the kingdom. However, as I have many duties, I am not able single-mindedly to practise virtue. What should I do?" Buddha answered, "As kings have many duties and are not always able to single-mindedly practice virtue, generate Bodhi-mind in all that you do. If you carry out your duties motivated entirely by Bodhi-mind, not only will your royal duties not fail, but whatever you do will be the means of attaining Buddhahood."  
(1)

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"When physical illness and mental anguish arise, meditate on taking and giving. Think, "May the physical illness and mental anguish of all living beings, whose number would fill the sky, be added to my own suffering."

When joy and fortune arise, meditate on giving and taking. Think, "I give this joy and fortune of mine to all living beings."

At the time of eating, generate Bodhi-mind. Think, "I eat this food to sustain my body for the sake of all living beings. Inside my body there are eighty-four thousand organisms. I assemble them now by the gift of food; in the future I will assemble them by the gift of Dharma. Not succumbing to purposeless eating and drinking, I will conjoin whatever I do with Bodhi-mind."

(1) As it is essential that Bodhisattvas learn this, this Sutra taught to Prasenajit was specifically quoted by Santideva in the Siksasamuccaya.

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"At the time of sleeping, think, "I sustain this body of mine for the sake of all living beings. Whatever things inside my body are replenished by sleep, by sleep I will replenish and sustain." Go to sleep in that hopeful state of Bodhi-mind.

At the time of cleaning your room, generate Bodhi-mind, thinking, "I clean away the dust of karma and fettering passions of all living beings."

At the time of bathing or washing your hands, generate Bodhi-mind, thinking, "I wash away the defilements of the fettering passions of all living beings."

When opening a door, generate Bodhi-mind, thinking, "I open the door of liberation for all living beings, taking them from lower states of being and leading them to Buddhahood."

When offering light to an object of worship, generate Bodhi-mind, thinking, "I will clear the darkness of ignorance from all living beings throughout all space."

From these examples learn to conjoin whatever you do, all activities of body, speech, and mind, with Bodhi-mind. Read in detail the Mahayana sutras and learn from the speech of the lineage Lamas, for the precepts of Bodhi-mind are boundless, limitless, vast as space.

The root text says about meditating on Bodhi-mind:

Renunciation without pure Bodhi-mind Does not bring forth the perfect bliss Of unsurpassed enlightenment; Therefore Bodhisattvas generate excellent Bodhi-mind.

Swept by the current of the four powerful rivers, Tied by strong bonds of karma, so hard to undo, Caught in the iron net of egoism, Completely enveloped by the darkness of ignorance,

Born and reborn in boundless samsara, Ceaselessly tormented by the three miseries ... All beings, your mothers, are in this condition; Think of them and generate Bodhi-mind.

This is the way of practice, as it has descended from the precepts of the oral lineage."

S: Let's stop there, we've come quite a long way and it's nearly lunch time. But just see whether there is any particular point that we need to go into in those two sections; that is to say, development of renunciation or withdrawal and development of the Bodhi mind. Here we are actually putting into practise the teachings of the root text. The commentary is giving ways of actually doing that in detail.

[581]

V: On page 222, the passage about meditating bodhi mind. Is one to think discursively about this; it says, 'ask yourself whether you can establish all living beings in Buddhahood'.

S: That is to say, whether you can without yourself having any degree of Enlightenment. You are using it as a reflection to urge yourself on to gain Enlightenment. You must ask yourself, 'can I really do it without being Enlightened myself'. You just reflect in this way. It seems to be a discursive reflection, a quite sincere and powerful one.

V: On 223 it says, 'having generated the mind which wishes for Enlightenment' and then 'the mind which actually enters this path'. Is that the intentional?

S: The intentional and actual, yes. Which together make up the relative Bodhicitta.

What about the cleaning your room and thinking you clean away the dust of karma, etc. Do you think this is very helpful or do you think it is a bit artificial? Would some people find it quite natural to reflect in that way? (V's: Yes)

V: When I first came to Buddhism, even before I was ordained, I was into Zen and this was very much stressed and I did this for a long time as a practice. It was very, very effective, cleaning out everything.

V's: (Unclear.)

S: Well, we must have more work parties, obviously.

V: We've got enough dirt in this house to clean already.

V: I think it is a great pity that people don't take this more seriously. Work of that kind is a very effective method.

S: I don't think it is a question of artificially reflecting, but if you, for instance, clean out a room or if you keep the centre neat and tidy and attractive, and if you are doing it in the right spirit this will tend to promote the Bodhicitta. When you are actually doing it you have the feeling of cleaning and purifying if you do it in the right spirit. You won't have to think 'ah, this symbolizes my cleaning away of the dust of karma', it won't be quite like that.

V: Some people would even say that you are actually putting that positive energy into the room, into the atmosphere and that will hold it. (S: Yes)

V: How would that be different from neurotic cleaning?

S: Well why does one neurotically clean? It's out of anxiety, repressed feelings of guilt. So that would spread around a very different atmosphere. You can go into some people's homes where the lady of the house keeps everything spick and span, everything in order, but there is a quite odd atmosphere, sometimes, because it is all neurotic. It's a complete difference [582] of motivation. But when it is neurotic it is unconscious, you don't know why you are doing it, you don't know that..., you are not in contact with those feelings of guilt, you've got an unconscious urge to keep cleaning and purifying, but of course you can't clean and purify. You keep having to be doing it but you are never satisfied, the guilt is never cleaned, because you never become conscious of it.

But in the case of the would-be Bodhisattva you do feel cleaner, you do make some progress, you do get rid of some dirt. And it's an aware and conscious process.

(End tape 25)

V: It's a bit like cleaning the outside of the pot, in a way, isn't it. (S: Yes)

V: Isn't it in Buddhism that it says one shouldn't take too many baths?

S: Well this was for monks, originally, but no doubt it generally. The Indians are very fond of bathing, maybe over fond. There is also this question of loss of bodily magnetism.

V: Yes, I was wondering about that.

S: I personally think it might be something to do with that, though I have no scriptural authority for that.

V: Can you say more about that, I haven't heard that.

S: It is said, that when you take a bath you lose some of your natural bodily magnetism. If you are constantly bathing, then you lose much magnetism. This is what I have seen, and what I have read, I don't know how much truth there is in this or in what way. But if there was some truth in it, well it could perhaps be part at least for the reason why frequent bathing was discouraged.

V: ... a lot of energy?

S: In a way, it's not so much energy, more like vitality. Does anyone actually feel this, that's the criterion, does one feel that? (V's: Yes)

V: Yes, I went to have a dip in some hot natural springs in New Zealand and I felt completely depleted for a couple of days afterwards. Quite ...

V: I've felt that it is better to bathe before meditation rather than after, because of something like that.

V: Well there is, what one can do is have a cold bath after, if you are brave enough, or a cold shower and this revitalizes the body, at least, I don't know about the magnetism, but at least one feels more vigorous after. I thought maybe it's also because it is a bit of an indulgence.

[583]

S: Well, as I said, the Indians are very fond of this, it becomes an indulgence, they go in for a lot of bathing and massage and shampoo. A lot of bodily sensations, etc. etc.

V: I suppose it depends if you have a bath to wallow in it and indulge or just to get clean.

V: I must say last night I had quite a headache and was thinking maybe I will miss the meditation, I thought I'd go and have a wallow in a bath. And when I came out of the bath I really felt good!

S: Yes, a bath can be refreshing, even invigorating.

V: It seems to be invigorating for a time, for a couple of hours, but then afterwards there is a period of lower energy.

S: I don't know whether there is any scientific basis to this idea, I just don't know anything about it.

V: Because what happens when you have a hot bath is that your veins dilate, which means that there is a much lower blood pressure, which means you often feel very weak. That's why it's said it is good to maybe take a cold shower afterwards, because it then constricts the blood vessels and things again. Which means there's more vitality. Especially it is very dangerous for old people to have hot baths, when they are older, because they get very weak sometimes.

S: Presumably this is why the ancient Romans committed suicide in a hot bath. Because they weakened themselves in that way and they used to open their veins in a hot bath, they could die more easily. But that isn't quite the same thing as loss of bodily magnetism, or bodily electricity, is it? I have some vague idea of electricity passing out of the body into the water, water being a conductor, but I don't know whether there is any basis to that.

V: I think that the fact that the bath water is warmer than your body, means that there is going to be a movement from your body to the water. There is going to be a tendency, as it were, to move from you into the water.

S: What moves, what would move? Not heat, obviously.

V: Well, in the sense of electricity, you have got a positive and a negative, so you've got this., call it a life force or whatever.

S: I'm not sure about that.

V: Sounds a bit like woolly thinking to me.

V: No, it's quite common sense.

V: Yes, if you were surrounded by something that is hotter than you then you would absorb the heat, but at the same time your body may have to function a lot faster to remove that heat to keep your blood at a constant temperature.

V: Also, as far as men are concerned having a hot bath is supposed to reduce the sperm count, so it is [584] supposed to be relatively, or safer to have intercourse after having a hot bath,

than before.

S: Is this an old wives tale?

V: No, I think it's...

V: There is another aspect, too, is that a lot of our energy is put into physical tension, and having a hot bath, especially a sauna bath, releases all this physical tension. So after coming out of a sauna bath, it is maybe a bit like massage, and you go bouncing off like a spring lamb. I think this can happen sometimes, that you have got more energy if you have been physically very tense and that you actually relax and then you have more energy at your disposal.

V: I was thinking, also, of the Indian thing of prajna., that air contains prajna and also water, I think. I was wondering if it could..., I always thought having a bath was quite good actually, absorbing all this prajna that was in the water.

S: But apparently, there seems to be a difference between hot and cold water. And also a difference between taking a bath indoors - in a bath - and a dip in the river. These seem to be two quite different things.

V: It used to be the only place I could be on my own. I used to escape to the bath!

V: I think in the river or in the sea there is a very vital energy in the water which can aid you, I think possibly in a bath ... you may not get that sort of vitality, or the atmosphere at all.

V: Also, I think, particularly too, showers are supposed to be much healthier than baths, it's supposed to be unhealthy just to lie and wallow in a bath for ages. Because I think, well I'm not quite sure what is actually happening, but I think your body takes in some of the stuff you are supposed to be getting rid of, the dirt etc. Whereas a shower just runs off you, it doesn't seep in.

V: Well, it's just more active, you've got to stay upright.

V: Oh no, this is just (V: you can't go asleep), it's definitely something about taking in bad, dirty things, or something.

V: The other thing of course, is when you have a bath you lose body odour, which is sometimes quite energizing (laughter) Some people have a really pleasant body odour, other people don't, and if you have a pleasant body odour, well, why get rid of it. It's quite reasonable to ask that.

S: Is that odour possible connected with magnetism, bodily magnetism.

V: It's probably part of it, I suspect there is more to it than that.

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V: Apparently when white people first came into contact with a certain African tribes the main thing that the African tribe noticed about them was an overpowering stench of soap.

S: Well you do notice that sometimes with people, especially when it is rather ordinary carbolic soap.

V: Maybe there is a connection between magnetism and heat, in a sense. Are you talking about magnetism in the sense of a feeling or...

S: Well, sort of odic force. Magnetism in mesma [mesmeric?] sense, animal magnetism, as it were. I just don't know how scientific that is or whether that is a scientific context or whether

therefore, there is or is not anything in this idea that you lose it through too frequent bathing.

V: There's a connection with all forms of energy, basically energy is energy and it manifests in different ways. And that it trans..., there is conservation of energy, if it comes in one way it will go out another way ...

S: So perhaps it is basically, is there any loss of energy through bathing, especially through excessive bathing?

V: I think it exists in hot baths, definitely (S: Yes) but cold baths and swims, I think probably ...

V: But presumably the monks in Indian didn't have hot baths.

S: Yes they did, they had hot springs and Rajgriya and the Buddha originally limited them because they were going in and taking baths every day, and one day the King Bimbisara wanted to take a bath there - they've still got these ancient hot baths, they are great tanks hollowed out of the ground - and he couldn't because there were so many monks there. So he just mentioned it to the Buddha and the Buddha made a rule then that the monks should go there only every fortnight.

V: Would it be using a kind of mechanical method of relaxing instead of ...

S: Is it mechanical just to dip into a river, say?

V: To dip into a river is invigorating.

V: (Unclear)

S: You can sometimes feel very sleepy after a dip in the river, in the open air in the sunshine. You feel like going straight off to sleep afterwards. Why is that, that suggests loss of energy, as when you are very hungry.

V: Isn't that because you are swimming?

S: Even without swimming though.

V: I think it's moving water, something to do with moving water, it's alive, it's flowing and it has an effect on your mind as well. What you were saying about the [586] sea, difficult to meditate by the sea, it's always constantly moving. It may have a similar effect.

V: It's interesting isn't it? But I don't think it seems to be a general case though, one always wants to lie down, after a swim.

S: No, I am not thinking of swimming, but just a dip in the river, on a fine day with sunshine and all that, and you can feel very sleepy afterwards.

V: It's rather a shock, to dive into water which is all quite a different temperature from your body.

S: Not even necessarily when it is a different temperature, it can be a very warm day and the water need not be very chilly but you do seem to experience this quite intense sleepiness afterwards. Even when there has been no great physical exertion or anything, the experience has been very pleasant. But does that suggest that some energy has been lost?

V: Maybe we ought to experiment.

S: Maybe.



V: It might mean you have relaxed more.

S: Yes, maybe we just need a bit more basic research.

V: But there is a scientific basis, I mean, trans... one of the ways of losing energy is...

V: No I was mentioning the relationship, you seem to be arguing on two different levels, the heat and the electrical thing.

V: Well they are different levels, of the same thing.

V: I don't quite see how you connect it.

V: Well explain.

V: It's like coating copper with different metals, isn't it?

(Confused voices.)

V: I think it's ... detail ... rather woolly, but I mean I know it (laughter).

V: Transformer theory.

V: Transformer theory, yes.

V: Just remove the excess heat from ...

V: That's why cooling things ... because one of the ways they transfer energy is through heat.

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V: Yes but this is the heat caused by electro-magnetic action in the core of a transformer.

V: But even if you put the transformer in a situation where the temperature is very high, it does lose energy.

V: Oh, yes.

V: Because the electro-magnetism is being converted to heat directly.

V: Well, imagine you go in a bath, you are the transformer and you are put in a hot situation, (V: But I am not a transformer) so some of your energy is transformed into bodily heat, therefore you must lose it.

V: You are not a transformer but you are a machine and all machines because they are not 100% efficient give off heat.

V: Well in a sense you are a transformer, you take in food and you transform it into energy.

S: It's probably got something to do with heat, then.

V: Nearly everything comes back to heat, actually.

S: I mean, in hot weather you do feel tired, you lose energy, cold weather is invigorating.

V: I did notice this when I was at college, doing theoretical study on heat transfer, so many things were connected with heat, it was quite..., you can't understand heat, for a start. You can't conceive heat.

S: Even the energy of meditation is called heat, in Sanskrit, tapa, or tajas, fiery energy and the Kundalini is imagined similarly as a fiery energy coiled up within you and uncoiling as you practice.

V: There is a deity called Mahatajus (?)

S: I don't remember but there could well be, tajas meaning this fiery heat.

V: Also warm feelings and cold feelings.

S: Warming up, radiating, cold is contracting.

V: Sapping.

S: Heat is more energy like, as it were.

V: Well heat is energy, energy is energy and heat is just a form of energy, electricity is the same, it is all energy. I don't think there is any difference.

S: No, I am trying to see an analogy between heat in the literal sense and heat analogically, as when you speak of warm emotions. Perhaps there is something actually radiating then.

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V: Actually that's another thing, you are continually radiating heat, too. Basically all heat is radiated heat and when it comes into contact with something it can then convect it or conduct it, but basically it is all radiated. And you are continually radiating heat to the whole universe and the whole universe is continually radiating heat. It is all, it's another aspect of a continuous process, it's never static.

V: So what's that, when you come into contact with, you are continuously radiating but when you come into contact with ...

V: Well there are basically three types, it is traditionally called three types of heat, radiation, conduction and convection, but it is basically all radiated heat. But as soon as it comes into contact with air it heats the air up and the air will convect, move round and then that will come into contact. But in a sense no particles ever actually touch one another so the heat has to get from one particle to another, so it sort of jumps across, radiates.

V: Maybe they are particles.

V: But they never actually come into contact, they are only electrical charges.

S: I think we had better have lunch.

V: From a scientific point of view it is very easy to see that things are impermanent. (S: Yes) You just look at the atomic theory, everything is throwing out electrical charges, then there is no substance ...

S: And even the atom is not a thing, any more than the electron or neutron. It is not a little tiny billiard ball whizzing round.

V: I think possibly with this bathing thing, ... if your body as a whole really blends in to the water and there is an acceptance of the blending in, I think then it can be invigorating, but if there is a resistance ...

V: I used to be very curious in a Convent where I was left when I was very small in India, which was Christian, they told me that the little bowls on the wall had holy water in, and I remember wondering how was it different from all water, and whether it was true.

S: Well apparently they have done experiments with holy water, you can do it yourself if you want to prove it or disprove it, that if you recite a mantra or even say something very positive over water, you impregnate it, as it were, with a vibration and if you then use this water for, say, watering a plant, the plant will thrive more. This is what is said, and it is claimed that these experiments have been done a number of times, that has been demonstrated.

V: They have shown that it actually changes the make up of the particles, to bless them.

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V: Very mysterious thing, water. Scientists once thought that they knew all about water and how it was constituted and that it had a very definite form, two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen, but now they don't see it like that at all, apparently.

S: Oh dear, I really am out of date.

V: There are different kinds of water.

V: They have discovered about twenty different isotopes of water now and they are still discovering more.

V: (Unclear)

V: I must say, living at Lasingham, looking over a quite big pond, my room looks directly out over it, I find it has a very tranquillising effect.

S: The Tantric tradition is that a meditation hermitage should ideally have mountains right behind it and still water in front. Still water.

V: It's a very inspiring thing to meditate on.

S: It's a bit like that at, near Christchurch where we went for the retreat, Lake Lynden. Though the mountain behind wasn't quite high enough. But we did have the water.

V: Sounds as though when people start practising their Tantric practice they have to go to Finland.

S: Could go to Scotland.

V: There is another aspect of ... is that your skin breaths, so when you are dirty and sweaty you are needing to breath more.

V: How does it breath then, what do you breath in? What do you need to breath in?

V: I don't know, it absorbs ...

V: You need to breath in oxygen, oxygen and water.

V: Maybe more than oxygen, your skin breaths, taking in energy, Chi is the Chinese, Japanese.

S: Prajna.

V: Prajna in India, so after a bath you should have more.

V: It depends where the water comes from.

V: I wonder if you could say that, with some people you have too much energy and you've got to try and get rid of it. If you have got nothing to put it into, and it is just whizzing around you

and you have nothing actually to concentrate in and direct it on to. But at times it may be good to sort of brush some off.

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S: It's a bit of a pity, really, that you need to do that.

V: I sometimes feel that after doing Yoga, I have got a lot of energy and I can't quite put it all into meditation.

S: You have to go and play tennis.

V: Iyengar recommends that you should take a bath, that it's a good thing to take a bath either before or after practising Yoga.

V: I don't know whether that has got anything to do with his brahmnical...

S: But if you have been doing Yoga you perspire a lot, and you need to wash that off.

V: I don't think it has got anything to do with that, he does suggest either before or after.

(Confused voices)

S: I've noticed that when people do Yoga they tend to perspire, there tends to be a very strong body odour then.

V: Especially with beginners actually, Mr Iyengar explained this in class once that if you do Yoga properly there is no need to perspire. It's as though you put too much energy in the wrong way ...

S: As far as I have noticed, most of the people who do yoga, I've not noticed you, but others that I know that teach it, perspire very, very much.

V: I do. (S: You do) Sometimes but not all the time. It's quite difficult to actually do that, to put a lot of physical energy into something without getting hot.

V: It's supposed, also, to be an expression of anxiety, perspiration. I don't know, I perspire quite a lot myself but I am not conscious of being particularly anxious.

V: Fear also causes it.

V: Sweaty hands.

V: When you need more energy you perspire. If you are in a situation that gives rise to fear ... a flush of energy.

V: Yes, but I don't think you can take that too far, because the reason you perspire is to remove heat, to keep the body at a certain temperature.

V: No, I wasn't thinking..., the reason you perspire is, I was thinking of one of the...

V: Causes.

S: Sometimes you may perspire more because you have very good circulation and the body is always feeling warm.

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V: My old physics master once set up a piece of apparatus that showed heat radiation quite distinctly on a screen. When I put my hands in front of it, it was absolutely amazing the sort

of currents curling up.

S: Maybe you have just got good circulation.

V: Old people don't perspire as much.

V: Some people enjoy perspiring as well, some people don't... can't stand perspiring at all, I quite enjoy it.

V: Some people associate perspiration with everything that is repulsive and unmanly.

V: Well if you are upset emotionally, usually. It is something to do with lack of balance.

V: What a strange topic!

(break in tape)

S: Who's next then? Page 226

"The meditation of Right View includes the ways to become convinced of the egolessness of persons and of the egolessness of phenomena. To do this, one should analyse the ego by means of the Four Keys, for it is said in the Scriptures, "There are countless methods of reasoning by which one can become convinced of egolessness. Yet if one uses the Four Keys for Beginners, understanding arises easily."

Concerning the egolessness of persons, consider the following: even in a deep sleep we hold the feeling "I" very strongly and tightly in the centre of our hearts. This feeling is innate egoism. When someone accuses you, 'You did such and such,' and actually you did not do it, you think, "He accuses me falsely. I didn't do anything." At that time the thought "I" arises very strongly. This is clearly innate egoism holding "I" as its object. At that time, you should analyse with a subtle portion of your mind what that object "I" is and in what way it is held."

S: Do you see this happening? (V's Yes) It is the, almost, natural resistance that comes up quite spontaneously when you are falsely accused. 'No I didn't do that, I am being falsely accused, that isn't fair, that isn't just', that is innate egotism.

V: I have also noticed in a conversation with somebody, in a group situation, when somebody directs something directly to you and maybe even uses the word you, you sort of take that on, and immediately get more of a sense of me.

S: That can be, as it were, healthy, one must be a bit careful here. The innate egotism which the author has in mind is something which feels threatened, it is not something healthy and expansive. When someone accuses you falsely you feel not only threatened but you feel as though your whole existence was being negated. And what feels negated, that is your egoism.

V: How then would it be healthy?

S: This isn't healthy.

V: But in what case would it be healthy? Just Protection?

S: No, supposing you are very full of metta and you are radiating that metta outwardly. And supposing someone said to you, 'you are not radiating metta at all, you are in a very negative state', but if you were in fact in a positive state, you would just smile, you would be, in a way, all the more happy, the fact that you were being negated. It would just seem so amusing, you wouldn't feel negated, in fact, so there wouldn't be any negative reaction. So that would not be your innate egoism, that would be something more like, let's say, a positive, healthy individuality.

V: So how does one handle innate egoism?

S: We are going to see that, we are not going to be allowed to get away with it, quite clearly.

"At the time of analysing innate egoism, if the analysing mind becomes very forceful, the ego-holding mind vanishes, leaving nothing to be analysed. When this occurs, bring forth the submerged mind which clings to "I" and again analyse it with the subtle portion of your mind."

S: Do you see how this happens? Well supposing you do become aware of this innate egoism, and you start trying to analyse it, you analyse it very vigorously or examine it very vigorously, as it were trying to dispel it. Then it just sort of disappears. Just like a person who withdraws, if you attack them very vigorously they withdraw, but they are still there, they have only withdrawn. So in the same way the innate egoism just withdraws, it just goes underground but in fact it is still lurking there. You have to realize that it is still there but in a very subtle form So therefore you bring your own subtle analysing mind into operation. The fact that it disappears and you are no longer experiencing it doesn't mean that, in fact, it is not there any longer. It is still there it has just, as I said, gone underground, and it is present in a very subtle, illusive form which you have to penetrate.

