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 Mitras. These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Triratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhisthana Dharma Team

[Tape 7, Side 1]

S: - but I don't agree with this because in the first place one could say simply it's a question of the best and most qualified Order member leading, and the general feeling on that occasion was that that was Nagabodhi, so he led; and clearly some people are better at leading than others. But apart from that I would even say, as a matter of psychology, that the majority of women, leaving aside those who are perverted by feminism, would actually