V: Eventually it does go altogether?

S: That is if you practice insight, sufficiently.

V: This is the phrase in the Udana, used quite a lot, routing out Mara's host. I really have a feeling for that, it's almost like it is getting deeper and searching and routing out.

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V: I had a communication exercise recently when this happened, I was doing it and then we were talking about it afterwards, and someone ... an acute accusation of seeing a certain thing in this person. and eventually it just vanished, and he was putting on a beautiful smile.

S: But you do find this sometimes, that if someone forgets themselves a bit, they become a bit heated, they become a bit heated or a bit angry in the course of discussion, as soon as you point this out, 'don't get so heated', or 'no need to get so annoyed'. And they say, 'Oh no, I'm not annoyed', then at once it vanishes. But it hasn't really vanished, they haven't resolved it it has just gone behind the scenes as it were, and as you say they produce a smiling face. But in fact the anger is still lurking there in a subtle form.

You see this with all sorts of emotions and things. If it is identified, it doesn't really vanish, it just goes underground. But you have got to dig it out, to root it out.

"Once you have identified innate egoism, you can begin with the First of the Four Keys. This is the Key of recognizing how we perceive the object to be negated, the "I" held as object by innate egoism. We feel that there exists an indivisible "I" that from the beginning is changeless and independent, and is not merely a designation imputed on the five aggregates taken as a whole or the mind and body taken as a whole(1). We do not feel that this "I" exists completely apart from the five aggregates, the mind and body. Nor do we feel that it exists just in the mind or in the body or just in any one of the five aggregates alone.

(1) The body and mind are made up of five aggregates (skandha, phung-po) - form, feeling, perception, conditioned activities, and consciousness.

S: Is this our actual experience, is this how we feel? 'We feel that there exists an indivisible "I" that from the beginning is changeless and independent'. Yes, it has been the same 'I' throughout my life and separate from all other 'I's'. 'And it is not merely a designation imputed on the five aggregates taken as a whole, or the mind and body taken as a whole'. It is something separate, we feel. It is not just a label designating body and mind, or the five

aggregates, but it actually exists, it isn't just a label.

'We do not feel that this "I" exists completely apart from the five aggregates, the mind and body', we don't really feel well here is the 'I', here am 'I', but there are mind and body, somehow these mind and body are subtly mixed up with that feeling of 'I'. Nor do we feel that it exists just in the mind or in the body, or just in any one of the five aggregates alone. We can't really define the relationship, we can't say that this I is something separate from the mind and body, nor that it is in them or in any part of them, but at the same time can't say that it is completely separate or independent. But that 'I' is there, this is what we feel.

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"The "I" that is held in this way by innate egoism is the object to be negated. Recognize this nakedly within yourself, not just as general words or from the understanding of others."

S: One just has to look within and examine one's own experience, just feel and see this 'I', because this is what has to be negated by the teaching of egolessness. So you have got to hold clearly in view first, what is to be negated before you can negate it. Just as before you shoot at a target you have got to fix your eye on the target and know what you are shooting at. So you have to get this 'I' which you are going to negate, clearly into view, identify it, feel it, experience it and then negate it.

V: So this is the process of realizing individuality?

S: Of realizing non ego.

V: But the first stage is realizing individuality?

S: No, realizing innate egoism. It is best to stick to the same terms, I think.

V: You've got to get hold of it before you can let it go.

S: Yes, before you can do anything about it.

V: Is there something that can be practised apart from meditation. Presumably it can, to a degree, according to the depth of our insight?

S: Is what, something that can be practised?

V: This perception of the ego or subtle ego in ordinary conversation.

S: Well you can perceive it all the time, because it is always there, so the possibility of perceiving it is always there. In some situations it comes up more sharply than in others. In other words you tend to experience it more when it is threatened or negated, as when someone falsely accuses you. Your whole being rises up in revolt, and what rises up in revolt, that's innate egoism.

V: And that's when resentment arises as well. (S: Yes)

V: But is there a healthy ego that is trying to do this?

S: Not according to the Madhyamika.

V: I must admit, that really confuses me.

S: But then, remember the illustration I gave before that the healthy ego, if one can use that expression, is not one that reacts in this way when threatened.

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V: In other words the whole system of conditioning is, as it were, reversed.

S: Supposing you take just the same situation. Supposing you know that you didn't do a certain thing and someone accuses you and you don't react, you quite positively just don't react. I don't mean that you just stay sullen and negative, you do react but it is a positive thing, it is a sort of response, you can say. That is the healthy ego.

It is not as though you, though then again this sort of language is very contradictory, it is not as though you are all simply innate egoism.

V: It's almost like ... positive ego, well I don't use that term, but I think pure awareness. It's like you are seeing the situation, it's awareness and you are not going to react because you just see, and you respond from that, or your being responds just from seeing, just from awareness. So there is nothing to be threatened.

S: Yes, so what does react in this way, that is the innate egoism. If you didn't have that innate egoism, you would just respond or just be aware of the situation. And sometimes you can be, sometimes you can do this, but when you can't or you don't that's your innate egoism.

V: It sounds like Ananda's story of the Naval officer the other day, somebody who felt his egoism threatened, falsely accused and spent eighteen years, or whatever it was, resentfully trying to prove his innocence.

V: I don't know, I keep still having thoughts like, if you recognize it, and you can say you see it ... I always have a thought, well who is recognizing it. To me it's always, some..., it comes back on.

S: Well then recognition is a sort of awareness. Again language cannot but be self contradictory. That if you can be just aware, then that is not innate egoism. But you can also say that if you are completely into the innate egoism, you are nothing but your blind reaction, there is no awareness. But when you begin to see the innate egoism, to the extent that you see it, there is an element of sort of 'impersonal you'. You can call that true individuality.

But language here, terminology, becomes very confusing, in a way, because you are talking in terms of an innate egoism and a real individuality, and 'I' can be applied to both of these.

V: It suggests that awareness, particularly awareness of self, is not actually an individual man.

S: Yes, or a supra-individual. It is certainly not an egoistic man. To the extent that you are truly aware you cannot be egoistic.

V: Would this mean that mindfulness, is, as it were, a higher level than your normal self?

S: Yes, the mindfulness or the awareness, it dissolves the reactivity in your attitude. And to that extent, also, it dissolves the innate egoism. That fact that you see it, means that there is something in operation that is not innate egoism, [596] which we can call mindfulness or awareness. Which is perhaps the nucleus of, I don't like to use this expression, but, the nucleus of a 'higher self', as it were, or a truer individuality.

V: Yes. There's a lot of misunderstanding about ego, that I've come across, including in myself. But what I've come across is a sort of thing that, if you are working..., there is a misunderstanding about not being egotistic, a sort of a woolly thing. As if certain things you do, say if you are working for a charity or something, or your doing some kind of, supposedly, unselfish work, that that is non-egotistical. (end side 1)

S: I've noticed recently, or for some time, even, that egoistic just seems just to be used indiscriminately as a dirty word to apply to things that you don't like, or certain modes of behaviour that you don't like. It can be applied in a quite reactive sort of way, in other words



in an egoistic way. Sometimes it seems that this is just one of the ways in which the weak trouble the strong. That if someone is quite weak and can't do very much and he or she sees somebody else more active, more capable, doing a lot and expressing themselves with some confidence, then they try to undermine them by saying 'that's just your ego', or 'you are into an ego trip', and all that kind of thing. 'Power crazy or power hungry.' But it is all just undermining.

V: Sure, I mean they might in fact be ... but that is not the point.

S: That might be so, but the motivation is itself egoistic, one sees. They can't get you open and honestly, so they get you in an underhand sort of way.

V: Isn't it up to a person who has this tendency and is naturally active and outward going and demonstrative to restrain themselves a bit, knowing that there is this possibility?

S: No, I think you shouldn't, no. That's just playing their little game. No, you should just not permit it. Just say, 'no, I am not being egoistic', but just calmly and quietly. Otherwise you place yourself on the defensive and then you may start becoming, even, resentful eventually, because your natural spontaneity and creativity is being cramped. One of the last things that one should allow is to allow the weak to call the tune for the strong to dance to. That is not good for anybody.

V: Some people will use this against themselves, if they are doing something positive, '... just my ego.'

S: Yes, 'I guess it's just my ego', they want to be a bit apologetic, yes you sometimes hear that.

V: It's a sort of self hating attitude. I think in the Bodhicarya somewhere this comes across, I think you used the term positive ego. You said, you might as well have a positive ego rather than a negative one, in that sense.

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S: Yes. I mean the Bodhisattva is completely active, spontaneous, creative, vigorous, but there is no ego there, it is not egotism. So one shouldn't confuse non-egotism with a lack of energy and initiative and dynamism, and so on.

V: Egotism gets in the way of that, I would have thought. (S: Yes)

V: One sometimes finds oneself in situations where there is a lot of movement, a lot of activity, and it seems necessary to arrest this, at least for an instant, to allow awareness to arise, to develop, to flow again. (S: Yes) How is one to do that, can it in fact be done?

S: As we have said before, there are alternating states, when you tend to get very active and a lot of energy flowing, you tend, usually, to become less mindful. But when you check that and become mindful you stultify the energy. So for quite a while you are alternating between these two, the pendulum is swinging all the time. You are either very mindful, even overly mindful, or at least not quite rightly mindful but with less energy; or you are very energetic but not with much mindfulness. But you have gradually to try and bring the two together.

V: Are there any techniques one can, say in a group situation, or is it a matter of technique at all?

S: Well even if there are techniques you have to remember to operate them. So it comes back to mindfulness anyway.

V: I think if it's a positive group it can help a lot in pointing it out to you and ...

S: Yes, you just have to be sensitive to other people's reactions or responses. If you are just

being too loud and noisy and unmindful you will detect a certain little something in the atmosphere. Or again if you are being so mindful that you are inhibiting yourself and stultifying your own energy and maybe other people are not doing that and their energies are flowing freely, you will become aware of that, that you are not quite as they are and then you will wonder why. 'Well I am inhibiting my own energy, I am over-mindful, I am in a one sided sort of way. I must let my energies flow more freely, as they are doing'.

V: This is the great value of the Sangha. (S: Right)

V: When you say over-mindful. That's seems to be..., you can't be over-mindful to me.

S: I am suggesting an alienated awareness.

V: Would you say at the present moment that generally the energy is flowing, or that it needs to be flowing more? What is the situation ... (S: Where?) Well within the movement generally?

S: There seems to be very much more energy than before, and also more mindfulness I am glad to say.

V: So you feel there is a genuine balance coming into operation now?

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S: I think there is, yes. Though I would like to see more positive emotion.

V: How can this best be developed?

S: I think we have gone over this, haven't we. I think very often one just needs more time. One has not got to feel pushed.

V: There seems to be, in each person's life, one activity, or one situation which is completely within the context of Buddhism, which immediately brings on a positive state. And if people could, if each person could perhaps get into that, they would find...

S: Or get into it more.

V: ... yes, it would leak out into the rest of life.

S: Do people feel that?

V: I think ... does.

V: Well there is one thing, there's if you like a..., ... line of least resistance.

S: Something that sparks you off. (V: yes) And then once you are sparked off then the little spark can spread.

V: I would say a similar kind of thing, certainly what has helped me is having one project to focus all my energies into, it has really helped to bring all my energies together. Whereas when I was in London I was doing this, this, this, and this, and I just couldn't take it, it all fell apart and I got quite confused about all that. I would say that if you can, just put everything into one project, initially, it does seem to bring things together.

S: Yes, and of course Chintamani is saying or suggesting that that one thing should be the thing that you find you get most easily into, most naturally into. That can be most spontaneously creative in. Then you can do other things. You find that sometimes, if you have got a number of things to do, some of which you like doing and others which you don't like doing or that are a little bit disagreeable, do the things that you really enjoy first and you get

up a lot of energy and that carries you through the other things that you don't like doing so much.

V: If you put yourself into other things, make yourself do that for a long period of time, after a while your natural ... will start pulling at will get into your mind (S: Yes).

V: You say one shouldn't feel pushed. There is a lot of talk at the moment about the fund raising and people pushing themselves more, and there certainly is quite a lot of pushing going on by people, of themselves.

S: Well there is pushing and pushing. It is one thing pushing obstacles out of the way of the flow of one's energy and the other is trying to push the energy itself in the sense of forcing it.

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V: Sometimes it seems to be the same thing.

V: I think ... is quite right, there has been a lot of force recently, a lot of forced energy, a lot of pushing and being pushed. I think that has actually been happening and I have ... myself and quite a few other people.

S: Yes, but the question one really has to understand is what is forced energy and when is energy being forced and how. Making an effort isn't forcing energy.

V: When one is going against what one really wants to do.

S: This is what it is, that there is something else that you definitely want to do but you are forcing your energy into another channel. But if there is nothing else that you definitely want to do and your energy is available, but it is just not going into any particular channel, then 'forcing' (inverted commas) is justified.

V: When your energies just aren't going...

S: Really into anything. But forcing is when you definitely want to get into a certain thing, you feel very strongly about it but you switch your energies deliberately, maybe it is just some mental decision, or you are talked into it and your energies are then being pushed into a channel where, as it were, they don't naturally belong. It is not the channel they would have chosen for themselves.

V: There's also several people talking about, 'well if you don't want to do it, it's a pretty good indication that you should do it'.

S: Well you can't generalize. In some instances with some people this may be so, but there is a legitimate resistance also. One just has to be very careful and I think, as regards the archway centre, there has been in the past so much prevarication and so many excuses for not doing things and so much lack of commitment, I think probably the emphasis on energy is really justified.

But forcing means not recognizing the natural flow of your energy or the natural direction of your energy. Sometimes, of course, circumstances maybe such that for the time being it is not possible for you to follow the natural flow of your energy, but you accept that. But you recognize also that you can't do it for too long, you can't do it indefinitely, that sooner or later you have to get back into what you really want to do. But if you are a healthy, normal person you can accept that for the time being.

V: It wouldn't then be forced if you have got a certain amount of acceptance, then you have got a certain amount of energy...

S: Yes, you see the overall situation. You might, for instance, say 'what I would really like to

be doing now is just writing poetry, this is what I really feel like, but I can't do it just yet, I have got to postpone it, fair enough this can wait, the other thing which has to be done is quite important so I will [600] do that. And I will put my energy into that quite cheerfully even though it isn't what I really do want to do, I can manage I can cope. And after so many weeks or so many months, then I shall do what I really want to do'. Every healthy person should be capable of this, but that is not forcing.

V: I suppose you could say, that if, in a way you have got this space or if you've even got the time, or if you even do have to stop and consider and think about these things, then you probably have the time. If you are really into doing what you are doing you will know straight away whether there is any time or not, almost.

V: Yes, we weren't thinking about time really, I see your point but I don't think it applies.

S: I think the great danger is, where for so many years one has had to do things that one doesn't, that one didn't really want to do, to such an extent that you no longer know what you really want to do even if you have the opportunity. And that is really bad, then you must stop for a while until you have a definite feeling, 'I would like to do this' or 'I would like to do that'.

Because, if you are always having to respond to external demands and are never really doing anything that you really want to do, or the things that you are having to do for external reasons is not the thing that you really feel that you want to do, and if this is going on indefinitely, then you are getting also more and more resentful. As I said, in the end you don't know what you want to do, you get out of touch with that, that's really very bad. So then one has to stop, until you are in touch with what you really want to do.

So if you are in touch with what you want to do, very definitely, but have to do something else for the time being, that doesn't matter so much. At least you are in touch with what you want to do and can come back to it, and give it space as soon as circumstances permit. But sometimes people go through all their lives without ever having the opportunity of knowing what they really want to do.

V: You can see this in people's faces, ... and bitter. Sagaramati and I were talking this afternoon about this sort of thing and tying it up with what we were saying yesterday about, possibly there are certain children who don't need to go through all the experiences of life because they know fundamentally what they want to do. But because of the context in which they are brought up they are forced into a certain straight jacket, almost, and so although they may initially be very healthy, cheerful and quite developed in some ways a great resentment can build up. So you get a strange sort of, almost contradiction in quite a good person of this tremendous quality and also a resentment.

S: I think the important thing therefore is to be in touch with what you really want to do, even though for the time being you are not able to do it.

V: But for an Order Member would it be rather assumed that what one really wants to do is to reach the goal and benefit all beings? (S. Yes) Because I think it can be interpreted on a different level, you know, 'what I really [601] want to do is paint pictures or write poetry', whereas that is not what people really want to do. They want to aspire, they want to evolve and I think one has to really keep the goal in mind, and see that that is the ultimate.

S: What you really, really want to do, yes.

V: I agree with that but I think you have got to get a much more human level and say that maybe you do just want to write poetry.

S: Yes, and you have to be able to connect what you want to do as a human being with what you want to do ultimately. But if you are out of touch from the beginning, with what you

really want to do even as a human being, you have got no lead into that higher objective, as it were.

V: It is what you were saying, I think in one of the other seminars, that that sort of comes naturally, if you write poetry or paint pictures that will come spontaneously if you keep the ideal ahead of you, then it will express itself, you will express yourself in things quite spontaneously. You don't have to look around.

V: If you recognize what your feelings are, even if it is not possible for one to carry them out at a certain time, to be able to recognize that inner need.

S: And to be in touch with them, and actually to feel.

V: Yes, I think that creativity, that continuity, the natural expression of that will come out in its right time. It is when you deny that you are feeling something because you feel you shouldn't feel it and it all goes wrong and you get blocked and feel resentful.

V: I think, if you are in touch with that feeling of what you want to do, you are in touch with that creative energy and that will flow into what you are doing.

S: Yes, then if the situation is such that you are actually into what you really want to be into, and your creative energy is going in its natural channels then you will be able to do quite a bit of other things on the side in which you are not so interested.

V: People who don't really know what they want to do...

S: There are some people who don't know what they want to do, in the sense of just dithering, they have got plenty of time, they have been thinking it over maybe for years, there has been no pressure on them, and they still don't know what they want to do. They just have to be told. 'Do this or do that'. At least if they do it, at least some energy is going.

V: Yes, I think in that way energy is produced and it is useful, it is quite important.

V: And also then they might find what they want to do. (S: Right)

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V: It could be things that need to be done...

S: Or at least know quite definitely that they don't like to do, or don't want to do certain things, well that is again.

V: It is often something you can never really find out by an analysis of the situation. You have got to put the energy in one direction before you can really get in touch whether it is the right one or not.

S: Yes. So I think some of the insistence that there is in these days, is that some of these people who have just been shilly shallying for years, should at least do something.

Anyway let's go on, we are getting a long way away from the 'I'

"The Second Key is to realize the extent of the logical possibilities. If we feel that there is an 'I' that exists in connection with the five skandhas, it must be either the same as or different from those five skandhas. It must exist in one of these two ways. Decide definitely that this is so, that there is no third way for it to exist. The last two Keys are the application of this logic."

S: Do you see that? If you feel that there is an 'I', that exists in connection with the five skandhas, well it must be either the same as or different from those five skandhas. It must

exist in one of these two ways. So 'decide definitely that this is so, that there is no third way for it to exist', then you apply the last two Keys to that. Here you are, you've got these five skandhas, you've got this feeling of 'I', either it is identical with those five skandhas or it is something different. It must be one or the other, there is no middle way here.

V: I've decided.

S: OK. then go on, apply the third key.

"The Third Key is to recognize that there can be no truly existent sameness. Suppose you feel that the "I" is the same as the five aggregates. A person made up of five aggregates is felt to have one "I". If that indivisible "I" and the five different aggregates truly were the same, then there would have to be either five different "I"s or only one indivisible aggregate. As both of these possibilities are clearly absurd, understand that the "I" is not the same as the five skandhas."

S: That's quite clear and straightforward isn't it.? Whether one is convinced by it, that is another matter, but the reasoning is quite clear. No doubt it is just the ego resisting, let's go on to the fourth key then.

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"The Fourth Key is to recognize the lack of truly existent diversity. Since the "I" is not the same as the five aggregates, suppose that it is different from them. If this were the case, just as you are able to indirectly identify the fifth aggregate after separating out the other four, you should be able to identify, "This is the 'I'," after separating out each of the aggregates. However, you can not do this. Therefore, understand that an "I" that is different from the five aggregates does not exist."

S: Do you think that for most people this sort of reasoning is very helpful?

V: No.

V: It's so clear that there's nothing to see.

V: It seems like if they had a preliminary enquiry going on, like he says here, 'however you cannot do this'.

S: Well you find that, if you try you find that, in fact, you cannot do it. You have to make the experiment yourself and see whether you can do it or not.

V: I don't think most people would be convinced by the duality of the thing.

S: But there are people who take argument and reasoning very seriously. Perhaps we don't have many of them around in our movement, but such people do exist, especially the more scientifically oriented.

V: I have been spending several years trying to separate out the five aggregates (laughter) totally baffled!

S: But what do you think gives most people a clear, or at least a fairly definite inkling, at least, of the fact that the 'I' as we usually experience it is not ultimately real.

V: His changing moods. (S: Yes) You think of yourself at one moment and you are very different the next.

S: Yes, but you call all of them I.

(break in tape)

V: Actually that struck me quite forcibly really. At one time of the day I felt like an eighty year old woman, of the worst kind, and another time of the day I felt about seven, in a most positive way. I thought 'wait a minute, who is this?' and it felt completely different. But I still couldn't work out what was seeing that.

S: You can also reflect on dreams, because the experience that you have in dreams is your experience, it is you, but sometimes you have the most fantastic adventures or go through the strangest sorts of experiences. Sometimes something that [604] has no connection, apparently with your waking life, your waking experience, as though you are leading another kind of life, another kind of existence all together. In other dimensions even, in other worlds, but it is all you. So which is you? As Chuang Tse says 'last night I dreamt I was a butterfly, 'etc. etc.

V: Can it all be transformed? Is that the ideal, that every aspect of one's life, one's experience is transformed into supreme emotional positivity?

S: Maybe that is going a bit too quickly ahead. But the point that is being made here is that we can have experiences which call into question that what we usually and normally identify as 'I' can be identified in that way. That the so called 'I' has got facets of which we are usually oblivious, and we get this sort of experience in connection with dreams. We get it sometimes in connection with drugs, that the 'I' is not confined to what we usually experience.

So this raises doubts in our minds about the reality of this 'I', which is so changeable, so multiform.

V: We can appropriate that by calling it our unconsciousness.

S: I don't think that helps very much.

V: What is this thing, for instance for weeks I was quite happy, even though I was possibly quite miserable in some respects. Because I said, 'oh yes, anger - that will pass, happiness - that will pass'. But I still can't understand, what is the thing that says that? That says, 'oh yes, there is anger passing through me'. It all seems quite nice and you...

S: Or is it even always the same thing, whatever it is that is saying it, does one even experience that?

V: Is it not your greed, hatred and delusion?

S: That's a cheerful suggestion! (laughter)

V: people were asking me how I was and I said, 'the bit on top is up and down but the bit underneath is fundamentally all right all the time'.

S: You can speak, perhaps, in terms of awareness. Over and above the changing shapes of the ego there is an awareness. But that awareness can't be described as a 'super I'. Or perhaps it can be described as a 'super I'. though it isn't really a 'super I'. It is, as it were, impersonal, without being alienated.

V: Ahh, so it experiences quite fully.

V: Sometimes it's more a feeling. I mean you think about your greed, it's almost as if, when you look back there is a vague feeling, a continuous feeling through it. That's what I have usually seen in me.

S: Anyway, let's take it that the 'I' has now been negated and has been unable to withstand all these arguments.

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"Through this analysis by the Four Keys, realize that the "I" that innate egoism feels to be an independent entity is completely non-existent. Sustain this realization in one-pointed meditation that is free from listlessness and excitement. Should your understanding diminish, repeat the analysis of the Four Keys as before and renew your realization. Those of sharp intellect can come to the same realization by directly analysing whether or not the "I" exists as it appears to.

"At the time of determining the lack of true existence of the "I", there are two perspectives to your understanding. From the perspective of realization, there is a deep understanding of the lack of true existence of anything; from the perspective of perception, there is clear emptiness that is merely the absence of a truly existent "I", the object of negation. When you sustain these two aspects in one-pointed meditation, you are practising the meditation of Equipoise like Space; following this, in the After-attainment, meditate that the ego, and all other phenomena as well, are merely diverting forms. Then, in subsequent meditation of Equipoise like Space, increasingly strong realization of the lack of true existence is drawn forth. Depending on that, in After-attainment, learn to view whatever you see as not truly existent, even though it appears to be so. View everything as false, as diverting forms that are like a magician's illusions."

S: Do you realize what is meant by this, 'meditation of equipoise like space'?

Well let's go from the beginning. 'At the determining the lack of true existence of the 'I' there are two perspectives to your understanding. From the perspective of realization there is a deep understanding of the lack of true existence of anything. From the perspective of perception there is clear emptiness that is merely the absence of a truly existent 'I', the object of negation. When you sustain these two aspects in one pointed meditation you are practising the meditation of equipoise like Space'. Now why is it like Space?

V: It has no value (S: Yes)

V: It contains.

S: It contains, yes. It is, as it were, the awareness containing all these so-called 'I's or so-called objects.

V: ... or is that going too far?

S: It's probably going a bit far. For instance, supposing you negate the 'I' with these arguments, you see that the 'I' does not exist, there isn't complete vacuity and unconsciousness, there is a state of clear perception that the 'I' does not exist. So you are seeing the non existence of the 'I', at the same time there is that seeing. So that seeing is not an 'I', there is that seeing which is containing the non existence of the 'I' [606] just as space contains objects. Therefore it is called the equipoise, or meditation, or equanimity, like Space. So you don't just fall into a blank, dark state when the 'I' is annihilated or when you see that the 'I' does not exist. You go on seeing that the 'I' does not exist but also the seeing is there.

V: The seeing but no seer.

S: The seeing but no seer. If you like you can speak in terms of a super-seer, but that will probably only confuse the issue. So there is a seeing, within which the 'I' is seen not to exist.

V: It sounds like a contradiction, but that is because of language.

S: It sounds like a contradiction because of our non-experience of that state. If you have experience of that state then it is all quite clear and simple, quite straightforward. We get a hint of that in connection with some of these super-normal states even like those of drugs, and certainly sometimes in meditation.



V: Would this be similar to the reading you did on the last seminar, about the brahmin who asked the Buddha about ... mind? (S: Yes)

V: Is that also the explanation of that phrase while we thus integrate in the ...

S: Yes, right. Which is not being involved in the distinction of subject and object, as it were. That isn't the exact wording but that is the meaning.

V: ...

S: Yes, but there is no 'I' in those, they are merely causally originated sentences.

V: But this meditation is not one of the Dhyanas, it is just this particular...

S: Well it is called a meditation but actually it is an insight. But it is arising in conjunction with a samatha type experience, because tremendous concentration is needed to see in this sort of way. It may be in association with actual meditation practice or when you are just reflecting, even as you move about. But probably if you were concentrating to the extent of being able to see in this way, you probably wouldn't be able to move about, you would just stand stock still, immersed in thought. Like Socrates is supposed to have done, completely oblivious of everything.

So, 'following this, in the after attainment', which means the reaction that takes place, reaction in the positive sense after this experience, 'meditate that the ego and all other phenomena as well, are merely diverting forms.' It's not that they are absolutely non-existent. They are non-existent as ego, non-existent as 'I', but there is something there. So just see what is there is merely diverting forms. 'Then in subsequent meditation on equipoise type Space, increasingly [607] strong realization of the lack of true existence is drawn forth. Depending on that in after attainment learn to view whatever you see as not truly existent, even though it appears to be so. View everything as false, as diverting forms that are like a magician's illusions.'

The point of the comparison is that you see something, but it has no substantiality. Not that you don't see it, you do see it but it has no substantiality. Just like the magician's illusion, you see a horse but it isn't really a horse, you see an elephant but there isn't really an elephant there. You just see things, you see the 'I', you see different 'I's in fact, within that seeing, but you see that though there is something there it isn't anything real, it isn't anything substantial. It is just like a play of forms, like a magician's illusion.

And that of course is the, again from another point of view, the union of the wisdom, or the void, and conditioned co-production, dependent origination. You see that there forms arise and pass away under the law of dependent origination, within this perception, within this impersonal seeing, and the two are unified.

V: It also seems as though the compassion aspect, compassion of the seen for the seen in other people, that's all connected.

S: Yes, compassion is connected with illusory forms.

V: So it's important to maintain, at least as a preliminary development, the understanding that although they are only illusory, still they have a personal quality.

S: They are qualities without substances. Or sometimes it is said that they are like bubbles, which are brightly coloured and reflect all the colours of the rainbow, even, but they are hollow, they are empty. But they are bright and beautiful, they are there.

It means a different perspective on things, a different experience of things when the ego is not there, when this innate egoism is not there. In a way you see everything as you saw it before,

but in a way it is completely different. It is not that you no longer see people and things and flowers and trees, you see them all, but you see them in a completely different way. That is probably the best way that one can put it.

V: Is there a Dhyani Buddha that is associated with this particular aspect?

S: Not that I recollect.

V: Do you see them all the time in a different way or just ...

S: Well you would see them all the time in this way. Because in a way it isn't a different way. If your wisdom is fully developed then you see like this all the time. It's quite difficult..., you could say, some of the sutras do say, it's as though you see everything as it was before but instead of seeing everything as opaque you see everything as translucent. As if everything was made of glass, or glass of different colours and that the light was streaming through everything. So that everything is as it was before but it has suddenly become transparent to the light instead of being opaque. And the [608] opacity is the egoity of things and persons. So not that you don't see a tree, and don't see a flower and don't see a person, you see them and you speak and relate just as before, but everything is now transparent. The opacity has gone, the darkness has gone.

V: Could you say that relates to the arising of the Bodhicitta as well, if you see everything as the light streaming through and you are relating to that...?

S: There is no arising of Bodhicitta without some experience of this kind of thing, because it all relates to the experience of the Voidness. You even have a faint glimpse of this sort of thing when it is a bright, beautiful morning, with the sun shining. It may have been the same old house and trees and garden that you saw the night before when it was raining and foggy. It is the same scene, the same house, the same trees but as it is light and bright with blue skies and sunshine it all seems completely different. But supposing instead of being just illuminated from outside it was also illuminated from inside, so the light was coming from within or the light was shining through. Then that would be a bit like this state, this sort of realization.

V: I think that is why Thangkas, or any of that kind of art is so good.

S: Visionary art, in which the figures seem made of light. This is one of the reasons, also, why stained glass is so good. It's a bit visionary, though traditional Christian is sometimes a bit too sombre, a bit too rich, a bit too deep. Some of the fibreglass is good in this respect. Some modern churches have got stained fibreglass, it is much lighter and brighter.

V: It might be nice to have that in Bethnal Green.

V: What, stained glass?

S: Yes, well stained fibreglass, anyway. A great Mandala Window, or sunburst, or something like that.

V: This thing in the stories of all the saints and so forth, is what..., who wrote the Cosmic Consciousness? (S: Buck) Buck, he describes subjective light.

S: Yes, but the strange thing is this subjective light is sometimes perceived by other people too.

V: Yes, this is what I was thinking. Unless it's triggered off in them. I see it in terms of energy, I find it quite difficult to see it in terms of ...

S: Yes, for instance saints halos and auras and aureoles, they represent something of this kind.

It is perhaps significant that illumination is expressed in terms of light, even we say en-light-enment or the light of wisdom.

V: So then it is not subjective if more than one person sees it.

(End tape 26)

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S: ...you can say perhaps, figuratively, the nearest we can get to this is to say, that this sort of insight, this sort of seeing, is a sort of light in which everything becomes transparent and diaphanous, instead of solid and opaque, as before. As I said, the opacity being the egoity in things and in persons.

So that when you see someone as having no real ego, no self-nature, it is not that they vanish from your sight. You just see them, it is as though you have spiritual X-ray eyes.

V: How does the feeling produced in this sort of thing connect with metta?

S: This is difficult to say, because metta as such, metta which is short of the Bodhicitta, is samatha, is not illuminated. Metta, though very positive is still, as it were, opaque, it is like an opaque colour as distinct from a translucent colour. It is like solid pigment as distinct from stained glass.

V: I should imagine that such an experience is a very peaceful experience, in a way. And presumably that being a positive emotional state then metta would come out of that quite easily.

S: Out of which?

V: That, this sort of experience.

S: The insight.

V: Yes, there would be an immediate

S: Yes, because it is the innate egoism that is the main obstacle, the main obstruction to the Mahametta and the Mahakaruna.

V: Didn't you say that you wouldn't be able to get insight unless there was a very positive feeling there in the first place?

S: Yes, but then, when on the basis of that you did develop the insight, then that positive feeling would be transformed into, as I have called the Mahametta - the great metta and the great compassion. Which are, by very definition, connected with Insight or connected with the Void, thereby distinguished from the ordinary metta and karuna which have still some tinge of ego, or which are even forms of ego, healthy ego.

V: I'm still confused about this subjective/objective. It's like, if say an ego, in an ego point of view you see things as opaque then the Buddha appears brilliant, illuminated, giving off light to an ego that sees things opaque.

S: Yes, but when things are transparent, light goes through them and you travel with the light because you are the light. So there is an object out there, well in a sense there is an object out there, but at the same time you interpenetrate that object or you are that object. But not that you stop at that object or with that object, you go right through that object. So the object is not only in front of you it is also behind you.

V: Uummmmm (laughter)

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V: Is this similar, I don't know if this is beside the point, to perception. If you see something outside you it's like.., well there has got to be you, in a sense, the subjective thing, outside to actually see it. (S: Yes) It's almost like as if.., I don't know, the subject/object thing becomes a bit shaky.

S: Well in a sense it does. There is, as it were, subject/object structure there but there is no substance to it. That is to say it is not that subject and object are obliterated literally, subject is there and object is there but they have become transparent.

V: No antagonism.

S: One could say that, but it is more than that, it is more positive than that. The subject goes through the object and the object goes through the subject.

V: I don't think you can understand it in words.

S: You can certainly express it in words but whether you can understand it from the words. You have got to have some basis in your own experience, otherwise it means nothing at all, even if it is only by way of analogy.

V: I think if you only catch a glimpse of this, it's this quite unforgettable thing. It's so powerful, it is so immediately self-validating.

S: Well one certainly gets some experience of it by way of the Manjusri sadhana, this is based on, this particular, one can't say thought and one can't say philosophy, but that is its basis.

V: Would this be one of the aspects of citta. I forget what it is called, it is called transparency. Conze talks about it being an illuminous...

S: Yes, there are sayings of the Buddha even in the Pali Canon but the Theravadins totally ignore them, where the Buddha says this consciousness, citta, is pampasanna(?) which means radiant by nature, it only afterwards becomes defiled.

So in a way the Yogachara took this up and the Tantrics took this up, that there is a consciousness continuum which is naturally radiant and, as it were, within which, the play of forms takes place. Though, of course, also you have to think in terms of the radiant citta and the play of forms as being coterminous, and the forms as transparent. But there is this line of thought which is not much pursued, unfortunately, perhaps it should be pursued more. It is there, both in the Theravada texts and also in the Mahayana in some forms, but it seems to have been brought out more in the Vajrayana tradition.

It's as though, speaking analogically, that consciousness is of the nature of light, as light is on the physical plane, so the consciousness is on the spiritual plane. Vedanta develops this a little, that consciousness does not require anything to illuminate it, it is self luminous. Just as when you have a light you don't have to bring a second light to show the first one, to light up the first one, it lights up itself. In the same way if you have a consciousness or awareness you don't require any second awareness to be aware of that awareness, it is self luminous. This is why, for instance, when people talk [611] about this regression ad infinitum, that you know, but do you know that you know, you have to know that you know, then you know that you know that you know. In this way there is an infinite regression of knowers, but that isn't so, because knowing is self-luminous, knowing illuminates knowing, there doesn't need to be another knower behind the first one to make knowledge possible.

V: But still we talk of self awareness.

S: Yes, but if there is a self which is aware, apart from the object of awareness, that is still alienated. But if the awareness and the self are completely integrated, it's an integral

awareness, then there is no such fissure, you feel completely at one with that of which you are aware.

Just like when you are into some action, if you are aware of yourself as acting, then there is an element of artificiality, it is not completely spontaneous. But if you are freely functioning and freely acting, spontaneously acting and there is awareness completely with that action and that functioning, then that is an integrated sort of functioning, there is no 'I' there. There is no question of doing something and being aware that you are doing it, as though there are two separate things, the doing and the being aware of what you are doing are the same thing. That is egoless functioning which you can even momentarily experience when you are very much into something. That is the way the Bodhisattva functions.

V: It would be better, in a way, to speak of it as self being aware, rather than self awareness, which suggests that there is self and awareness.

S: You need a composite term which is one word, with no subject and no object. You could say being aware, being-aware as one word. Or be-ware, you should be-ware (laughter).

I think one can only get anywhere near anything of this sort by just looking at even very faint analogies and reflections in one's own experience. Otherwise you have no hope of coming anywhere near. We all do know that when we are completely immersed in something we are functioning quite spontaneously, at the same time we know what we are doing, but we are not standing outside ourselves and watching our action from outside. The two are completely unified, the action and the awareness of the action.

So it is this sort of state, or way of functioning, raised to a much higher power.

V: So it is when you are standing outside of yourself being aware that it is alienated?

S: Yes. You can of course be aware when you are doing nothing, that isn't necessarily alienated, but when your awareness is not fully integrated with what you are aware of, that is alienated. Just as when you are completely into something, you are not standing aside and seeing from outside how much you are into it, or that you are doing it. It is all quite indivisible, it is action, it's always awareness. It is Void, it's also deed. That is a more dynamic aspect of what has been said here.

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"Meditation on the egolessness of phenomena consists of two parts. One must become convinced that both compounded things and non compounded things have no true existence.(1) Take your body as an example of a compounded thing. We feel sure that our "body" exists independently and is not merely an imputed designation. This "body" is the object to be negated by meditation, for the body is nothing more than a conglomerate of five limbs made up of bones, flesh, and fluid."

(1) All compounded things are impermanent; non compounded things, such as sky and Voidness, are permanent.

S: We are negated as an actual existence, that is.

"The argument used to negate the truly existent "body" is the same as that used to negate the truly existent "I". The "body" that is felt to be a truly existent entity must be either the same as or different from the combination of five limbs made up of bones, flesh, and fluid. Consider that it is the same: a body develops from the semen of the father and the ovum of the mother, which, coming together, provide a basis for the entrance of consciousness. If the truly existent "body" really were the same as the combination of five limbs, then, since a truly existent body is unchanging, that drop of semen and ovum would have to be, from the moment of conception, a combination of five limbs. This is clearly absurd.

"Consider that the truly existent "body" is different from the combined five limbs. If this were the case, you should be able to show, "This is the 'body'," after separating out each of the five limbs. You cannot.

"Thus, as the truly existent "body" is neither the same as nor different from your combined five limbs, draw forth and sustain the definite realization that such a "body" does not exist at all."

S: That seems quite clear, doesn't it? (Laughter) It's just a question of how convincing one finds the arguments. But even if one doesn't find the arguments convincing you can experience or see the same thing in other ways. The Gelugpas, at this level, do rely very much on this kind of argumentation. But, of course, this is all within the context of a religious practice, meditation and so on. So no doubt if one goes through these reflections after a quite lengthy session of puja and visualization and so on, then one might well give rise to an actual insight on the basis of these reflections.

V: It seems relatively easy to capture a glimpse of insight, but then to convince... it's almost as if you say 'well am I convinced', and as soon as you ask yourself that you've lost it. But if you can go further into that and say 'yes, that really is so'.

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S: That's why the text says 'draw forth and sustain the definite realization that there is no true existence'. And that comes only with practice, obviously.

"The second aspect of the meditation on the egolessness of phenomena is to become convinced that non compounded things have no true existence. Take as an example the sky."

S: The sky, traditionally, Akasa, or space as it sometimes translated, is generally classified in the Abhidharma as a non-compounded thing.

"As the sky has many different directions, analyse whether the sky is the same as or different from those directions. Draw forth and sustain the definite realization that there is no true existence. Meditate as before.

"Single-mindedly sustain the definite realization that not even an atom of all the phenomena of samsara and Nirvana - the ego, the aggregates, mountains, houses, tents, and so forth-exists in and of itself."

S: We can probably have some, at least intellectual, insight into this as a result of certain scientific studies. Studies the structure of so called matter and the atom, and so on. You get down to smaller and smaller objects that gradually disintegrate and you are left with, apparently, just energy, not anything. This is a quite useful sort of approach, for the modern, especially scientifically inclined person.

"Know that all are merely imputed designations."

S: You could certainly say that of the atom and the electron and neutron, there is no such thing, they are just imputed designations.

"This is the Yoga of Contemplative Equipose like Space. Following this, in the After-attainment, realize that all objects of perception are by nature false, not truly existent, as they arise dependent upon cause and circumstance. This is the Yoga of Illusoriness. When, depending on these two Yogas, Contemplative Equipose is joined by the bliss of well-practised mind and body,"

S: This is the positive emotion.

"which is drawn out by the power of analysis, one obtains actual Intense Insight.

S: The terminology is a bit peculiar to the text itself, but the actual intense Insight seems to correspond to the spiritual Insight. Up to this point it has been more of the nature of excogitation, thinking, reasoning, convincing oneself, or intellectual insight. But at this point it seems that the spiritual insight emerges.

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V: So, presumably, if this sort of experience arises without the well laid foundation, of well practised mind and body, you can get, what I mentioned the other day, that if there is a residue of negativity you can distort this and use up the energy. (S: Yes)

V: Is that what's sometimes call dry insight?

S: No, dry insight is a Theravada term, the meaning of which is disputed, even among the Theravadins themselves, dry in the sense that dissociated from samadhi. But when pressed, usually those who hold that there is such a thing as dry insight, insight dissociated from samadhi, will say that there is a momentary samadhi, at the instant [of] insight there is an instant of samadhi, which makes the instant of insight possible. But most Theravadins regard the whole conception of dry insight with extreme scepticism.

All right let's go on then, we come back to the actual verses of the text.

"Concerning the meditation of Right View, the root text says:

One who sees the infallible cause and effect Of all phenomena in samsara and Nirvana, And destroys all false perceptions, Has entered the path which pleases the Buddha.

Appearances are infallible dependent origination; Voidness is free of assertions. As long as these two understandings are seen as separate, One has not yet realized the intent of Buddha.

When these two realizations are simultaneous and concurrent, From a mere sight of infallible dependent origination Comes certain knowledge which completely destroys all modes of mental grasping. At that time the analysis of the Profound View is complete.

Appearances refute the extreme of existence; Voidness refutes the extreme of non-existence. When you understand the arising of cause and effect from the viewpoint of Voidness, You are not captivated by either extreme view."

S: What does it mean by, 'when you understand the arising of cause and effect from the viewpoint of Voidness'?

V: There's no beginning or end... (S: No)

V: The positive?

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V: There's no cause and effect?

S: Well there is no cause as an entity and no effect as an entity, because the fact that one is dependent the other means that they cannot have any self nature and therefore are Void. This way you see dependent origination from the standpoint of Voidness, or see, in fact, dependent origination as non-different from Voidness.

V: I still see it as difficult to see it, seeing the arising of cause and effect not from the standard of Voidness.

S: I'm not so sure about that.

V: I mean, really because I still don't understand this Voidness thing.

S: Maybe a bit more reflection is needed. It is quite easy to understand the words. It's as though one has got a sruta-mayi-prajna but maybe not yet a cinta-mayi-prajna. The words make sense, but perhaps one hasn't, as yet, assimilated the meaning through reflection, even on the intellectual level.

"The last part of the actual session is the dedication of merit. Having gained experience of the Three Principles of the Path through focusing-meditation and analytical-meditation, you should conclude the session by saying: "I bow down, worship, and go for refuge to the feet of the Lama, who is indistinguishable from Manjusri."

S: ... focusing meditation and analytical meditation. Focusing meditation seems to correspond to samatha and analytical meditation to vipassana.

V: It's rather strange, I associate analytical meditation, myself, with the more discursive mode.

S: Well it is discursive, because there is analysis, but it is meditation because it is backed up with samatha.

"As you make this strong prayer to the assembly of Lamas and deities, repeating it many times, the entire field of assembly gradually dissolves into light, merging from the outer limits of the field into Tsongkhapa and Manjusri, who are seated in the centre of the holy Assembly. As Tsongkhapa, together with Manjusri, dissolve into you, the individual meditator, all impurities and ailments of body and all defilements and sins of mind are purified and you yourself are transformed into Manjusri. Rays of light emanate from your body. They strike all living beings throughout space and establish them in the high state of Manjusri. The vessel of existence that surrounds you is also purified; feel intensely that it has become a crystal palace [616] the gods. To the extent of your ability meditate that all animate beings and inanimate objects are perfectly purified. Then establish a catena of mantras in your heart and in the hearts of all living beings. Repeat as much as possible, "Om ah ra pa tza na di." (The last time you repeat it say, "Di, di, di, di, di, di, di, di, di," at the end of the mantra until you run out of breath.)"

S: The Tibetans say 'Dhi dhi dhi dhi'.

"To dedicate merit say:

By the virtue done here, May I quickly become Manjusri, And establish all beings, without exception, In his high state.

I dedicate the pure white virtue I have accomplished That I might uphold the Dharma of instruction and understanding, And accomplish all the wishing-prayers and deeds Of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the three times.

By power of this virtue, May I in all lives not part from the Four Wheels of the Mahayana. (1) May I complete the path of Renunciation, Bodhi-mind, and Right View, and the Two Stages of the Vajrayana.

"I will follow my Lama as a son follows his father, striving to accomplish the essence of the Three Principles of the Path, the keys that include the essence of all Buddha's Teaching."

The root text states:

Son, when you realize the keys Of the Three Principles of the Path, Depend on solitude and strong effort, And quickly reach the final goal!

Tsongkhapa with great mercy gave this teaching to us, his followers.



(1) These are: 1) living in a place where the necessities for practising the Mahayana are easily found; 2) relying on a holy being who practices and teaches the Mahayana; 3) having great aspiration for the practice of the Mahayana; and 4) having produced great merit in the past.

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"When your mind has become well practised in the general path of the Mahayana, enter the path of the Vajrayana, the unsurpassed path by which Buddhahood is attained not in three immeasurable aeons, but in one short lifetime of the degenerate age. Having pleased a qualified Vajrayana teacher in the necessary three ways, your nature will be ripened by initiation.

Guard more dearly than your life the vows and obligations taken at this time. Seek the key realizations of the Two Stages of the Vajrayana, for their deep meanings are the essence of the ocean of Tantras. When you have found unmistakable realization of these, make effort in the Yoga of Four Sessions. There is no practice greater than learning the path of both Sutra and Tantra in its entirety. This is the final key of the precepts that manifest the quintessence of the heart and mind of Tsongkhapa. Tsongkhapa himself said in *The Concise Meaning of the Stages of the Path*:

Having produced the general path needed for the two Mahayana paths, Both Sutrayana - cause - and Mantrayana - effect Depend on a protector, a skilful pilot, And enter the great ocean of Tantras.

Then, through reliance on the complete and perfect precepts, Make good use of this lifetime of leisure and opportunity. I, a yogi, practised like this; You who desire liberation, please do likewise.

Experience in yourself all these things, from relying on the holy spiritual teacher in thought and deed through all the forms of practice up to learning the Two Stages of the Profound Path. Each day practice in four sessions, or at least in one. If you do this, you will have used well this life with its opportunity and leisure, and you will be able to extend in yourself and others the precious Teachings of the Buddha.

S: Any query about those last passages?

V: What is the catena of mantras?

S: Catena is just a sort of linked series, it is the rosary of the mantra, the series of the letters of the mantra. Catena is a sort of chain.

V: What are the necessary three ways?

S: With body, speech and mind.

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V: And the Yoga of four sessions?

S: I assume that means four times a day.

V: The two stages of the Vajrayana?

S: This is usually said to be the samana krama, and the uptanna krama, the evolving stage, it is usually translated, and the perfect stage. This refers to quite specialized practice of Tantric meditation.

V: Do the Tantras actually, are they the actual practices?

S: No, they are the texts which describe the practices. Just like the sutras do, but the practices

of a more esoteric nature.

V: I'm still a bit confused Sutrayana cause and Mantrayana effect, I don't quite understand that.

S: In other words the realization that you get, by following the Sutrayana, both Hinayana and Mahayana, becomes a basis for the further realization of the Vajrayana.

V: What does the catena of mantras...?

S: It's the chain of mantras, the letters of the mantras.

V: So when it says establish it, does that mean ...

S: Have it going on constantly, the om ah ra pa tza na di, going on all the time.

V: What about in others, you also see that in others.

S: Yes, you can visualize, very often you do this, you visualize the mantras revolving, standing upright on a lotus in your heart going round clockwise. And you visualize the same for all other living beings, that in the heart of each one is a lotus flower, on the lotus flower the letters of the mantra and those letters are revolving. This is a quite standard Tantric meditational procedure.

V: In general what is the significance of the mantra, the fact that it is moving? Does it signify its activity.

S: Yes, it's activity, that you are repeating it, it's revolving, it's active as it were. It's alive, you could say. Just like the heart goes on beating and that keeps you alive, so the mantra goes on revolving and that keeps your spiritual practice alive, as it were.

Any general impression or comment on this text and commentary as a whole?

V: It's really rich.

V: It came alive.

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V: It's very good,

S: But, just reading it through, that is the words of the root text, one doesn't get so much out of it. One gets a lot with the help of the commentary. At least imagining the sort of context within which the practice and the study and the contemplation of the text takes place.

V: It seems that this particular commentary seems very different from the more modern commentaries that I have seen sometimes. Which are much more analytical and discursive, much more divorced from the actual practice. They seem to be much more an exploration, merely, of meaning.

S: Yes, well it is a commentary within the context of meditation, as I said at the beginning.

V: The description of the refuge tree is amazing.

V: I've got a great feel, that even having got so far that one could almost throw away all other books.

S: Yes, right. Well the Gelugpas virtually do, in a way. They throw away all other books for practical purposes, except for Tsongkhapa's lam rim, which is his detailed explanation of the

stages of the path. They just constantly go into this. Many of them do quite a bit of other reading, but that remains their main text, the one to which they always return. And ordinary monks very often don't know any other texts.

There are two versions of it, the complete version and the shortened version which is, I think, only a quarter of the full version, which Tsongkhapa himself prepared, it seems. Every Gelugpa monk has studied that shortened version at least, and knows it fairly thoroughly. Many of them, of course, know the full length version, the complete version and perhaps have even studied the commentaries on it by Tsongkhapa's disciples and also have studied the sutras from which Tsongkhapa quotes. But the lam rim itself is the work from which they start and to which they return and by which they check their own practice. That is the standard, that is the norm for the Gelugpas.

We will soon have an English translation, it is being prepared by Alex Wayman(?) who has been working on it for years and years. But I hear it is nearly ready, there maybe copies...

V: Does he have a Guru?

S: He has studied with a number of Tibetan Lamas, including some who have gone to America. He has also been to India and he is himself definitely a Buddhist. I used to have correspondence with him when I was in Kalimpong. We got out of touch for quite a few years. He is one of the very best people working in the field of Tibetan studies. Very faithful, very traditionally minded and very scrupulous, very painstaking.

V: So he is a Buddhist, not just an academic?

S: Very much so. He has got all the academic equipment but he uses it in the interests of his Buddhist life, one could say. His attitude is very good, very humble and very [620] restrained, and completely non-controversial, no polemics, no criticism of other scholars. He is just concentrating on the text and making it as clear as he can, making his translations as accurate as he can and drawing on as many sources as possible. I believe he has been in touch with Geshe Wangyal too, I don't think he has worked with him very much but he has some contact.

Well I think we had better close there now.

Next session.

## "6. The Concise Meaning of the Stages of the Path

The third selection is The Concise Meaning of the Stages of the Path. In it are set forth in a brief but lucid form the teaching that unifies the Sutrayana and Tantrayana paths, the three stages of the path for the three levels of beings."

S: All right, let's go straight through the 'Concise meaning of the stages of the path' and discuss it as a whole afterwards.

"I bow down to the prince of the Sakyas, Whose body was formed by a million perfect virtues, Whose speech fulfils the hopes of all beings, Whose mind perceives all to be known.

I bow down to Manjusri and Maitreya, Whose emanations dance in innumerable fields. Having assumed the burden of the Conqueror's deeds, They are superior sons of that peerless Teacher.

I bow at the feet of Nagarjuna and Asanga, Who are the Ornaments of Jambudvipa; Renowned throughout the three realms, they composed commentaries On the "Mother of Conquerors"(1) so hard to fathom.

I bow to Dipankara,(2) who, from these two great vehicles, Received the treasure of precepts

That comprise the key complete and without error To the two lineages the paths of Extensive Deeds and Profound View.

(1) The Prajnaparamita Sutra of One Hundred Thousand Verses.

(2) Atisa He received the teachings of the two great lineages, the lineage of Extensive Deeds (Compassion), given by Buddha to Maitreya, and descended through Asanga, and the lineage of Profound View (Wisdom), given by Buddha to Manjusri and handed down through Nagarjuna. Nagarjuna and Asanga are thus the two great vehicles mentioned here.

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I respectfully bow down to the Spiritual Teachers, Who, moved by compassion and by skilful means, illumine This best gate for the fortunate travelling to liberation, This eye through which all the glorious scriptures are seen.

This teaching of the stages of the Bodhi path Is the legacy handed down from Nagarjuna and Asanga, Who are crown ornaments of the wise of Jambudvipa, And banners of fame resplendent among men.

This precept is a Wish-Fulfilling Jewel, Fulfilling all desires of mankind; Receiving a thousand rivers of good Teaching, It is an ocean of glorious explanation.

Through it one can realize that all the teachings are without contradiction, And understand all of the doctrines as precepts; One can easily find the intention of Buddha, And avoid the abyss of wrongdoing.

Thus this precept is relied on by many of good fortune, The wise of India and Tibet. What sensible mind would not be captivated By the path of stages for the three levels of being?

Contemplate the significance of this way, Which gathers the essence of all the Scriptures; Even hearing and teaching it in a single session, You gather the glorious benefits of hearing and explaining the Teaching.

Depend, with effort, in thought and deed On the holy spiritual friend, the teacher of the path, Who is the root of the good arrangement of dependent origination Giving all excellence in this and future lives.

Having seen this, retain it though it cost your life, And please your guide by accomplishing as he instructs. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

This life which has leisure Is more precious than the Wishing-Jewel; So difficult to find, it is as quickly gone as lightning in the sky. Thus realize that all worldly activities

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Are like chaff in the wind, And seize the essence of leisure and opportunity day and night. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

You cannot be certain that after death You will not be born in lower states of being. To protect you from this fear, firmly take refuge in the Three Jewels And do not lapse from their precepts.

Knowing well the effects of black and white karma, Accept what is good and reject what is not. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

Unless you attain a human life with the requisites You will not succeed in achieving the highest path; Learn that cherishing dependence on the Four Powers (1) Is the way to ensure attainment of such a life.

For those powers are the special key to purify sinful karma, The defilement from falling into sins of body, speech, and mind. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

If you do not try to contemplate the Truth of Suffering - the afflictions of samsara ... You will not produce desire for liberation. If you do not contemplate the Cause of Suffering - the stages by which samsara is entered - You will not know how to eradicate samsara's source.

Value the knowledge of what binds you, And from world-weariness, renounce samsara. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

(1) The Four Powers are the Power of the Objects of Refuge (Lama, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha), the Power of doing virtuous actions as countermeasures, the Power of removing wrongdoing, and the Power of turning away from wrong.

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Producing Bodhi-mind is the king post of the Mahayana path, The base and support of Bodhisattvas' great deeds, A philosopher's stone transmuting all into merit and wisdom, A treasure of merit assembling glorious virtue.

Understanding this, the heroic offspring of Buddha Hold the precious Bodhi-mind as their central meditation The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

Giving is the Wishing-Jewel which fulfils the hopes of living beings, The excellent weapon that cuts the knots of greed, The deed of the Bodhisattvas that strengthens courage, And the basis of fame extending in the ten directions.

Understanding this, Bodhisattvas rely on the good path Of giving up everything, their fortune and even their bodies. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

Moral Practice is water which cleanses the defilement of wrongdoing, It is moonlight cooling the hot torment of passions; As lofty as Mount Meru in the midst of mankind, It assembles all beings with no threat of force.

Understanding this, Bodhisattvas guard this Moral Practice As they would their eyes. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

Patience is the finest ornament of powerful beings, And the best restraint for the torment of passions. It is Garuda, enemy of the snake of hatred; It is the armour not pierced by weapons of harsh speech.

Having understood this, develop in many ways The armour of great Patience. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

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When you don the mantle of Effort that is steady and unswerving, The excellence of instruction and insight grows like the waxing moon, All actions become significant, And whatever is begun is accomplished as desired.

Understanding this, Bodhisattvas put forth Great waves of Effort, dispelling lethargy. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

Meditation is the majesty that subjugates the mind: It is to be immovable as Mount Meru when sitting, When rising, to undertake all virtuous aims, Thus drawing forth great joy of supple mind and body.

Understanding this, powerful yogis rely On Meditation, which subdues the enemy, wandering mind. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

Wisdom is the eye which sees profound Voidness, The path that completely uproots samsara, The treasure of knowledge praised in all the scriptures The illustrious lamp dispelling dark ignorance.

Having understood this, the wise who desire liberation With great effort generate that path. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

In one-pointed meditation alone, You do not find the power to cut samsara's root. And by wisdom set apart from Abiding Tranquillity, Though you analyse intensely, you do not expel the passions.

Having placed wisdom that resolves the meaning of existence Upon the horse of unwavering tranquillity, Cut off all mental inclination to either extreme With the sharp weapon of Madhyamika, the logic free of extremes.

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By wisdom which deeply analyses in this way, Increase the understanding that realizes Voidness. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

The samadhi achieved by one-pointed meditation Is not enough; by proper analysis Distinguish the pattern of existence While increasing the samadhi which rests firm and unmoving.

Seeing this, understand how wonderful is the effort That conjoins Intense Insight and Abiding Tranquillity. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

Contemplative Equipoise is Voidness like space; In the After-attainment, all is Void like a magician's illusion. Meditating on both, method and wisdom are joined ... Thus transcendent Bodhisattva deeds are praised.

Realizing this, fortunate ones (1) Are not satisfied by either path alone. The Reverend Lama practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

Having produced the general path needed for the two Mahayana paths ... Both Sutrayana - cause, and Mantrayana - effect ... Depend on a protector, a skilful pilot And enter the great ocean of Tantras.

Then, through reliance on the complete and perfect precepts, Make significant the attainment of leisure and opportunity. The Reverend Lamas practised like this; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

In order to develop my mind And also to help others of good fortune, By the virtue which comes from explaining in clear words The complete and perfect path pleasing to Buddha,

I set forth this wishing-prayer that all beings May not be separate from the pure, good path. The Reverend Lama set forth this prayer; Those desiring liberation should do likewise.

(1) Bodhisattvas.

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As I met with the doctrine of the peerless Teacher By the kindness of my Lama, I dedicate this virtue that all living beings Might be upheld by a holy spiritual teacher.

First seek to listen to the extensive teachings Then consider as precepts all of the doctrines;  
Finally practice day and night, And dedicate all to extend the Teaching.

S: It seems, on the whole, quite clear and straightforward, though there are one or two points that probably need commenting on. For instance, twice Tsongkhapa mentions understanding all the doctrines as precepts, or consider as precepts all the doctrines. I think in view of some of our previous discussions it is quite clear what that means.

V: Practice.

S: No it is more specific than that.

V: They don't contradict each other.

S: Well, as precepts they might, apparently.

V: Get to the spirit that underlies them all, rather than...

S: That too. Bear in mind that all the doctrines, though they may appear very general to us after the lapse of time, were originally addressed to specific individuals in specific situations. There is no such thing as a general, philosophical teaching, what seem to be doctrines are in fact precepts, in other words they have a practical import for the individual. In some cases they may still be precepts for us, in other cases they may not be. We may even need entirely new precepts based on the old ones.

You could even distinguish doctrine and precept, taking doctrine in a slightly different sense. Doctrine is what is generalized from precepts, such a doctrine may itself be a precept or it may not be a precept, but it ought to be a precept, one may say. You could even say that the mere scholar wants to turn precepts into doctrines and not allow the doctrine ever to become a precept, and to deny that any of the precepts ever were precepts.

Any other point?

V: Black and white karma?

S: Unskilful and skilful.

V: A general point, Bhante, in connection with the overall form of the ... Would they originally be intended for recitation in a puja, because they have a refrain at the end. Would that be how it ...

S: Possibly, I don't think so really, but that possibility can't be excluded, but certainly they were meant for learning by heart and very likely for chanting aloud as well. No doubt [627] the young monks and novices were encouraged to learn them by heart and repeat them. Then they would be explained verse by verse, by a teacher.

V: It says, 'And by wisdom set apart from Abiding Tranquillity, though you analyse intensely, you do not expel the passions'?

S: That is simply intellectual insight, unsupported by meditation, in the sense of samatha experience, or experience of the absorption. In that particular verse it summarizes the whole position very neatly. 'In one pointed meditation alone', that is in samatha alone, 'you do not find the power to cut samsara's root', to cut it finally and permanently. 'And by wisdom set apart from Abiding Tranquillity', that is to say purely intellectual insight, 'though you analyse intensely you do not expel the passions'. Because your intellectual insight is not reinforced by all the energies of the highly concentrated, integrated state of mind which we develop in meditation.

So this is very general Buddhist teaching, this would be quite definitely accepted by all schools, whether the Hinayana or the Mahayana, this is common teaching.

V: I was quite surprised about the translation, 'philosophers stone'. It seemed like strange words to use from a Tibetan source.

S: It could be the wish fulfilling jewel, of course. Or it maybe something quite different. Of course, the Indians were familiar with the general ideas of alchemy, there was an Indian alchemical tradition. It is called rasayana (?) in Sanskrit, alchemy, and the second Nagarjuna, or the one whom Western scholars call the second Nagarjuna, the Tantric Siddha-Nagarjuna, is supposed, among other things to have been an expert in alchemy, in the transmutation of base metals into gold. So there may well be some tradition about the philosophers stone, even in the Western sense, the alchemical sense, which came down from India, to Tibet, and which was known to Tsongkhapa.

V: Could you say something about the symbolism of Mt. Meru?

S: Mt. Meru is supposed to be the central mountain of the world system and there are four continents at its feet, of which Jambudvipa is one, the world as we know it. It's more like the axis of a complex of world systems. Sometimes it is identified with a particular mountain in the Himalayan range, but my own belief is that Meru didn't represent, ever, any particular mountain. That it was more like the axis, or axial principle of a complex of worlds, of which our world is one. A complex of worlds existing on different planes. But the picture that you usually get is of Meru, this central mountain, like an enormous pyramid, with the realms of the gods on the sides of the mountain, and then lower down, lower beings. Then the four continents spreading out at the foot in the four directions. Each continent of a different shape, each continent with its own sub-continents and then around that an ocean, then a ring of mountains, then another ocean, a ring of mountains. In that way seven oceans and seven mountains, in rings. That is the traditional picture.

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V: What's at the peak of the mountain?

S: That is the peak of conditioned existence, the highest realms of the gods, or realms of the highest gods.

V: Does this have anything to do with stupa symbolism?

S: No, certainly not directly. Sometimes you get a little flag at the top of Mt. Meru. It's a triangular flag, it's Vajraketu, which is like a comets tail, not a banner type flag, more like a pennant.

V: There are some really nice paintings, ... shown in the book of ...

S: Yes. Once I asked a young and rather bright Tibetan incarnate Lama, just for fun, as it were, how he reconciled his Mt. Meru geography of the Buddhist texts with the modern geography that he was now learning at school. He was only about sixteen, so he thought for a moment, then he said 'they are both true for certain purposes'. Which I thought a very good reply. Presumably not the same purposes.

V: It seems a very characteristic reply. it seems to underline an aspect of all Tantric teaching, in a way.

S: Mmm. He meant that if you wanted to get from, say Kalimpong to Calcutta then you relied on modern geography, but if you wanted to practise certain meditations, then you relied upon the traditional Mt. Meru geography.

V: Spiritual geography.



S: Yes. Let's go on then, this is our last session and we have got to cover quite a bit of ground, though I think we can actually do it provided we don't dilly dally on the way.

## "7. The Foundation of All Excellence

The final selection is The Foundation of All Excellence, which presents the stages of the path from the viewpoint of reliance on a spiritual teacher and the mind-practice of the three levels of being. Tsongkhapa's poem serves as a root text for a later commentary written by Kushri Kabchu Sudhi.

In this case the author made a line-for-line commentary on the root text and at the end of each section quoted sutras as a scriptural authority. In order to make this process clear, we have inserted the lines of the root text in italics in the appropriate places. Also, many of the sutras have been omitted to limit the length of this selection.

The Foundation of All Excellence is usually recited last during the chanting of prayers, as it is a prayer to achieve the object of one's meditation or prayer. When the text is recited in this way, the last line of each verse is repeated.

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"The kind Reverend Lama is the foundation of all excellence. Seeing that dependence on him is the root of the Path, May I rely on him With great respect and continuous effort.

A human life with leisure is obtained this once. Understanding that it is very important and hard to find, May I produce unceasingly The mind that takes up its essence day and night.

The fluctuation of life is like a bubble of water; Remember death, for we perish so quickly. After death the effects of black and white karma Pursue us as the shadow follows the body.

Finding certainty in this, May I always be careful To do only virtuous deeds And abandon even the slightest nonvirtuous actions.

The door to all misery is seeking satisfaction in pleasure. Having realized that there is no security In the pernicious perfections of samsara, May I be strongly intent on the bliss of liberation.

That pure thought produces The great heedfulness of remembrance and discernment. May I accomplish by this means the essence Of the individual vow, which is the root of the doctrine.

Having seen that all beings, my kind mothers, Have fallen like myself into the ocean of samsara, May I practice pure Bodhi-mind, Which assumes the obligation to free all living beings.

Bodhi-mind alone, without cultivation Of the three Moral Practices, does not lead to enlightenment. Having realized this, may I practice With intense effort the Bodhisattva vow.

By quieting attraction to objects which are false, And analysing the meaning of Reality, (1) May I quickly produce within myself The path that unifies Tranquillity and Insight.

When by this practice I become a vessel of the general Path,

(1) Voidness.

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May I soon enter The great gateway of the fortunate ones, The Vajrayana, most superior of Yanas

The basis of achieving the two Siddhis Is the pure vow one takes on entering this Path.

Having found real understanding of it, May I keep this vow though it cost my life.

Having realized the significance of the Two Stages, Which are the essence of the Vajrayana, By unswerving effort in the four sessions of yoga May I achieve what the Holy Lama has taught.

May the Spiritual Teacher who has shown me the good Path, And all my spiritual friends who practice it, have long life; May I at last completely surmount All inner and outer obstacles.

May I in all births enjoy the glorious Dharma Inseparable from the perfect Lama; Having completed the stages (1) and paths, (2) May I quickly obtain the high state of Vajradhara.

(1) The ten Bodhisattva stages are: (1) Joyful One, (2) Undeified One, (3) Illuminating One, (4) Radiant One, (5) Difficult-to-Practice One, (6) Manifest One, (7) Far-Reaching One, (8) Unwavering One, (9) Perfect Intelligence, (10) Cloud of Dharma. At the final stage one enters to Buddhahood.

(2) The five paths are the paths of Accumulation, Application, Insight, Cultivation, and No More to Learn. When one reaches the Insight Path of a Bodhisattva, one begins the first of the Bodhisattva stages. "

S: I think we might as well go straight on with the commentary because each line is explained in detail. We can discuss it in that context.

"The Foundation of All Excellence

"Namo Guru Manjughosaya

This teaching joins opening the door to the stages of the path to liberation with the precious scriptures of the Tathagata. In it is explained the practice which begins with reliance on the spiritual teacher, and then proceeds through the stages of mind-practice. The root text states:

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"The kind reverend Lama is the foundation of all excellence. Seeing that dependence on him is the root of the path, May I rely on him With great respect and continuous effort.

The kind reverend Lama is the foundation of all excellence:

As the kind holy spiritual teacher shows us the actual path, he is the foundation of all worldly and spiritual excellence that can be derived from hearing, thinking, and meditating on the Teaching.

Seeing that dependence on him is the root of the path:

When you rely on the spiritual teacher, whatever excellence you have achieved so far will not degenerate; instead it will increase and you will finally accomplish all excellence of the stages and paths of the Mahayana.

May I rely on him With great respect and continuous effort:

Having realized that the spiritual teacher is the root of all excellence, by continuous effort of body, speech, and mind, develop great faith that perceives his knowledge and does not perceive in him even the slightest fault. Remember his great kindness with deep gratitude and honour him; make offerings to him, respect him in body and speech, and strive to do as he instructs."

S: Any query about that, it seems quite straightforward? One can also see that in earlier times, even in Tibet, when printing, though it did become subsequently known in Tibet, was

certainly not as common as it is in the West, one had to rely much more on the individual teacher from whom you heard the teaching orally. Nowadays, of course, we often find that people just often get hold of books and they read books, and there is no personal contact with a teacher. Maybe they get quite a lot from the books, but it means that the personal contact isn't there, and then when they do come in contact with a teacher personally, then it is sometimes a bit difficult to make the transition. Sometimes they treat the teacher as a walking book, for reference purposes only.

Though of course, on the other hand, you can also treat the book like a teacher. You can regard the book as being someone's actual teaching and feel yourself in contact with the author who wrote the book and be very attuned to him and his teaching, and in that way, almost, be in touch with a teacher, if one is sincere this too can happen. But only too often we don't take books all that seriously or treat them all that well. Even the scriptures.

So, especially for the traditional type of student the Lama was, indeed, the foundation of all excellence, in as much as it was from the Lama, and only from the Lama, that one heard the teaching, one couldn't get it in any other way. Even if you [632] got hold of a text it was often so difficult it required somebody's personal explanation and interpretation. There is also an interesting point, that, 'when you rely on a spiritual teacher, what ever excellence you have achieved so far, will not degenerate, instead it will increase.' So what does this suggest? That it's not just enough to learn a little bit and go off on your own, but you have got to keep up the contact until such time as you can really depend on yourself. Otherwise if you leave the teacher or break off contact prematurely then you can slip back and even lose what you have gained.

V: How long would you say it would be necessary..., when would you know that you could rely on yourself.

S: I think probably you wouldn't, you'd be much better to ask. Some, no doubt, are able to rely on themselves after five minutes with the teacher, but others maybe not after fifty years, you can't generalize.

V: Could one say that if one had a genuine grasp of the Dharma, that was more or less sufficient?

S: What was done mean by grasp, is it a mental grasp or a real spiritual grasp?

V: I was thinking, actually, just of a mental grasp.

S: That's very shaky.

V: Presumably it is until one has put oneself in a state of, well, spontaneity isn't quite the right word...

S: Well it's until you are virtually a Lama yourself.

V: So whenever you come into contact with certain situations you don't think, 'ahh yes, does that correlate ...

V: You would have to feel really in contact with something, as it were, higher than yourself.

S: Yes, or at least with your teacher. Not necessarily with a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, but at least with your teacher, so that the contact was there, even though you weren't actually physically together. Though again here one mustn't deceive oneself, otherwise it becomes like people seeing, 'I don't attend all the meetings but I am there in spirit'. When people should say this sort of thing they should be asked to prove, to actually demonstrate in some way or other that they are there in spirit. Either by means of a magical apparition or in some other way, but they must prove it, they must show it, that they are actually there in spirit. If they can't then

the statement shouldn't be accepted.

It is just the same with saying 'I haven't seen my teacher for years and years but we are together in spirit.' Well you have got to show him that you are.

V: He may reply that he's not advanced enough to see my spirit. (laughter)

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S: Well you are in a terrible state then!

All right go on to the quotation from the Gandavyuha-sutra.

"It says in the Gandavyuha-sutra:

Serve the spiritual teacher with a mind that is like earth, never tired of its burdens; with a mind immutable as a diamond; with a mind like a dog, never angered at misery; with a mind like a young prince who never contradicts the edict of a King of the Dharma.

Conceive of yourself as a sick person, of the spiritual teacher as a doctor, and of his precepts as medicine. Become convinced that earnest practice will heal your sickness."

S: Some of these comparisons might not exactly appeal to the modern mind, that you should have a mind like a dog. Never angered at misery, like one of these wretched Indian curs that are so ill-treated and half starved that they have lost all spirit, they don't even dare to bark any more. However badly you treat them they never react, they just accept it all. So you should be a bit like that, in a positive sort of way. That is what the text is saying, this goes completely against one's innate egoism.

Well at least consider yourself a sick person, someone who is having to take medicine, it will do you good even though it is a bit nasty. Perhaps even this conviction is not all that common, that the Dharma, the teaching is really going to do you good. It's really going to help you, really going to restore you to health, really make you positive, or really lead you to Enlightenment. Very often even this conviction isn't very strong, that the Dharma really will have this effect, you've only got to take it, only got to practise it. Not just keep the bottle on the shelf and look at it from time to time, or just shake it and admire it. Say, 'look, I've got a bottle of Dharma water, it's going to do me a lot of good one day when I drink it, but not just yet'. Like St Augustine said, 'Oh Lord make me chaste, but not yet'. All right, let's carry on then.

"After you have come to rely on the spiritual teacher, you must proceed through the various stages of mind-practice. The next verse of the root text is an exhortation to make good use of this human life with its leisure:

A human life with leisure is obtained this once Understanding that it is very important and hard to find, May I produce unceasingly The mind that takes up its essence day and night.

Mind-practice on the difficulty of obtaining leisure and opportunity is very important, for it increases the inner inclination to accomplish the Holy Dharma.

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"A human life with leisure is obtained this once:

For beginningless lifetimes we have wandered in a leisureless condition in the three lower states of being because of the influence of our karma and fettering passions. Now, this one time, because of the convergence of a great deal of virtuous karma, we have obtained this human life, which has the ten aspects of opportunity and the eight aspects of leisure.

Understanding that it is very important and hard to find:

When we consider the obstacles to obtaining a human life, the actual nature of this life, its causes and effects, and the allegories concerning it, we see how very rare it must be. This life is more precious than a universe full of wish-fulfilling jewels, for it enables us to accomplish the ten virtues, which cause birth as men or gods, and beyond that, can even cause attainment of the adamantine body. It also enables us to produce Bodhi-mind, to achieve the Six Transcendences, and to fulfil the Three Precepts (Moral Practice, Meditation, and Wisdom), which lead to Omniscience and the Assured Good of liberation.

May I produce unceasingly The mind that takes up its essence day and night:

Understanding the importance of this, do not senselessly ruin yourself by laziness or by heedless involvement in the eight worldly concerns. Always practice mindfulness. Hearing, thinking, and meditating on the doctrine of the Buddha by day and by night, generate the mind that desires to take up the essence of the Holy Dharma of instruction and understanding. If you apply such thought to practise, you will strive to use the methods to make meaningful this human life with its leisure and opportunity."

S: Any point arising from that?

V: What would be the mind that takes up this essence?

S: I'm not sure about that. Presumably it means the essence of the mind itself, but then the question arises, what is that essence? It could be considered to be the Voidness, or it could be considered to be the Bodhicitta. Ahh, we've got a comment on that point, after, let's wait and see.

V: The thing about 'day and night'. I know that in Tibet, in the monastic tradition, that many of the monks used to have only a very small amount of sleep, two hours sometimes, three hours. Is there any, can you see worth in this for us, that we should...

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S: I think in the first place, night and day here means, simply, all the time. Not literally all twenty four hours of actual practice in the technical sense, though that would be very good if you could do it, but, as much as you possibly can. You shouldn't waste any time, you should carry on with full vigour.

In other words you should be doing, always, something which is meaningful from the point of view of your development. It doesn't mean that you should necessarily always be meditating, or always be studying texts, even sleep is necessary. And if after four or five days without sleep you are in a completely useless condition, because you are just a nervous wreck, well that doesn't help you from a spiritual point of view. So things like sleep, food, exercise, rest, these are also needed if you are to carry on at all. So one mustn't take this sort of statement in that literalistic way, take it literally, yes, but not literalistic. Even when you are eating you can be mindful.

V: I just wondered if you thought there was any value in really trying to limit your sleep, really cut it down quite drastically as the Tibetans did in the monastic situation.

S: Well certainly one should not spend more time on sleep than one really needs. The question is what does one really need? You probably need less than we usually give ourselves, but I think you should be quite careful about making quite extreme efforts to reduce sleep. This just might bring on a breakdown if you are not careful.

V: It occurred to me that the Tibetans probably wouldn't need so much sleep anyway, because in the monasteries their life is less complicated and in a sense the perceptions would not be taking in so much and they wouldn't have to sort so much out.

S: There is that, there is also the point of course that they might have had a rest or siesta in the

afternoon. Indians do that very often. I am not so sure that Tibetans always did sleep such very few hours, even in monasteries. Judging by some of the young Tibetan monks or ex-monks which stayed with me, they always used to find it very difficult to get up in the morning. I used to have to rouse them.

V: I just remember reading about it in Dhardo Rimpoche's book, his biography. He did this practice and he only had two hours of sleep each night.

S: Yes, but he had to leave the Tantric college after a year, his health broke down. That was in a Tantric college after he had completed his ordinary studies, and he was already a Geshe, but he couldn't stand it for more than a year. He isn't all that strong.

It would be nice not to have to waste all that time lying in bed, but one does physically need the rest, need the sleep. Need the opportunity to dream, you must give yourself what is objectively necessary. And just hope that by virtue of whatever meditation that you are able to get in, you will be born in a deva world where nobody needs to sleep. Just be careful that you don't give way to sloth and torpor and that when you wake up in the morning quite fresh and bright just get up, don't [636] be tempted to have the unnecessary half hour or one or two hours, or whatever it might be.

V: I think the magnetic pull has got a lot to do with sloth. (S: Mm? ) As far as in the West, the magnetic pull. A lot of people say that we are inclined to sloth, you are forcing against that whole atmosphere.

S: The gravitational pull, you mean? (V: Yes) That may be more true of people in cities, but I don't know, I'm not so sure.

V: ... get up it's six 'o' clock ...

V: I know there is an obvious way, just sloth and torpor, just hanging around in bed, but I think some people can positively hang around in bed (laughter).

S: Well if you meditate in bed, that's obviously quite another matter (end tape 27)

V: It's a difference, say, from jumping up out of bed, I have been three stages, one of them just sloth, just hang around in bed, another one is neurotically jumping up and quickly having to do something, brushing my teeth and getting to meditate. The other one is waking up and just lying there for half an hour, letting things tick over, ... the day, watching my dreams and feeling much more relaxed about it and then getting up. And I think there is probably, I don't think one has to jump up straight away.

S: You don't have to, it just depends in what sort of state of mind you are. I wasn't suggesting that you should jump up neurotically, if you jump up well let it be positively.

V: It depends how you wake up, how you get up.

S: Some people just don't feel very bright even after half an hour. But I think the average healthy person should feel fresh and bright and ready to get up after they have had a good nights sleep, and adequate sleep. I think if we err at all, we should err on the side of springing out of bed because the more natural tendency is just to lie there for another five minutes, especially on a very cold morning.

V: It depends, I think there is a difference in waking up and lying there in a half daze state, half asleep, and in being fully conscious and fully awake, but just lying there quite conscious.

S: If you deliberately lie there just to reflect on things and are not deceiving yourself, well that's all right. But just make quite sure that you are not deceiving yourself.

V: You have to be fully awake to be sure!

V: Getting back to what Uttara said about it being peculiar to the West, this, all this sloth and torpor. I remember in Dhyana for Beginners, that ... said that sloth and torpor were one of the most difficult things to [637] overcome, so the Chinese obviously had the same problems.

V: I still get a bit confused about it, actually. Especially with regards the sleep that you need, because recently I have been practising getting up more or less as soon as I wake up...

S: Well you must just find whether you can actually function properly with less sleep. If you always feel tired during the day and just can't get on with things, well obviously you need a bit more sleep. But if you can do just as much and feel just as good with less sleep, well obviously you were having too much sleep before.

But I don't feel one need feel under an obligation to reduce, anyhow, but the chances are that most people do take, actually, more than they need.

V: In my own experience there is no consistency, in fact. Sometimes I have had very little sleep and have had all my energy there, all day long until quite late into the night and the next day it might be completely different, be dozy all day long.

S: It no doubt depends on the weather and what you have been eating and not eating, and what you have been reading and who has been to see you, or you've been for a walk; all sorts of factors.

V: Presumably a really healthy person, when they go to sleep, sleeps for as long sleep is needed at that particular time. (S: Right) And it may be eight hours, it may be four hours, then you wake up and that's that.

S: With quite a few people there is a sort of reluctance to face the day. It is not so much that they don't want to get up but they don't want to have to start facing the day and doing the various things that they have to do. So they retreat into bed, stay on a bit more so that they don't have to start doing things which they may not be looking forward to. That is, of course, rather weak, though perhaps understandable.

V: I sometimes find that there's more excitement in the dreams than in the day time, so I...

S: Maybe you had better write your dreams down so that we can all enjoy them! All right let's carry on.

"The actual way of taking up the essence of human life, which has leisure and opportunity, is found in the three levels of mind-practice: the path for lower beings; the path for middle beings; and the path of higher beings. Concerning the first level, the root text says: "

S: Ahh, just a minute it says here that this essence is not the essence of the mind but the essence of human life.

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"The fluctuation of life is like a bubble of water; Remember death, for we perish so quickly. After death the effects of black and white karma Pursue us as the shadow follows the body.

Finding certainty in this, May I always be careful To do only virtuous deeds And abandon even the slightest nonvirtuous actions.

After experiencing the desire to utilize this human life with its leisure, you must learn how to do so, stage by stage. In this, begin with the realization of impermanence and the Truth of Suffering, and continue through the great wave of the Bodhisattva's deeds. After you have ascertained, through listening and thought, the levels, enumerations, and nature of the Path,

meditate on them without confusing their stages. This is the great key of practice.

The fluctuation of life is like a bubble of water:

This human life, with its leisure, is not dependable, for inner and outer circumstances do not allow us to stay as we are, and in each moment the life-flow fluctuates, moving toward death. We perish as quickly as the bubbles in a puddle of rain water.

Remember death, for we perish so quickly:

Again and again contemplate impermanence, remembering that we have no power to remain forever and no certainty as to when we will die. The way to achieve final happiness is to be unattached to worldly activities or to this life's bodily enjoyments, for these are like chaff in the wind and will be of no benefit in the future.

After death the effects of black and white karma Pursue us as the shadow follows the body:

As nothing except consciousness (our inclinations) remains after death and we must take rebirth, the karma accumulated by good and bad deeds pursues us as a shadow follows the body. Therefore, decide to practise only Dharma from this time on. The three grades of virtuous karma - small, middling, or great - lead respectively to rebirth in a human life, as a god of the desire realm, or as a god of the higher realms. They also have the conditioning effects of long life and good health, and the positioning effects of abiding in a place [639] of great beauty. In short, they result in happiness, which increases until perfect omniscience is obtained.

The three grades of nonvirtuous karma - small, middling, or great - lead respectively to rebirth as a hungry ghost, a four-legged animal, or a being in hell. They have the conditioning effect that even when you rise out of these inferior births and are reborn as a human, you will have a short life with much illness and will enjoy killing others. The positioning effect of such karma is that wherever you live will be very disagreeable. In short, you must face the wretched results of nonvirtuous karma, for the deeds done will not decay, and there is no way to avoid their effects. These effects will in fact multiply. You must firmly believe in these true words of the Compassionate Teacher.

If you assembled in palpable form all your nonvirtuous actions accumulated from beginningless time, the mass would be greater than Mount Meru or the ocean. If in this life you heedlessly heap up more wrong actions, you will surely be reborn in lower states of being. Born in a hot hell, you will burn in a fire of molten iron which is forty-nine times hotter than the ordinary fire of men. Like the wick of a butter lamp, your body will become indistinguishable from flame; you will be cooked in boiling molten copper. Born in a cold hell, your body, cracking and blistering, will be embedded in a glacier surrounded by snow-covered mountains. Born as an animal, you will undergo the wretched necessity of killing and eating other animals. Born as a hungry ghost, you will find nothing to eat or drink, and even if you should find something, it will burn like fire in your stomach.

Finding certainty in this, May I always be careful To do only virtuous deeds And abandon even the slightest non virtuous actions:

Beings in the three lower states experience misery that lasts for hundreds of thousands of human years. Contemplating this, produce great faith in the Lama and the Three Jewels, who are able to protect you. Completely absorb yourself in the thought that your Lama is the one who knows, and from now until enlightenment take refuge in him. Do not engage in even the subtlest form of any of the ten nonvirtuous actions. Repent and confess any wrong you have done. Constantly increase the feeling, "I will never do it again," and from this time on give up all wrongdoing With strong determination and prayer think, "As much as I can I will perform virtuous actions. I will not give up [640] the effort to do those things which are now too difficult, for at some future time I will do them." To bring this about, you must, with



remembrance and discernment, remain heedful day and night. "

S: So any comments on that?

V: That attitude and view regarding being born as an animal and that you will undergo the wretched necessity of killing and eating other animals, rather than being killed or knocked around or exploited, that's a different point of view ...

S: Yes, you are under the necessity of committing further unskilful actions, which is much more terrible than actually suffering them. As Plato says, in the Republic, it is much better to suffer injustice than to commit it.

Go on to the quotation from the Sutras.

"The Guhya-acittavyapti-sutra says:

How do men and gods avoid degenerating the root of virtue? They abide in heedfulness. What is heedfulness? Heedfulness consists in guarding the mind; giving up wrong things; abandoning worldly pleasures and depending on the pleasure of the Dharma; not giving way to harmful or desirous mental constructs; not giving way to non-virtuous mental activities, such as desire, hatred or ignorance; not performing injurious actions with body, speech and mind; in short, not degenerating the root of virtue in any way. This, monks, is heedfulness."

S: That seems quite straightforward, let's go on.

"From heedfulness you progress to the second stage of mind-practice, the general path for the middle being. By making effort, beginning with the remembrance of death and continuing through the cultivation of right actions and the rejection of wrong, you will attain rebirth in happy states of being. Yet, at this stage, you have not passed beyond the misery of conditioned activities, for you are still constrained by the bonds of karma and fettering passions, and in the future you will certainly fall back into lower states of being. In the prison of the three realms of samsara, you will continue to be tortured on the rack of the three miseries.(1) Therefore you must first produce the desire for release, and then you must travel the path to liberation. Thus there are two parts to the practice of the middle being: to engender the desire for liberation, and to ascertain the path that leads to it. Concerning the former, the root text says:

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The door to all misery is seeking satisfaction in pleasure. Having realized that there is no security In the pernicious perfections of samsara, May I be strongly intent on the bliss of liberation.

The door to all misery is seeking satisfaction in pleasure:

Though you seek happiness in samsara, you will never find satisfaction; it is like drinking salt water to satisfy thirst. Instead of being satisfied, your attachment will increase and become the door to great and long-lasting misery that far outweighs any happiness you might have found.

Having realized that there is no security In the pernicious perfections of samsara May I be strongly intent on the bliss of liberation:

There is not the slightest security in worldly happiness; it is as momentary as a flash of lightning. Just as someone lost in the desert pursues a mirage thinking it is water, so we in samsara pursue that which has a nature of suffering, thinking it is happiness.

Even the most perfect enjoyments of samsara bring forth only wretchedness: karma, fettering passions, sickness, and pain. Through hearing and contemplating the Teachings, learn to

realize that these pernicious perfections are the basis from which all undesired things arise. Consider this again and again with the mind of renunciation, which sees all samsara as a burning fire and desires unceasingly the perfect, irreversible bliss of liberation. This mind of renunciation is indispensable for entering either the Hinayana or Mahayana path.

You should next examine the causes of the misery of samsara. The chief cause of misery is the karma of nonvirtuous deeds, of virtuous deeds, and of immovable actions.(1) All these arise because of the fettering passions and shoot you into samsara like an arrow from the bow. The fettering passions, in turn, are caused by misconceptions that arise from our distorted mental activities.(2) Remain constantly aware of the perniciousness of these misconceptions, for they project happiness upon misery, and permanence upon impermanence. Remember the perniciousness of attachment to desirable objects in

(1) Causing, respectively, birth in the lower states of being, in the realms of men and gods, or in the formless realm.

(2) Tshul-min yid-byed kyi kun-rtog.

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general, and specifically to wine and women. Remember the perniciousness of hatred, mental turmoil over harm to yourself or those close to you; and of ignorance, which is confusion about the cause and effect of karma and about the nature of "just-thatness" (Voidness). Remembering the perniciousness of all these, abandon them.

S: Any point in connection with that section?

V: He translated Voidness as 'just thatness' it sounds more like tathata.

S: Yes, I think in the original it must be tathata, but they have got Voidness in brackets to indicate that tathata is virtually the same thing as Voidness. Because the term tathata hasn't occurred in the text, in the volume, before.

V: It says, Bhante, 'the chief cause of misery is the karma of non-virtuous deeds, of virtuous deeds and immovable actions'. I am not sure why virtuous deeds.

S: That is to say skilful actions divorced from insight, which land you at best only up in heaven, and after a while you will debase from there and that will be a source of suffering in the end.

V: 'Immovable actions', being very strong?

S: No, immovable actions are those which project you into the realm of the formless gods, the rupa dhyana states or Arupaloka states which are even higher but there the same thing happens in the long run. All right, go straight on.

"Also contemplate the twelve links of dependent origination as set forth in the Arya-gagananja-pariprc-cha-nama-mahayana-sutra:

The way of profound dependent origination is as follows: ignorance conditions conditioned activities; conditioned activities condition consciousness; consciousness conditions name and form; name and form condition the six senses; the six senses condition contact; contact conditions feeling; feeling conditions craving; craving conditions grasping; grasping conditions existence; existence conditions birth; birth conditions ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, misery, anguish, unhappiness, and agitation. In this way there come forth only great masses of misery. The Sublime Wisdom of the Bodhisattvas has penetrated to what the causes and conditions are by which a living being is completely fettered by the [643] passions. This is called the way that all existence comes forth, dependently-linked-origination. What is the way of reversing dependent origination? By the

cessation of ignorance, there is cessation of conditioned activities; by the cessation of conditioned activities, there is cessation of consciousness; by the cessation of consciousness, there is cessation of name and form; by the cessation of name and form, there is cessation of the six senses; by the cessation of the six senses, there is cessation of contact; by the cessation of contact, there is cessation of feeling; by the cessation of feeling, there is cessation of craving; by the cessation of craving, there is cessation of grasping; by the cessation of grasping, there is cessation of existence; by the cessation of existence, there is cessation of birth; by the cessation of birth, there is cessation of ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, anguish, unhappiness, and agitation. Thus there is cessation of the great masses of misery. This is called the way of ceasing the process of dependent origination. The sublime wisdom of the Bodhisattvas has penetrated to what the causes and conditions are by which a living being is purified. This is called penetrating to the Profound Way of Dharma, This is not the way of Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas.

S: Why do you think that last comment is there, 'this is not the way of Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas'? Whereas you find these twelve Nidanas in both orders in the Hinayana scriptures.

V: Pratyekabuddha doesn't teach so his deeds would not be like a Bodhisattva's deeds.

V: But also, presumably the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas don't view dependent origination from the point of view of Voidness.

S: Voidness, right yes. Whether they actually do or not, that's another matter, but certainly the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas as conceived from the Mahayana point of view do not have that insight into Voidness. And therefore do not, in a sense, even completely fathom the dependent origination.

V: Where it says 'feeling', does that mean emotion?

S: Feeling is pleasant, painful and neutral feeling. Which are, in a way, the raw materials of emotion.

V: Or sensation?

S: Sensation you can say is feeling at the lowest level.

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You have a sensation to, say, touch, you feel something as hard or soft or warm or cold.

V: Does it mean all these, then?

S: Feeling means whatever sensation or feeling or emotion we experience coming into contact with external things, as our natural reaction to that contact. It may be on the whole pleasant, it may be on the whole painful, or it may be neutral. That is the last of the resultant Nidanas of the present life. There is no question of any sort of action, yet. These are just impressions, we are passive. But when in dependence on our experience of something as pleasant there arises craving, then the action process starts up. Or if we experience, say, in dependence upon suffering, which is painful feeling, experience faith, then the creative process sets up.

V: Going back to 262, it says 'as nothing except consciousness (or inclinations) remains after death', is that the Samskaras?

S: That's the Samskaras, yes, or karma formations.

V: I'm still not clear about why it is not the way of Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, dependent origination.

S: Well the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, again from the standpoint of the Mahayana, see dependent origination dualistically. They see dependent origination as one thing and Nirvana or Voidness as something other, something different, another principle. But the Bodhisattvas see that the dependent origination is itself Voidness. In other words they completely fathom the dependent origination. The Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas like the Vaibhasikas and Svatantrikas, they think that there is actually something there which is arising in dependence on something else which is actually there. But the Bodhisattva sees, as we saw yesterday, that to the extent that phenomena are dependent, to that extent they are Void, because they don't have self nature, they don't have ego identity.

So that, to see something as actually dependent on something else, as having an existent being which is dependent on some other existing being, this is a contradiction in terms. So a Bodhisattva sees that but the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, again according to the Mahayana, do not. In other words the Bodhisattvas have a profounder insight into dependent origination. But the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas do see it too.

Well let's go straight on.

"The next step is to ascertain the path that leads to liberation. Concerning this, the root text says:

That pure thought produces The great heedfulness of remembrance and discernment. May I accomplish by this means the essence Of the individual vow, which is the root of the doctrine.

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That pure thought produces The great heedfulness of remembrance and discernment:

When you have fully realized the perniciousness of samsara and desire to escape from it, then, motivated by desire for liberation, take the excellent individual vow, which is the root of the doctrine. You should cultivate the great heedfulness which consists of remembrance, discernment, self-reproach, shame, and cautiousness: remembrance, which causes you to constantly examine body, speech, and mind, and discriminate between right and wrong actions; self-reproach, which causes you to shrink from wrongdoing; shame, which causes you to shrink from the censure of spiritual friends; and cautiousness, which causes you to fear the karmic effect of wrong actions.

May I accomplish by this means the essence Of the individual vow, which is the root of the doctrine:

By this heedfulness you can attain the essence of pure Moral Practice. Guard it more dearly than your life, for Moral Practice is the source of the precepts of Meditation and Wisdom - the source of all excellence.

As long as you have desire and attachment, you must wander in samsara. Fearing this, renounce samsara and enter the actual Path. You will be able to do this by making good use of this life with its leisure and opportunity, but as the excellent life of a monk is especially helpful, the wise take pleasure in monkhood.

You can obtain liberation by following the Three Precepts of the path (Moral Practice, Meditation, and Wisdom), but you will only be able to fulfil the minor purposes of yourself and others. Therefore, Buddha taught that one must finally enter the Mahayana path. Indeed, it is best to enter the Mahayana from the beginning, for that vehicle by its nature abounds in skilful means, and is thus able to bring incalculable benefits and happiness to all living beings. Therefore we say that the Mahayana path includes the Three Great Purposes.(1) Bodhi-mind is the gateway to the Mahayana, the basis of all Buddha's Teaching, and the method of rapidly reaching Buddhahood. In order to produce this Bodhi-mind, Buddha taught that in each living being there is the potential for attaining Buddhahood. This is called the Buddha-essence (Tathagatagarbha), the lineage abiding within. This Buddha-essence is the

nature (chos-nyid, i.e., Voidness) of mind, which in itself is not spoiled by any defilement, and exists pure from the very beginning

(1) The Three Great Purposes are great mind, great abandonment, and great realization. [646] in the midst of fettering passions. Concerning this, he taught that to learn the deeds of the Bodhisattvas, the lineage of expansion, is essential, for by producing Bodhi-mind through the mind-practice of the highest type of being, one does those practices which lead to Buddhahood.

S: Any query arising here?

V: He seems to distinguish the threefold way, like here he says, 'the three precepts of the path, (moral practice, meditation and wisdom)' suggesting that they're leading up to the Mahayana, presumably fulfilling the Hinayana.

S: Yes, that is to say taking all of these in the Hinayana sense. That is practising ethics for the sake of individual enlightenment and the same for meditation and wisdom.

V: But he also talks of excellent moral practice, or something like that, in previous parts, as if he's distinguishing two kinds of...

S: No, that doesn't distinguish. Because this translates the adhisila, adhicitta and adhiprajna, which you find in the Hinayana, these terms. There they mean more, not morality and meditation aiming at heaven, but aiming at Nirvana. But in the same way that the Hinayanists look on Heaven, the Mahayanists look in the Hinayana Nirvana.

V: What actually is the individual goal?

S: To gain individual Enlightenment, presumably.

So to gain the Hinayana Nirvana, this is of course from the point of view of later Mahayana thought, to gain the Hinayana Nirvana, you only need a moderate degree of penetration into dependent origination and Voidness. But if you want to follow the Mahayana path then you need to penetrate fully. So from the Mahayana point of view the Hinayana wisdom is not sufficient, it is only a stepping stone to the Mahayana wisdom.

V: When an Arhant gains Nirvana and then dies, presumably he doesn't get reborn again in the animal realms either, isn't that a bit like nihilism? Can you say what happens in that case?

S: According to the Pali Canon you can't. That the Arhant after death, like the Buddha, can't be described as existing, or non-existing, or both or neither. In fact the Buddha goes on to say in his own case, that even during his lifetime, you cannot say of the Buddha that he exists or doesn't exist, or both or neither. He is unfathomable during his lifetime and also after death. Unfathomable in his true nature.

You notice here, there is this teaching introduced, we haven't encountered it before in the book, of the Tathagata-garbha, the Buddha essence, as he translates it here. This is found in some sutras, but clearly can be misunderstood. 'In order to produce this Bodhi mind Buddha taught that in each living being there is the potential for attaining Buddhahood, this is called the Buddha essence (Tathagatagarbha)'. But if that teaching doesn't produce that effect, if it doesn't [647] cause people to develop the Bodhi-mind, if it causes them to have wrong views instead, then obviously one just has to quietly drop this teaching.

V: Doesn't garbha mean room.

S: Garbha means room but the Tibetans understand it as meaning essence or seed. It also means treasury or case, it has all these meanings. Or receptacle, store place, hiding place. I mean the danger is that you identify this Buddha essence with your ego. In the West people

are almost bound to do this. So probably, at the beginning at least, the less said about the Tathagatagarbha the better. Clearly the Buddha himself, the historical Buddha did not put things in these terms, presumably for these very reasons.

All right let's read the extract from the sutra.

"From the Arya-Tathagatagarbha-sutra:

Until you reach the path, you wander in the world  
With the precious form of the Sugata  
Completely wrapped, as in a bundle of rags,  
By things degrading and dirty. The omniscient  
gods saw this And spoke of it to others.

Here it is. You have this precious Tathagata  
Wrapped in rags. Unwrap it quickly. I have also  
seen with my omniscient eye That, wrapped in the fettering passions,  
All beings suffer, Always troubled by the misery of samsara.

I have seen within the wrapping of fettering passions  
That which is not seen by those who think they are free:  
The meditating form of Buddha-pure, Not moving, not changing.  
Having seen this, I make this exhortation; Whoever would strive for the highest enlightenment, listen.

This is the Voidness of living beings, Like a Buddha seated in the midst of fettering passions.  
When you pacify all fettering passions And free the sublime wisdom of the Sugata,  
You obtain the name of Buddha, And bring joy to men and gods.

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S: So this essence is not an ego, this essence is the Voidness itself. That's quite an important point.

All right, let's stop there for tea or coffee.

Break

S: You can think of it just like that, in a sort of poetic way but mustn't take any part of that description literally.

"Mind-practice for the highest beings consists of first producing Bodhi-mind, the entrance to the Mahayana, and then learning the deeds of the Bodhisattvas. Concerning the former, the root text says:

Having seen that all beings, my kind mothers, Have fallen like myself into the ocean of samsara,  
May I practice pure Bodhi-mind Which assumes the obligation to free all beings.

Having seen that all beings, my kind mothers, Have fallen like myself into the ocean of samsara:

First develop equanimity toward all living beings. Then think, "By the influence of karma and fettering passions, I myself have fallen into the immeasurably deep ocean of samsara, and I am tortured ceaselessly by the crocodiles of the three miseries. With my mind's eye I can also see that all living beings, who have been my infinitely kind mother again and again, are also tortured by the misery of samsara."

May I practice pure Bodhi-mind Which assumes the obligation to free all beings:

"In return for their kindness may all beings meet with undefiled happiness. May they be free from all misery. May I myself cause this to happen."

Thinking this, produce the high resolve to assume the obligation to free all beings. To the extent of your ability you must continually develop the precious aspiration for enlightenment

that is the vital force of the Mahayana, thinking, "I will obtain perfect Buddhahood in order to free all beings from misery."

S: Any comment or query on that? I think this, as it were, recapitulates on the ground that we've gone over before in earlier works.

Let's carry straight on.

"From the Arya-astahasrika-prajna-paramita:

The Blessed One said: "Subhuti, since Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, desire to renounce samsara in order to reach unsurpassed perfect enlightenment, [649] they abide in equanimity toward all living beings. Produce this mind of equanimity toward everyone: consider all beings with a mind which is without nonequanimity, with loving mind, with helpful mind, with virtuous mind, with a mind without pride, with a mind without anger, with a mind without thought to harm, with a mind without reproach. Consider them impartially, conceiving all living beings as your mother, as your father, as your son, and as your daughter. Subhuti, as Bodhisattvas, Mahasattvas, desire to become Buddhas, to manifest enlightenment that is perfect and unsurpassed, you should abide in equanimity toward all living beings. Learn to do this and become the Protector of all beings."

(Side 2 of tape 28)

V: When we were [talking] about the far and near enemies, was there a far and near enemy for equanimity?

S: Yes, for equanimity the near enemy is indifference, equally indifferent towards all. For the far enemy, obviously is disturbance, mental disturbance or mental turmoil, or more basically even discrimination.

"The second part of mind-practice for the higher being is to learn the Bodhisattva's deeds. It has two parts: the first is the way of learning the Mahayana, which includes the general way of learning the Bodhisattva's deeds and the particular way of learning the last two Transcendences. The second is the particular way of learning the Vajrayana. About the general way of learning the Bodhisattva's deeds, the root text says:

Bodhi-mind alone, without cultivation Of the three Moral Practices, does not lead to enlightenment. Having realized this, may I practice With intense effort the Bodhisattva vow.

Bodhi-mind alone, without cultivation Of the three Moral Practices, does not lead to enlightenment:

There are great benefits in producing even the aspiration for enlightenment, but you will not accomplish unsurpassed and perfect enlightenment if you do not repeatedly cultivate the Moral Practices of vows, of accumulating virtuous actions, and of working for the benefit of all living beings. These three Moral Practices, together, are the key to all the Bodhisattva's deeds.

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Having realized this, may I practice With intense effort the Bodhisattva vow:

Since obtaining enlightenment depends on accomplishing the essence of the Mahayana path, take up the Bodhisattva vow and do not give it up though it cost your life. Through all the stages of learning, guard your vow from contamination by the eighteen major and forty-six minor failings. Apply yourself, respectfully and with great effort, to the wonderful deeds of the Bodhisattvas, which conjoin both method and wisdom, perfecting yourself through the Six Transcendences and perfecting others through the Four Ways of Assembling. "

S: These eighteen major and forty-six minor failings are the Bodhisattva precepts, the major precepts and minor precepts. The observance of which, prevents one from falling from ones Bodhisattva vow.

The Four Ways of Assembling, they did come up earlier on and there was one that I didn't remember. So the four are, first of all Dana, making offerings, gifts, generosity. Then pleasant or affectionate speech, then working for the benefit of others, or welfare of others. Then fourthly oneself setting an example. These are sometimes called the four means, or four methods of conversion.

V: There was another list of four wasn't there?

S: Yes, that was the Four Confidences of, the four aspects of ... I did find those actually.

Yes, the Four Confidences of the Tathagata. That he sees no ground for anyone to reproach him with not having knowledge of what he claims to have knowledge of. Then he sees no grounds for anyone reproaching him with not having destroyed the Asravas which he has claimed to destroy. No one can reproach him as having declared the hindrances to be hindrances when in fact they are not hindrances, he has this confidence too. And that no one can reproach him to the effect that someone who practices in accordance with his teaching will not achieve the destruction of suffering, he sees no ground for anyone reproaching him in this way. So these are his Four Confidences.

In other words he is confident that he knows what he claims to know, he has destroyed what he claims to have destroyed. That the hindrances that he has seen are really hindrances and that the teaching that he has given really does lead to the destruction of suffering. He has these Four Confidences, or Four Aspects of Fearlessness, according to Geshe Wangyal's rendering.

V: There was another point, actually, that came up on the first day, which was ...

S: I think those were the Four Bases of Psychic Power.

V: No, I wasn't thinking of that. There was a suggestion, or it seemed not clear in the text, whether Geshe Wangyal was suggesting that the Bodhicitta was something separate from Wisdom.

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S: I don't remember. But that must have cleared itself up later, because the Bodhicitta can, the intentional Bodhicitta can be apart from Wisdom in the sense of insight. The actual Bodhicitta is produced only by the intentional Bodhicitta, the metta and the karuna, in conjunction with wisdom in the sense of insight.

V: Did you find the Four Bases of Psychic Power?

S: Yes. The Four Bases of Psychic Power are, canda - urge or will, if you like. Citta - mind or consciousness, virya - energy and dharma-vicaya - investigation into the Dharma.

V: Is it canda the same as our Chanda(?)

S: No, it's a different word.

V: Dharma-vicaya?

S: Yes a 'c'

V: 'ch' ?



S: Yes, if you don't transcribe it literally it's a 'ch', if you're doing it with diacritics and all that just put 'c'.

V: What are these called?

S: The Four Bases of Psychic Power, the four practices that have to be developed as a basis before the supernormal faculties can be developed.

"From the Arya-dharma-samgitti-sutra:

When asked, "What do Bodhisattvas accomplish?" the Blessed One said, "Any action of body, any action of speech, any action of mind of a Bodhisattva is done with an eye to all living beings. All his actions are preceded by great compassion and empowered by great compassion. All his actions benefit all living beings, arising as they do from the high resolve to provide happiness and benefit to everyone. In this way Bodhisattvas decide: 'Whatever brings benefit and joy to all living beings, that I will accomplish.'

"If you ask, 'What are the powers which Bodhisattvas accomplish?' they are ten: the power of accomplishing Giving, of accomplishing Moral Practice, of accomplishing Patience, of accomplishing Effort, of accomplishing Meditation, of accomplishing Wisdom, of accomplishing Method, of accomplishing Prayer, of accomplishing Power, and of accomplishing Sublime Wisdom."

S: These are the Ten Paramitas, prayer is usually translated as vow - amita (?) in Sanskrit and sublime wisdom is Jnana as distinct from prajna.

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V: What was prayer?

S: Prayer, the Sanskrit is pranidhana, which is more usually translated as vow. There is a short account of all of these at the end of the Survey, of all of these ten.

"These are the ten accomplishments of a Bodhisattva. All of a Bodhisattva's transcendent accomplishments are included within these ten.

"If you ask, 'What is a Bodhisattva's accomplishment of Giving?' there is nothing a Bodhisattva does not give to living beings, except that which would be harmful to them. It is not easy to believe, much less to understand, this beneficent mind of a Bodhisattva unless one is a Tathagata or a Bodhisattva who has obtained patience.

S: Patience here has a technical meaning. It is the acceptance of the non-originitiveness of all Dharmas. Which means a kind of insight into Sunyata, the Voidness, from the Mahayana point of view. It is after he achieves this that the Bodhisattva becomes irreversible. It is practically the same thing as saying that unless one is a Tathagata or an irreversible Bodhisattva. Again this is explained in the relevant section of the Survey.

"By Giving you can obtain great enjoyment. By Moral Practice you can obtain rebirth as a man or god. By Patience everything around you will be beautiful. By Effort you can quickly obtain clairvoyance. By Meditation you can obtain a mind suitable for anything. By Wisdom you become exalted among the worldly. By Method you can become able to do anything. By Prayer anything can be done without difficulty. By Power you will be indestructible. By Sublime Wisdom you will be able to teach the whole world."

S: That's a very good paragraph. Let's look at it a little more closely.

"By giving you can obtain great enjoyment'. Usually people think of giving as a painful business. The Salvation Army used to have an advertisement or appeal which exhorted you to 'Give until it hurts' (V: No!) Haven't you seen that one? They have apparently placed their

publicity in the hands of a professional agency, now they are playing on your guilt. I don't know if you noticed this, incidentally I think it is very bad. For instance there is this poster I saw up in quite a lot of places only two or three years ago, I don't know if it is still around. There is a stalwart Salvation Army officer with what seems to be a child huddled in a blanket and the caption is, 'Now will you care?' In other words it is your fault, it is trying to get you to feel guilty so that out of your feeling of guilt you give something, which is really terrible.

Admittedly it is for a good purpose but you are being got at through your negative emotions, through your sense of guilt. It doesn't seem at all good. So in the same way, they had this poster originally, 'Give until it hurts'. So [653] the Buddhist point is, give until you are absolutely overflowing with joy, you are so happy to give. Well, the Bodhisattva, anyway, maybe not the ordinary Buddhist, but certainly the Bodhisattva, by giving you can obtain great enjoyment.

Then, 'by moral practice you can obtain rebirth as a man or god', by moderate skilful action, you don't fall back in the evolutionary scale. 'By patience everything around you will be beautiful', what do you think that means?

V: In a sense, ugliness and beauty disappear. If you look at something for long enough you will cease to see it in terms of your own prejudices.

S: Well, if you practice patience there's no hatred, so if you look at things with hatred in your mind everything will seem dark and ugly, but if your mind is patient and it is full of love, you will see everything as beautiful.

'By effort you can quickly obtain clairvoyance', that's one of the supernormal faculties. This connects up with the Four Bases of Psychic Power, one of which is this effort, or virya.

'By meditation you can obtain a mind suitable for anything'. Now what does that mean? If you have got a skilful mind, a meditative, a concentrated, integrated mind, you can apply it to anything. It is not a special, very precious, rare mind, which is only to be kept for special religious purposes, which can only do puja or arrange flowers or things like that. This meditative mind, the mind you get through meditation, it is suitable for any purpose, you can turn your hand to anything, anything which is for the good of yourself or others, that is. Whether it is typing or collecting money, or writing a book or giving a lecture, according to your particular talents you can turn your mind to anything. It's just a very skilful, pliable, concentrated, vigorous mind, able to function at any level, in any way, do, any job. The Mahayana stresses this very, very much.

'By wisdom you become exalted among the worldly', because wisdom is, of course, not mundane, it is transcendental. 'By method you can become able to do anything'. Method here means skilful means, upaya, if you go the right way about it, if you know the right approach, if you are sufficiently skilful, tactful, diplomatic. If you suite the right means to the right end, you can do anything. The Tibetans say, they have a proverb, 'if you know the right way to go about it, you can make yourself comfortable even in hell'. A very typical Tibetan saying.

V: That's a teaching which would be very useful!

S: So, by method, by skilful means, you can become able to do anything. 'By prayer anything can be done without difficulty', prayer is a misleading translation here, it means vow. If you vow to do something, then it can be done without difficulty. In other words if you absolutely make up your mind you are going to do it, if you are half hearted about it, if you don't know whether you really want to do it or not or whether it is worth doing or not, or you ought to be doing it or not. Whether somebody else ought to be doing it instead, if you have got all these hesitations and reservations in your mind, well of course you won't succeed, of course it will be difficult to get done. But if you make this vow, if you are absolutely [654] determined and resolved and nothing is going to stop you, not even the Buddha is going to stop you, then certainly you will get it done.

This sort of resolve is, in a way, discouraged in the West, or in Christianity, you are not supposed to have that. You remember the Flying Dutchman? (V: No) Well the Flying Dutchman, according at least to the version that Wagner used for his opera, he was in a terrible storm and he was commanding this little ship, in the days of sailing boats, and he was trying to round Cape Horn, I think it was. There was a terrific storm and he swore an oath that even if God himself is opposing me, I am going to sail my ship round Cape Horn. Because of that terrible blasphemy he was condemned to be sailing his ship round Cape Horn for ever and ever, until some pure maiden who had never uttered or even thought any such blasphemy, fell in love with him, rescued him, etc. etc. So to have this sort of determination is seen as not very good.

V: It made a very powerful impression on me when I read it, I was quite young and I remember thinking, there is something in that.

S: What, that sort of oath? (V: Yes)

V: I was just trying to think of an equivalent, that a Buddhist might have, the equivalent prayer, it would be rather different.

S: You could hardly say, well you can say even if the Buddha doesn't oppose you, in situations like that he encourages that sort of human energy and determination. It is Mara who is likely to discourage you.

V: It could be trying to illustrate that one shouldn't try to go against natural forces too strongly, people pillaging the land in their determination to create industry.

S: Yes, that's true. But in those days, apparently, there was no thought of these things, or even no danger.

V: There again you could say that this sort of vow would be for the good of all beings and to say against the god, in that way say god is for all living beings so you would be going against that, in their mind.

S: I think the point of the story of the Flying Dutchman is that human resolve is being damped down, that human beings shouldn't be too sure of themselves. This seems to be the implication.

V: I think it's more, I feel it is more in connection with, one shouldn't oppose the basic spiritual principles which are working in the world by one's own ego no matter how determined.

S: I think this is a crushing down of the healthy ego from the standpoint of pseudo-religion.

V: You could say that resolve is one of spiritual principles.

S: Obviously one can't interpret as though there is an actual, factual meaning there, it is a legend and you can [655] give it any meaning that you choose. But to me it certainly does suggest that, that God doesn't like human beings, apparently, getting a bit beyond themselves or being too bold or too resolute. After all it is his wind, who are they to go against it when he is blowing it around Cape Horn.

V: Usually you say that is pride...

S: Pride, yes. Whereas, in a way, humans should go against natural forces in a deep and fundamental way, in the same way as the stream entrant goes against the stream. Against the gravitational pull.

V: (Unclear)

V: Once you were in the stream I thought it was easy.

S: Well when you are in the middle and the stream is carrying you in the right direction, but what is one illustrating?

V: Breaking of the fetters.

S: Yes, and the early Pali texts have got an idiom of going up-stream, and in that way going against the current, going back to the source. But in trying to get back to the source you are going against the current.

V: In the parable of the log, where you are going with it.

S: Yes, right, and rotting inwardly, and eventually sink, disintegrate into little fragments.

V: Doesn't the log ... down stream?

S: No, the log gets landed on a muddy bank and just rots there in the hot sunshine, and swarms with maggots.

V: I thought the analogy was to follow the stream all the way to the ocean.

S: That is taking the same sort of image in a different kind of way. You can locate, I hope we are not being pedantic, but you can locate Nirvana either where the ocean is or where the source is. So if you locate Nirvana where the source is, then you go upstream, against the current to get to Nirvana. But if you locate Nirvana where the ocean is (laughing) you follow the natural flow of the water. Which is not, of course, giving way to your passions, but getting to that midstream point where you start feeling the pull of the unconditional.

V: ... it's a bit complicated.

S: Yes, there's not only the question of a crossing from here to there but of going up stream or down stream too. But one mustn't take images and metaphors and similes in too literalistic or pedantic a fashion, but just try to get [656] the spirit of the thing. And also be quite clear what is being illustrated, decide to begin with whether you are going to have your Nirvana upstream or downstream (laughing) otherwise you just get confused.

I think personally, it is safer to have your Nirvana downstream, because this ideology of going back to the source and going back to your origins is like going back to the cosmological beginning of things, which isn't the Buddhist point of view at all.

V: The womb?

S: The womb, yes. We don't want to go back there do we, we hope we've got out! As one of my friends said about another friend, this is not friend with a capital F this is about twenty years ago, she said 'he hasn't been born yet'. He, at that time was about forty.

Anyway, on we go. I think we might very well, I think I am going to take out some extracts from this book and suggest that Marichi puts them in the Newsletter as fillers, I think this would be quite a good one, this last paragraph. I suppose with, 'by giving you can obtain great enjoyment' in bold face type!

V: Maybe we should put that above the dana bowl.

S: Yes, right, people wouldn't believe you, I think, in some cases.

V: The dana bowl in Glasgow says 'giving is receiving.'

S: That's going to appeal to a mercenary motive isn't it!

V: The one at Aryatara used to have a notice saying ...

"The next step is to understand the last two Transcendences. Learn that Abiding Tranquillity is included within the Transcendence of Meditation, and Intense Insight is included within the Transcendence of Wisdom. Concerning this the root text says:

By quieting attraction to objects which are false, And analysing the meaning of Reality, May I quickly produce within myself The path that unifies Tranquillity and Insight.

S: 'Quieting attraction to objects' suggests tranquillity, or samatha, and 'analysing the meaning of reality', suggests insight.

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"Consider the benefits of meditating Abiding Tranquillity and Intense Insight, and stay in a place which has the five necessary qualifications (that it is easy to find food, clothing, etc...). Have few desires, be contented, give up many activities, abandon desirous feeling, and achieve pure Moral Practice. Depend on a holy being who has done all these things. By listening to the Profound Dharma and contemplating its meaning, one can produce the view which realizes just thatness" (Voidness). Depend on the various causes of quickly achieving Abiding Tranquillity and Intense insight.

"By quieting attraction to objects which are false:

"When the six sense objects (form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and other phenomena) -which are false in that their way of Appearance and way of Existence do not accord (1) - make contact with the six sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind), six corresponding consciousnesses are produced. These consciousnesses then produce the feelings of desire for pleasing sense objects, aversion for those which are displeasing, and delusion, which is attached to the idea that the objects of the senses truly exist. Seeking to achieve pleasure and prevent displeasure, you have accumulated and will accumulate many aspects of karma through body, speech, and mind.

By the bonds of various attractions - of karma and fettering passions - which are the grasping of inner or outer objects in this way, we have been bound up in the prison of samsara from beginningless time, and have been tortured ceaselessly by unsought and unbearable misery.

Understanding this, be motivated from the first by aversion for the high states of men and gods, seeing that they are like islands of cannibals. With this motivation, begin to meditate.

Sit in the meditation posture(2), and take as your object of focus either Buddha or Voidness.

(1) The way of Appearance and way of Existence (snang-tshul and gnas-tshul) of sense objects do not accord, for sense objects appear to truly exist, but in reality are empty of true existence.

(2) This has eight aspects: 1) sit on a soft cushion in the lotus position; 2) rest your hands on your heels, palms upturned, left hand underneath and thumbs touching; 3) keep the body straight; 4) keep the teeth and lips as usual, tongue touching the upper teeth; 5) keep the head in a straight line from the nose to the navel; 6) keep the eyes half-open, gently focused on the point of the nose; 7) set the shoulders evenly; and 8) breathe quietly and gently, in-and-out breath of the same length.

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"There are five failings in meditation: laziness, which is lack of inclination to achieve samadhi; forgetfulness of the object of focus; failure to identify listlessness and excitement; after identifying them, failure to apply their countermeasures; and continuing to apply the

counter-measures after you are free from listlessness and excitement.

There are eight activities which remedy these five failings. The first four are antidotes to laziness. These are faith in the excellence of samadhi; intense desire for samadhi; effort that strives for samadhi; and the well-practised mind and body that are the effect of that effort. The remedy for forgetting your object of focus is remembrance. The remedy for not identifying listlessness and excitement is discernment. The remedy for failure to apply the countermeasures to listlessness and excitement is the mind of activation; and the remedy for excessive application of the countermeasures is the balanced equanimity which knows when to cease such application.

There are also five obstacles, five defilements, and five distractions which impede progress toward Abiding Tranquillity and Intense Insight. The five obstacles are: concern for the body; concern for enjoyments; not doing as the Aryas instruct; mingling too much with others; and being content with superficial study. The five defilements are: excitement and regret; depression and sleepiness; doubt; desire for desirable objects; and harmful mind. The five distractions are: mental distraction; outer distraction; inner distraction; symbolic distraction; and the distraction of wrong tendencies. Abandon all these, and meditate properly.

V: What are symbolic distractions?

S: I'm not sure what those are. I think probably it's something arising that reminds you of something else, or which is a sign of something else, which is itself a distraction. I think probably the meditation, the visions and so on would come under the heading of inner distraction, but this is just my guess.

All right let's go straight on and then we'll discuss the whole section.

"There are six powers: listening, thinking, remembrance, discernment, effort, and thorough knowledge of the subject matter. Through these one gradually accomplishes the nine states of mind: directing the mind; directing the mind continuously; redirecting the mind; directing the mind completely; subduing the mind; calming the mind; completely calming the mind; [659] directing the mind one-pointedly; and directing the mind in equanimity. When, by the power of gradually developing these nine states, you attain the special bliss of well-practised mind and body, you will have achieved Abiding Tranquillity.

S: All right, any comments on all that so far?

V: It's almost a complete teaching on how to meditate.

S: What about the 'high states of men and gods being like islands of cannibals'?

V: Feeding on each other.

S: No, it's not quite that, it's that you have aversion to them, that is to say you have no more desire to be reborn in a high human state or high heavenly state, than you have to visit the island of cannibals. That is to say you have no desire, whatever, to be reborn there. Because you are thinking entirely in terms of Enlightenment and Buddhahood. You don't hanker after even a quite exalted achievement within the wheel of life. So to you, high human status and heavenly status are no better than the island of cannibals.

V: 'Of gods and men', I thought that the state of men being human beings...

S: Yes, but here what is meant by the human state is simply one that is the product of skilful mental activities but without any orientation to Enlightenment. A human state without any prospect of or thought of Enlightenment is no better than an island of cannibals.

V: I don't want to dispute that but I wonder if there can be a human state without that, without

...

S: There can be a human state without that being there consciously, certainly. Without people making a definite effort in that direction.

V: Only human in the lowest sense, or the popular sense.

S: What about these, 'nine states of mind'? These are really levels of concentration or of absorption. First of all directing the mind, directing it to the concentration object. Directing the mind continuously, keeping it fixed all the time on the concentration object. Redirecting the mind, that is bringing it back when it falls away from the concentration object. Directing the mind completely, that is keeping it fixed all the time on the concentration object without interruption. Subduing the mind, getting the mind to accept this concentration, this uninterrupted concentration on the object without any resistance. Calming the mind, when it becomes completely satisfied and settled into the object. Then completely calming it. Directing the mind one-pointedly, making it completely one pointed - presumably in this case in its attention to something transcendental. And directing the mind in equanimity.

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V: It's like what they had in the front of the Newsletter, the article.

S: Yes, that's right, it's the same thing.

V: What's abiding tranquillity?

S: This is samatha.

V: What are the countermeasures to listlessness and excitement?

S: Which are the countermeasures to listlessness, for instance looking at a bright light or being in a brighter room and practising or reflecting, stirring up vigorous reflections. That if I give way to laziness then my life will be completely useless, and so on. Or even getting up and having a little stroll round and then coming back and sitting down and trying again. Or being careful that you don't start meditating on a full stomach, things like that.

V: And excitement?

S: In a way the opposite. If you are naturally a bit excitable and easily stimulated, well meditate in a darkened room and reduce things like tea and coffee and surround yourself with calming colours, with green, not with yellow and red or orange. Take a look at nature.

V: Doing continuous chanting seems to bring all these kind of things ...

S: Yes, that's true, these nine you mean? (V: Yes) Yes, you can get into these, you find first of all you start the chanting, your mind is into that and then it wanders away, then it comes back and then you get more and more into it, deeply into it and very satisfied. You then start to relax into it and start getting more and more out of it, and all your energies are into it.

Last night, by the way I thought the chanting of the Mantra of the perfection of wisdom a bit fast. Did anybody else feel that?

V: I noticed it was very fast.

S: It seemed to be like that right from the beginning.

V: I felt quite dizzy after a while, I had to stop.

S: Why was everybody chanting it fast?

V: (Unclear.)

S: That's one reason. I stopped about two thirds of the way through it. I tried to slow it down but nobody could hear me.

V: There seemed to be a lot of energy, just as soon as we started chanting it actually, there seemed there was just an incredible lot of energy just to start.

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S: I think probably what it was, this is my guess, that just before the meditation people hadn't been very quiet. There was quite a lot of vigorous talking and chatting and so on. So when you started on the puja, well that was all right while you were doing the puja, but that rather excited energy was there underneath and I think it came out with the chanting.

V: It wasn't very negative.

S: It wasn't negative but it was just speedy.

V: A bit jagged as well, wasn't it.

S: Hmm, don't want to make too much of a point of it, it certainly wasn't negative and it certainly was an energy, it was very positive in that sense. But it was a bit speedy, it's almost as though people couldn't help chanting quickly. It was a bit impetuous, as it were.

V: I felt in general that people come in too quickly at the beginning. I think it would be very good of the leader, who ever it was, could do it a few times first.

S: Ahh, that's a good idea.

V: Then people could listen and yet tuned into it. (S: Yes, right) It's very hard to do that because if people don't listen then if you are supposed to be leading it you can't guide it.

S: Yes, right. Whereas yesterday everybody came in very vigorously right from the word go, as though they were just waiting for their chance. Which is good in a way, but it was a bit speedy.

V: It's like doing that extra thing was a bit of a treat.

S: Yes, maybe that.

V: Is that why you stopped it, before ...

S: No, it just fell by the wayside, I don't think there is any particular reason. In those days, if anything, you probably couldn't have got people to chant very much at all.

V: I think last night we only chanted the mantra ninety-six times.

S: Did we. (laughter) I didn't ...

V: Ninety five.

V: Yes.

S: Are you sure.

V's: (Unclear.)

S: No, I counted and made allowance for that and added on what was missing.



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V: Well we did three extras when we did it before, after the English version.

S: I intended that should be as usual, there seemed to be some hesitation about that, with several people not having the courage of their convictions.

V: I was under the impression that we decided not to do one [it] at that point.

S: I was under the impression that we decided that we would do it as usual. But those people who were under the impression that we were going to do it as usual didn't seem to have the courage of their conviction. Because I didn't chant the heart sutra in English, I was looking at the Sanskrit text and following it through.

V: We were waiting for you to lead through.

S: Yes, perhaps you hadn't noticed that I wasn't chanting the English.

V: I noticed that, but I thought you were going ...

S: So I left it for everybody to carry on as usual.

V: That's no good, if you are going to lead! (laughing)

S: But those who had, those who were under the impression that the three mantras were going to come at the end hesitated, they weren't quite sure after all.

(end tape 28)

But then I took it up.

V: I thought you were doing a crafty one. (S: No) Waiting for everyone to get ready for you to lead off.

S: No, I just thought, since they can't hear me anyway, they are just going to go into the last three mantras, under the impression, no doubt, that I am also chanting even though they can't hear me.

V: Do you think, Bhante, on the subject of mantras, or chanting generally that it is best to finish together, at a definite point or just to let it straggle off.

S: Well it shouldn't straggle off. You shouldn't have some people booming on after everyone else has stopped and is ready for the next mantra.

V: That's been tending to happen.

S: No, you should be all together, otherwise it sounds very ragged.

V: Tone it down rather than just to stop?

S: Well I am referring to all the mantras, including those we recite at the end of the puja. That some people shouldn't [663] prolong the chanting when everybody else has come to the end of theirs, sometimes that does happen.

V: I was talking about, like the Padmasambhava mantra, it goes on a bit.

S: I got the impression once or twice that it was that people weren't sure whether they were prolonging it or whether it was dying away. I think perhaps the dying away shouldn't begin too far from the end. If you are going to chant it for five minutes, well let the dying away last

for one minute. But sometimes it seems that we have been chanting for ten minutes but it has been dying away for about eight minutes!

V: What seems to happen very often is that it dies down a bit and then people forget that it is dying down and they build it up again.

V: Yes, I don't like that. I think some people sometimes do that consciously because they have got an idea that we should chant for a set period of time and actually that doesn't happen, it dies away before that and then people want to continue it.

S: I think one should say a minimum of five minutes and if there is a general feeling that it is going on, then let it go on a bit longer.

V: It's very much being aware of others. I think quite often people chant and they are just into their chant, they are not really picking up on the general feeling.

S: Yes, and also chanting, if possible, in such a way that you can still hear the person who is leading the chanting. So that he controls it.

V: I think it is very hard, what we have been doing, I think is good, to have someone to start the mantra and we listen to the start, I think we should try and be aware of that person at the end, as well, he essentially guides the end. (S: Yes)

V: You can't be aware of them at the end unless you are aware of them all the way through, really.

V: Sure, yes.

S: You can't be aware of him if you are drowning him all the time.

V: Do you think that five minutes is a good time for that sort of chanting?

S: I think not less than five minutes.

V: I think this is what is happening, people tend to say, let's chant the Padmasambhava mantra for half an hour, or twenty minutes of something and not ...

S: I think one must be careful not to force it. Otherwise if you don't really feel like chanting it for half an hour but [664] you have to, it can be forced, which seems quite out of keeping with the spirit of that kind of thing. Maybe on certain occasions it goes on for a full half hour or even longer with complete spontaneity, but it must be spontaneity.

V: One shouldn't really predetermine that much.

S: You can predetermine the shortness but not the length. If you know that you have only got five minutes, well you are just going to chant it for five minutes.

V: Do it 108 times, just to make it complete.

S: I don't know whether that would work with the Padmasambhava mantra.

V: Even that is a bit forced sometimes.

S: Yes, because you might be into such a rhythm that a couple of hundred times is just right. I'd say just roughly five minutes but if it lengthens spontaneously that's fine.

V: I think also why the person leading gets drowned, is because the feeling that vigorous is tied up with being loud for some reason, or having energy and loud sound together.

S: Yes, but sometimes, on two or three evenings, the concluding few minutes, when it was definitely not loud, were much better, because it wasn't being forced at all and it was a bit more musical. It lost its harshness.

Anyway there has been an overall improvement in the course of the retreat, there is probably no need to say any more about it. We are going to talk about it at the convention anyway.

Any further points about that.

V: 'Directing the mind equanimity' would be the Four Brahma Viharas practice?

S: No I don't think it is. I am not quite sure in what sense the word equanimity is used but I rather think that the last two, that is directing the mind one-pointedly - which is presumably what one has been doing all the time, and directing the mind in equanimity; refer to a stage of practice when the concentrated mind is turned in the direction of Voidness. In the direction of reality. But that is my guess, as it were. Otherwise it is as though you are going back to the beginning.

Anyway let's go on to the next section.

"And analysing the meaning of Reality [Voidness]:

At the time we perceive an ego in ourselves, it does not appear to be merely an imputed name or sign; it appears to exist independently, from the beginning. We feel that this object of the egoistic mind, the ego, truly exists as it appears to us. But the ego held in this way [665] is the very object to be negated. If the ego, the imputed phenomenon, (1) were to actually exist independently from the beginning, it would have to be either the same as, or different from, its basis of imputation(2) - the five aggregates, the mind and body. There is no third way for it to exist. If that ego, "I", and the aggregates were truly the same, as the ego is an indivisible entity, the five aggregates would be one, or there would be five egos. This cannot be, so the ego is not the same as the five aggregates.

If the ego were to exist separately from the five aggregates, since to be truly separate is to be completely without connection, it logically follows that the ego would be uncompounded like the flower of the sky, (and thus non-existent). (3) The ego would then be pictured as a completely different entity from the aggregates, and as it is not pictured like this, be certain that the ego does not exist separately.

In the same way, analyse the environment of the ego (that which is "mine") and all other phenomena, with the wisdom which investigates the meaning of Voidness.

May I quickly produce within myself The path that unifies Tranquillity and Insight:

At the completion of analysis, when you enter into one-pointed equipoise through successive development of the four mental-activities (entering heedfully, entering ceasingly, entering ceaselessly, and entering effortlessly), you obtain Intense Insight and the well-practised mind and body developed by the power of analysing. Entering thus into unified Abiding Tranquillity and Intense Insight, learn the good path of the Conqueror, which unifies Appearance and Voidness, perceiving that from the perspective of realization, all is void of self-nature, and from the perspective of appearance, all is like a magician's illusion.(4)

(1) btags-chos.

(2) gdags-gzhi.

(3) Anything that is uncompounded has not come into being as the effect of causes and conditions and cannot itself act as a cause or condition giving rise to other effects. A truly existent ego must logically be uncompounded and as such, would have no cause-and-effect

relationship with anything else. This is the case with the concept of the flower of the sky, and thus, like the flower of the sky, the uncompounded ego is completely non-existent. For fuller development of the refutation of true existence, see *The Four Keys in The Three Principles of the Path*, pp. 227-9.

(4) See *The Opening of the Wisdom Eye*, by His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, pp. 53-63 for more explanation of the development of Abiding Tranquillity and Intense Insight through the nine stages, six powers, and four mental activities.

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S: Any query on this? This recapitulates the material that we came across in the *Three-Principles of the Path*, or the commentary on the *Three Principles of the Path*.

V: What does entering refer to?

S: Entering the state of meditation.

"From the *Samdhinirmocana* sutra:

"Of the five obstacles pointed out by the Blessed One, how many are obstacles to Abiding Tranquillity, how many to Intense Insight, and how many to both?"

"Maitreya, concern for enjoyment and concern for body are obstacles to Abiding Tranquillity. Not doing as the Aryas instruct is an obstacle to Intense Insight. Mingling too much with others and being content with superficial study are obstacles to both; for by the former you cannot apply yourself in meditation, and by the latter, even if you apply yourself, there can be no final accomplishment."

"Lord, of the five defilements, how many are defilements of Abiding Tranquillity, how many are defilements of Intense Insight, and how many are defilements of both?"

"Maitreya, excitement and regret are a defilement of Abiding Tranquillity. Depression and sleepiness are a defilement of Intense Insight; doubt is also a defilement of Intense Insight. Desire for pleasurable objects, and harmful mind are obstacles to both."

"Lord, how can one obtain the path of completely pure Abiding Tranquillity?"

"Maitreya, at a time when you have completely destroyed sleepiness and depression."

"Lord, how can one obtain the path of completely pure Intense Insight?"

"Maitreya, at a time when you have completely destroyed excitement and regret."

"Lord, as Bodhisattvas are entering into Abiding Tranquillity and Intense Insight, how many kinds of distraction are there?"

"Maitreya, there are five kinds of distraction. There is mental distraction, outer distraction, inner distraction, symbolic distraction, and the distraction of wrong tendencies. If a Bodhisattva gives up the mental activities of the Mahayana and falls into the mental activities of the Sravaka or Pratyekabuddha, this is mental distraction. If your mind is attracted to the five kinds of external [667] desire objects, to activity, to designations, to habitual thoughts, to related passions,(1) or if you project your mind to any outside image, that is outer distraction. If, depressed and sleepy, you are lethargic, or relish meditative equipoise too much, or are prevented by any passion from entering the state of meditative equipoise, that is inner distraction. If you depend on outer signs and make these signs the object of your inner meditation, this is symbolic distraction. If you depend on inner mental concepts, and produce the proud mind which thinks, 'I, I'; this is the distraction of wrong tendencies."

(1) Those passions which arise through the fettering passions, desire, hatred and ignorance. (nye-ba'i-nyon-mongs; Sanskrit, upaklesa). It is taught in the Prajnaparamita literature that there are eighty-four thousands of these branch passions and that the eighty-four thousand aspects of Dharma are their countermeasures. In the later Abhidharma literature, this list was abbreviated: to ninety-eight in the Abhidharmakosa by Vasubandhu and to twenty in the Abhidharmasamuccaya by Asanga.

S: Any query on that?

V: 'and relish meditative equipoise too much', so you can get into a nice stage and cling to it?  
(S: Yes)

V: 'If a Bodhisattva gives up mental activities and falls into the mental activities of a Sravaka and Pratyekabuddha'?

S: That is, he is thinking in terms of simply gaining Enlightenment for himself alone. This is a distraction from the standpoint of Mahayana meditation.

V: Is Sravaka different from Arhant.

S: Sometimes it is equivalent to Arhant and sometimes one who is following the Arhant path, even though he might not yet have become an Arhant.

V: This thing about 'proud mind which thinks "I". I have been thinking about this within the context of the metta bhavana, when we say, may I be well, may I be happy. I was wondering if ...

S: Well, it's turning a negative ego into a positive one. Turning a miserable and unhappy ego into a happy ego. So that you, so that the ego - if you like, can gradually be more and more refined until such time as there can be some reflection of wisdom in it, in that more refined state. It's as though the positive ego is a bit open to spiritual influences, but the negative ego is completely closed to it. Just as when you are in a happy, tranquil state and you listen to a lecture you can take it in, though you are just as egoistic as ever, but at least you are in a happy and positive state, and tranquil state. You are more receptive.

But if you are very angry and resentful, you can't possibly [668] take in anything. There again this is where the positive emotional state is very important, even though it is mundane. There's just as much ego there as when you are miserable but the positive ego is better material to work with, from the spiritual point of view. This is what, in India, is sometimes called the 'ripe' ego as distinct from the 'unripe' ego.

V: There is a phrase in the Udana ... 'the self of the self made strong'. (?)

S: Yes, indeed, or with the self made firm.

V: Yes, and not negating it.

S: Not negating it on its own level of experience, as it were. Well one could say that what is important is that the ego should be negated by wisdom, or insight, not that the ego should be negated by the ego.

V: You may dislike yourself ... the concept of getting rid of me.

S: There's no use you hating yourself if, you've got to expose yourself to the attacks of wisdom, and to do that, or to be able to do that you must be in a very positive state indeed.

V: So when that sort of energy builds up and up and up, are you saying that the more energetic you get the more you are prey to Mara, so as it build up and up you then apply

wisdom to stop Mara usurping it.

S: Yes.

"Having identified these distractions, rely on their countermeasures.

Many objects of focus have been taught for the meditation of Abiding Tranquillity and Intense Insight, but it is best to hold in your mind the form of the Buddha. This is important for many reasons, but particularly for sustaining remembrance of Buddha, practising accumulation and purification, and practising the yoga of the divine mantras.

You should also focus on the meaning of Voidness, for having focused on that, one can accomplish Abiding Tranquillity through the nine stages. Also, producing the wisdom that realizes Voidness is most important in the way of practice and the causes of Intense Insight which have been previously explained. Therefore contemplate the benefits of the realization of Voidness and the troubles that arise from not realizing it, Then, having become convinced of the egolessness of persons and phenomena, meditate on that egolessness and perceive that everything is like a magician's illusion.

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S: Any query there? 'Objects of focus', mean subjects of concentration. It is interesting that the form of the Buddha is recommended as the best, because it is a form of remembering the Buddha. And it helps one to accumulate positive mental states and purify oneself, because of the associations of the Buddha form. Also it is the introduction to, not only visualization, but also recitation of mantra.

"From the Samadhi-raja-sutra:

Illusory, like a city of celestial musicians, Like a mirage, like a dream ... Meditate that designations are empty in nature; Understand all existence in this way."

S: In other words the whole of existence, as we saw in the previous work, is to be reflected on and meditated on as like a 'magician's illusion, in the sense that, it is perceived but it has no substantial reality. There is no substantial entity there. But there is, as it were, something. One sees it but one does not take it as truly real, just like the mirage, also. You see it, but you know that there is, in fact, no city there, so you are not fooled, but you do see it.

"After this, one can learn the Vajrayana. This has five aspects: to receive the initiations which make you a suitable vessel; having become a vessel, to keep pure vows and obligations; having maintained your vows. to accomplish the profound path of secret mantras; to make supplication that obstacles to achieving this good path of Sutra and Mantra be surmounted and to pray to obtain quickly the high position of the three Kayas (Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Dharmakaya).

Concerning the first of these, the root text says:

By this practice having become a vessel of the general Path One can enter the Vajrayana, most superior of yantras. May I soon enter This great gateway of the fortunate ones.

By this practice having become a vessel of the general Path One can enter the Vajrayana, most superior of yantras:

When, through gradual practice of the general path of Sutrayana and Mantrayana (which includes the three lower Tantras), one becomes a fit vessel, one can enter the Vajrayana. It is superior to all other yantras, the Sravakayana, the Pratyekabuddhayana, and even the Mahayana Paramitayana, as it creates as the path the fruits of Buddhahood - a Buddha's place, body, enjoyments, [670] and deeds. It quickly completes the accumulation of merit and wisdom by many methods more rare and wonderful than those found in any other teaching. It is the

profound short path through which one can quickly gain the high state of Vajradhara.

May I soon enter This great gateway of the fortunate ones:

The Vajrayana, in which is found the extraordinary indivisibility of method and wisdom, is the great gateway for spiritual beings of good fortune, disciples who are like Wish-fulfilling Jewels. Such disciples, moved to great faith by their compassion, have great capacity to deliver from the ocean of samsaric misery all living beings, their kind mothers. Exerting themselves to the fullest, such beings will enter the Vajrayana free from doubt. The doors of entrance are the pure initiations of water and diadem and so forth, which are explained in the precious Tantras. The initiate will quickly enter the Vajrayana path by receiving sacred initiation from a qualified Vajrayana teacher whom he has pleased in the three ways. This initiation ripens him, empowering him to hear the explanation of the path of secret mantras and to meditate on the three Kayas of Buddha.

You must obtain initiation in order to hear and meditate on the path of mantra. The Mahamudra-tilaka tantra says:

Just as butter is not churned from sand, Without initiation, there is no Siddhi.

It is also very important for teacher and disciple to carefully consider each other. It says in the Sutras that the best teacher is a monk, the next best a novice (sramanera), and then a householder. Rely on the most excellent.

It says in the Vajradaka-tantra:

One who is angry and deceitful, Extremely harsh in speech, Complacent in his knowledge ... Such a one should not be relied on as a Lama.

One who takes pleasure in meditation and virtuous work, Who always respects the Lama, Who always gives offerings to the deities ... One who has such qualifications is a disciple.

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S: Here the Vajrayana is equated exclusively with the Anuttara Yoga Tantra. Here the Vajrayana does not include the three lower Tantras, that is to say the Kriya, the Upaya and the Yoga Tantras. So one is on a very high level indeed.

V: What does it mean there, 'as it creates as the path the fruits of Buddhahood, a Buddha's place, body, enjoyments and deeds'?

S: This is quite difficult to explain, actually. Let me give you an example, you can take as an example, say, the Buddha pride. When you are Enlightened, of course, you will be a Buddha, so you will have all the attributes of a Buddha including the Buddha pride. But you can make the Buddha pride, which is one of the fruits of Buddhahood an actual method of practice, or you can make it of the path. You can say, 'well I am a Buddha, how can I possibly behave like this or like that?' In this way you are making a fruit of the goal, a fruit of the ultimate realization the path. In other words a method of practice.

But this, of course, is extremely dangerous. This is why it is found only on this level, one has to have an initiation for it and be with a Lama. It can't be just a matter of words.

V: I suppose on a lower level it is like drawing inspiration from teachers and trying to live up to..., trying to emulate them, if you like.

S: No it's not really that, it's actually having the conviction that you are. And because you have the conviction that you are you act accordingly, and that is the practice. But it falls completely flat, with disastrous results, if one is not practising properly, if one is not at that level, if one has not been initiated, if one has not got a Lama, and so on. Just to get the idea

out of a book and feel attracted by it and apply it, or pretend to apply it, this is really disastrous, and this is what we actually find.

V: Is this what the Soto Zen school teaches?

S: This is very much what Zengo (?) was saying. Yes, surely it is a method, but it can be so seriously misunderstood and misapplied. So here it is placed firmly within the context of the Vajrayana. That is to say, the Anuttara Yoga Tantra, and it is insisted that one has initiation. That means quite a lengthy procedure and that one has contact with the Lama and one even develops this sort of thought or reflection, this attitude, within the context of very definite practice. It's not just a theoretical understanding.

V: So this is the main sort of practice?

(Break in tape)

S: ... is usually regarded as the goal, in this kind of way.

V: As regards the principle of Vajrayana methods ...

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S: Sometimes there is this classification that the cause is the basis of the practice, or the path is the basis of the practice, or the goal is the basis of the practice.

Here you are making the goal the path, the Mahayana makes the path, the path and the Hinayana is said to make the cause the path.

V: The cause? (S: Yes)

V: Does that mean the motivation for following the path or the cause which is ...

S: No, for instance if you take that if you want happiness then you must practice non-attachment. You practice non-attachment because that is the cause of a certain result or certain fruit.

V: So the Hinayana makes the cause the path and the Mahayana?

S: Makes the path the path. And the Vajrayana, this is of course schematic and it doesn't fit completely, but the Vajrayana makes the goal the path.

All right let's go on, I think we might just get through this.

"The second of the five aspects of Vajrayana is to keep pure vows and obligations once you have become a vessel. The root text says:

The basis of achieving the two Siddhis is the pure vow one takes on entering this Path. Having found real understanding of it, May I keep this vow though it cost my life.

The basis of achieving the two Siddhis Is the pure vow one takes on entering this Path:

Keeping the pure vows and obligations taken with the Lamas and deities as witness at the time of receiving sacred initiation is the indispensable basis and foundation of producing within yourself the profound path of mantra and of accomplishing both Siddhis the Ordinary and the Superior. This is repeatedly stated in the Tantras.

Having found real understanding of it, May I keep this vow though it cost my life:

Having come to real certainty of this, and not merely the formulated understanding derived



from the assurance of others, you must guard your vows and obligations more dearly than your life, abandoning the fourteen major transgressions and the eight gross infractions. The gravest fault is to despise your Vajrayana teacher.

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S: Any query on this?

V: I'm a bit confused about 'both siddhis, the ordinary and the superior'.

S: Both siddhis, means worldly supernormal powers and Enlightenment itself. Clairaudience, clairvoyance, telepathy, these are ordinary supernormal powers. Enlightenment itself, in all its various aspects is the superior Siddhi.

"From the Krsnyamari-tantra: Do not despise your teacher.

Do not stray from the Sugata's Teaching. Do not criticize or feel anger Toward your brothers.

S: Here it means Vajra brothers, that is to say those who are initiated disciples of the same teacher.

"Do not give up the Bodhi-mind. Do not despise your own or other's religion. Show pure loving-kindness toward all living beings, Never abandoning them. Do not show secret teachings To beings who are not completely ripened. Do not abuse the aggregates of yourself or others. Do not trouble the existence of worldly people.

Always give love, even to the worst. Do not discriminate between the teachings. Do not deceive the faithful. Always keep your vows. It is also wrong to despise The wisdom nature of women. Do not feel that yogis are beggars, And always respect them.

Always repeat the secret mantras, And always keep your vows. Yet, if through carelessness You should break your vow to the Lama, Draw the sacred mandala And confess your failure before the Sugatas. Without doubt, with compassion, And with faithful mind, guard your vow to the Lama."

S: Any query on those?

V: What's Sugata?

S: Sugata means the Buddha, Sugata is one who is well gone, [674] or sometimes translated as happy, happy one. Or well come.

V: What is the mandala?

S: The mandala is the ritual mandala, it says here draw the sacred mandala, it is more like set up. When you build up a mandala which is a symbolical representation of the whole universe and you offer it to the Lama, that is to say you offer everything to the Lama. So this is what you should do if you happen to break your vow, your vow to the Lama. You make a mandala offering and you offer that to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and then do your puja afterwards and make your confession.

V: Is that like Mount Sumeru?

S: Yes, it is actually the ritual equivalent is a base rather like a round tray upside down with the bottom upwards, you cover that with rice, then you put a ring on top and fill that with rice and then another ring. And in this way you build up a mandala and it can be ornamented and decorated and then this is offered reciting certain verses. And you visualize or you feel that you are offering up the whole universe to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

As if to say, if you had all that at your disposal you would not keep it you would dedicate it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. I have one of these mandalas in Norfolk, by the way.

V: There's a special mudra.

S: Yes, there is a special mudra, I'll see if I can remember it. (demonstrating) So here's Mount Meru in the middle, and here's one, two, three, four continents. So you put the rice in the palms and you can make this mudra and recite the verse of offering up the mandala. This is the simplest form of mandala. There are three kinds of mandala, there is the little mandala, the middle mandala and the great mandala. This is the little mandala, then the middle mandala is the ritual one which I described, and the great one is the universe itself.

V: Is this the same practice as the four foundation offerings?

S: Yes, it is included there, there is an offering of the mandala, yes.

V: Could you just say a bit more, Bhante, about the three Yanas, like the Hinayana making the cause the path, the Mahayana the path the path.

S: Well in the Hinayana you are working on the cause, getting rid of the cause to produce a certain effect. In the Mahayana you are working on the process itself, you could say, this is not the way that it is actually explained but this is what it seems to amount to.

V: I'm not sure what you mean by that.

S: Well with the Hinayana you are working to get rid of something which is the cause of something that you don't want. So you are working on the cause. In the case of the [675] Mahayana you are working to produce something positive which is not yet there. So you are, as it were, working on the path. In the case of the Vajrayana you are working on something that is, in a sense, already there, but which is not actually as yet experienced. But you are taking it as there, in that way you are working on the goal. Your practice is the goal itself.

V: Could you also say that that was working on the effect?

S: No, the goal isn't an effect, no. Because that is not produced, your realization of the goal is produced, but the goal itself is not produced.

V: Nirvana, you've got the conditions leading to Nirvana but Nirvana is not conditioned.

S: Right, yes.

V: How is the Vajrayana different, if you are working on something which you take as there but which you have not experienced, isn't that the same as what the Mahayana are doing?

S: No, the Mahayana doesn't make that a method. The Vajrayana makes it a method. The Mahayana accepts as a general philosophical position that, that yes, you already are that, but it doesn't make it the method of practice, as the Vajrayana does. According to this classification, that is. It's much too neat to cover everything in the Mahayana and in the Vajrayana.

The Mahayana doesn't have methods in this respect. It sees the goal as the goal, it does not see the goal as the path or the goal itself as the path. This is, in a way, one of the differences, so we are told, between the Mahayana and the Vajrayana. The Vajrayana doesn't have any separate philosophy of its own, but it has special methods, which are not found in the Mahayana. For instance the Mahayana says, that yes, you are Buddha, but it doesn't show you how to make, the fact that you are Buddha, which of course you don't realize, a method for practice here and now. The Vajrayana does this.

V: In what way could this...

S: For instance in the form of various visualizations, it doesn't just rest with the bare statement. It gives a number of visualizations and mantra recitations, and so on. Even very elaborate ones which are practices based on the fact that you are Buddha here and now. You don't do them as practices to achieve Buddhahood so much as to express Buddhahood.

V: Are the Sudanese given Vajrayana or Mahayana?

S: Sadhana is a Tantric term, in this way, but Vajrayana as I said earlier, more often covers the lower Tantras as well, not just the Anuttara Yoga Tantra. So a sadhana is a text for performing the puja and visualizing and reciting the mantra of any Tantric deity, or even a Mahayana deity, because there are many Mahayana deities that come in the Tantra. Though there are also Tantric deities which are specifically [676] Tantra and don't come into the Mahayana.

V: What's the difference?

S: The main difference is, it is a difference between, really, the Anuttara Yoga Tantra and the other three Tantras, that in the lower Tantras you do not have father/mother forms, that is yab-yum forms. There is no sexual symbolism, this is the main difference, at least externally. And you do not have wrathful forms, all wrathful forms belong to the Anuttara Yoga Tantra, as such.

I mean, the wrathful Manjushri, the practice which brought in the wrathful Manjushri would be a practice of the Anuttara Yoga Tantra. Though there are Manjushri practices in the lower Tantras, but not of the wrathful Manjushri.

(end side 1)

V: So when one speaks in terms of a Tantric form, say Avalokiteshvara...

S: It should be a wrathful form. And this is also why it says here, 'it is wrong to despise the wisdom nature of women'. Well why is it wrong to despise the wisdom nature of women, and what is that wisdom nature?

V: The Yum.

S: It's the Yum, yes.

V: The dakinis.

S: Dakini. Because in as much as when you visualize the Tantric deity you are visualizing a male and female figure in union. So if you have a negative attitude towards women as such, even though it might be quite correct from the standpoint of the Hinayana and the Mahayana, at that time, if you have a negative attitude towards women then you are unable to see the female figure simply as a symbol of wisdom. The female form symbolizing the wisdom component of Enlightenment, just as the male form symbolizes the action, or compassion component of Enlightenment.

V: It's learning to distinguish between Mara's daughters and Tara.

S: And in the same way, 'do not abuse the aggregates of yourself or others'. In the Hinayana and the Mahayana you can say, 'fie on these aggregates, they are disgusting, I wish to give them up', but in the Vajrayana ... the five aggregates of the five Jinas, the five Buddhas. So you mustn't have a negative attitude towards the five aggregates because then you would be having a negative attitude towards the five Jinas and you are trying to see, or not even trying to see, you are taking your stand on the non-duality of aggregates and Buddhas.

V: In the Udana, is that why, there's the place where the Buddha said (I can't remember

exactly) but being positive towards getting rid of the ego, the aggregates ... do you remember that?

S: But for the Vajrayana just as there is no duality between [677] dependent origination and the Voidness, there is no duality between the aggregates and the Buddhas. So rejection, or renunciation is based on the dualistic outlook or attitude. And however appropriate it may be in the Hinayana and the Mahayana and the lower Tantras, it is not appropriate here. So therefore, 'one does not abuse the aggregates of yourself or others', because you would then be abusing the five Buddhas.

V: But you are doing this on the basis of having gone through ...

S: Yes, of course, you have gone through, you have traversed the Hinayana, the Mahayana, made your way through all the lower Tantras and you have arrived now at the gate of the Anuttara Yoga Tantra and you've met the Guru and had your initiations and have been set on the path. So you just haven't picked up some book and read about it.

V: Do you think that having posters of wrathful deities about in shops and things like this, do you think this is devaluing.

S: Oh quite definitely, quite definitely. What else can it do?

V: Vajrapani

S: Vajrapani is more generally exhibited in his wrathful form with the two other family protectors, that is Avalokiteshvara and Manjushri. So strictly speaking that should be the peaceful Vajrapani, when it is in that triad, but usually it isn't. That is a touch of the path of irregular steps, which is generally permitted. It is so general now it is almost the path of regular steps.

V: I have noticed that the wrathful form of Vajrapani doesn't have skulls in his crown. Whereas all the other wrathful forms, deities do.

S: I am pretty certain I have seen Vajrapani with skulls. (V: Yes)

V: What about Mahakala.

S: That's Tantric.

V: Oh, I've got to take him down have I?

S: Well it is the path of irregular steps. We can't insist on it completely at present, but at least we should know what we are doing. For instance the original tradition was that pictures and scrolls of Tantric deities were not publicly exhibited. They were only exhibited on the occasion of initiation with the Guru and the disciples present. And there are instructions in the Hevajra Tantra, for instance, that you carry these things under your arm and concealed from sight when you travel, just like the actual texts itself.

It's an offence, according to some lists of precepts, to show the picture of the Tantric deities to those who are not initiated. But look, it is almost commercialized now. So really it is a degeneration. I've noticed myself in the Tibetan temples, when Tibetans go round paying their respects [678] to all the images by turn, what is their attitude to these yab-yum forms. It is even more devout than it is towards the non yab-yum forms. They regard it as something very, very exalted, symbolizing something they can't hope to understand, they just bow before it and pass on. They have a quite different attitude.

I think we had better pass on

"The third aspect of the Vajrayana is to complete the profound path of secret Mantra. The root text says:

Having realized the significance of the Two Stages Which are the essence of the Vajrayana, By unswerving effort in the four sessions of yoga May I achieve what the Holy Lama has taught.

Having realized the significance of the Two Stages, Which are the essence of the Vajrayana:

Guard the pure vow. Then realize that your teacher is the perfect teacher - the great Vajradhara; your surroundings the perfect surroundings; your attendants the perfect companions; the teachings the perfect Teaching - the glorious Guhyasamaja, king of all Tantras. Realize the key meanings of symbolic and nonsymbolic yoga in the three lower Tantras, and realize the Two Stages - development and fulfilment - in the Anuttarayoga Tantra. These include the essence of all the teachings of the four precious Tantras.

By unswerving effort in the four sessions of yoga May I achieve what the Holy Lama has taught:

Having realized by hearing and contemplation the key meanings of the Tantras, make strong continuous effort in this profound path, not wavering even for an instant. Practice yogic meditation in four sessions - early dawn, morning, afternoon, and evening. Without regard for life and body, accomplish what is taught in the Caryamelakapradipa and the Pancakrama and others. Our holy forebears mercifully taught to fortunate disciples these special precepts, which they themselves realized intuitively after they had understood the significance of the root tantras from the explanatory tantras and thus reached exalted states and obtained siddhis and wisdom."

S: Any query on this? I suppose in a way there can't be any query because it's all rather out of reach.

V: There's one thing, going back a bit, what is the... 'by receiving sacred initiations from a qualified Vajrayana teacher whom he has pleased in the three ways. What are the three ways?

S: Usually it is body, speech and mind. But there is [679] also another interpretation which we did get some pages back. By respecting with the body and speech, by making offerings and then acting according to his advice. These three.

V: Also this, 'do not feel that Yogis are beggars, and always respect them'. Is this because they're usually ragged or ...

S: Yes, this isn't even just recognizable wandering monks. The Tantric teachers, quite deliberately, very often lived in a completely unconventional, not to say disreputable way. Quite outside, even, traditional Buddhist monastic life. So it is a sort of warning, be careful, don't go by appearances, don't just automatically despise some beggar-like or madman-like person. This may be a Yogi, may be a Tantric practitioner.

"The fourth aspect of the Vajrayana is to make supplication for help in surmounting all obstacles to this good path of Sutra and Tantra. The root text says:

May the Spiritual Teacher who has shown me the good path, And all my spiritual friends who practice it, have long life. May I at last completely surmount All inner and outer obstacles.

May the Spiritual Teacher who has shown me the good path, And all my spiritual friends who practice it, have long life:

All the Conquerors and their offspring in the three times have gone and will go to Buddhahood by the good path of Sutra and Tantra that has been explained above. Our

spiritual teacher accomplishes the deeds of the Conqueror, for he teaches us this good path that is without error in its nature, without mistake in its stages, which omits nothing, yet is not excessive in its enumerations. May the spiritual teacher and the holy Dharma friends who hear, think and meditate on this path with us, walk with firm step of their lotus feet, and may their lives be long and of adamant nature.

May I at last completely surmount All inner and outer obstacles:

May I increase all helpful qualities - faith, effort, strength of heart, and wisdom. By the power of the Lamas, deities, and the Three Jewels, may none of the inner and outer obstacles which hinder accomplishing this good path arise for even a moment - the outer obstacles of harmful sentient beings, demons, and so forth, and the inner obstacles of ills arising from imbalance [680] of the four elements within the body and from a penchant for the three poisons. If by the power of bad karma any of these obstacles should arise, may I subdue it immediately.

You must earnestly seek blessings and from the depths of your heart make supplication to the Lamas, deities, guardians, and Three Jewels, that you may quickly achieve all the realizations of the path. Pray that you may reach the final goal without hindrance. If you do so, their blessings will quickly enter into you and you will certainly accomplish all you desire.

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The fifth aspect of the Vajrayana is to make wishing-prayer and to dedicate one's virtue in order to obtain the high state of Vajradhara as quickly as possible. The root text says:

May I in all births enjoy the glorious Dharma, Inseparable from the perfect Lama; Having completed the stages and paths, May I quickly obtain the high state of Vajradhara.

S: Any point arising there? Here, as elsewhere you end with the dedication of merits. Vajradhara is of course the Buddha symbolizing the Dharmakaya for the Gelugpas, as for the Kagyupas too.

V: He holds two vajras, doesn't he?

S: No, dorje and bell, vajra and bell.

V: Crossed arms?

S: Yes.

V: What is a penchant?

S: A sort of liking for, disposition towards, a taste for, a weakness for.

V: I think it means literally leaning.

S: Leaning.

V: It's a French word isn't it.

S: Yes, a bias towards.

V: Imbalance.

S: A natural inclination.

Well we have reached the end, believe it or not, I didn't think we would, actually.

[681]

V: You mentioned the Gelugpas and the other?

S: Kagyupas, the school of Milarepa.

V: You mentioned a few Tantras so far, the Anuttara Yoga Tantra and the Hevajra Tantra.

S: The Anuttara Yoga Tantra is a class of Tantras. It is not one particular work.

V: Does that apply also to other three main ...?

S: They are classes of Tantras, yes.

V: That's the highest one isn't it, the Anuttara Yoga Tantra? (S: Yes)

V: Are they kept more or less secret or are they published.

S: The texts are available but the instruction would be given by, the initiation will be given by the ... And the text by themselves aren't very helpful. There is one translated into English, the Hevajra Tantra, but you can hardly make head or tail of it if you were to go through the text.

V: Is that part of the Anuttara Yoga Tantra?

S: Yes. Hevajra is a Tantric deity, in the sense that he appears in wrathful form with a dakini. Also, another point is, though there are the exceptions, deities with more than one head and more than two arms, are Tantric forms. So you usually get these together, a completely Tantric deity, would be one in wrathful form with his dakini and with a number of arms and legs and a number of heads. This is the fully developed Tantric form.

V: What about Avalokiteshvara with a thousand arms?

S: No, because that is always in peaceful form, that is not fully Tantric, one could say. But for instance, there is the Maha ... Mahakala, these are all shown in wrathful forms with numerous arms and legs and heads, and with their dakinis. These are typically Tantric forms.

V: Are there wrathful dakinis?

S: The dakini also are, yes, the wrathful dakini on her own would be the Anuttara Yoga Tantra.

V: Are [they] all wrathful to depict a certain kind of energy?

S: One could say that, yes. You can get stern looking deities who are guardians, at a lower level, they are not Tantric deities. Like the four guardian kings, they may look quite frowning and stern but they are not Tantric [682] deities they are just guardian deities. They are not even found exclusively in the Tantras, they come in the Mahayana too, even in the Hinayana.

V: Have you practised any of the higher Tantras?

S: A little bit, but not very much.

V: Where would our practices come from, do they belong to the lower Tantras?

S: They are barely into the lower Tantra, yes. But another point is that one mustn't think, sometimes appearances are to the contrary, one mustn't think that the Vajrayana directs, as it were, to a higher goal than the Mahayana. Sometimes it is said that the Anuttara Yoga Tantra is higher only in the sense of being more efficacious. In the sense, again, that it is intended for those with the strongest passions. Just as for someone who is very, very sick, very strong

medicine is needed. In the same way, for those who are really slaves of all the defilements, very powerful medicine is needed in the form of the Anuttara Yoga Tantra.

This is why you have sexual symbolism, wrathful deities and so forth. So it is higher only in that sense. If you are very pure and calm, and so on, you don't need to practise the Anuttara Yoga Tantra. You can achieve the same realizations without that particular form of practice. So it is often said that the Anuttara Yoga Tantra is for those who are particularly under the influence of craving, hatred and delusion. Who have got them in a very high degree.

That goes against the usual idea that higher Tantra is for the more highly evolved person, no. You could almost say that the lower the Tantra the more highly evolved the person. Because the more highly evolved you are the less drastic the methods you need. Sometimes it is said that the Kriya Yoga, the Yoga of ritual is for the very calm, restrained person with no powerful passions. He can attain the goal of the Tantra simply by practising the Kriya Tantra, the so called lowest.

V: That seems quite strange actually, because it seems as though the Vajrayana, in a way, is for the few but looking around, it almost seems as though it could be for many.

S: Yes, but again it is only efficacious within a framework of practice and initiation, which means faith. And if you haven't got that, well there is no use taking-it up. It is for people with very powerful passions, no doubt, but also within a framework of tradition, and people who are able to believe or have faith that there is such a thing as Enlightenment and that the Vajrayana can lead them to it.

This is an explanation which is very often given, though again sometimes it is suggested that the Anuttara Yoga Tantra is an actual higher stage. This is one of the characteristics of the Tantra generally, that you get a different answer to your question from every teacher. That's why, in a way there is no finality in the Tantra. Which is in a way quite good.

With the Hinayana and Mahayana there is a definite right answer to everything, but not in the Vajrayana. Mainly I think because the Vajrayana is entirely a matter of practice. [683]

V: What does Tantra actually mean?

S: It means something woven, something put together, compiled, i.e. just a text. But eventually it meant that particular kind of Tantra.

V: What is the difference, there seems to be two types of wrathful forms. One very big and bloated and the other relatively slender, but still with ... ? Is that just an incidental difference?

S: I'm not sure, there probably is a significance, but I don't recollect what it is. I don't remember having heard any explanation of that.

Well I think it is lunch time.

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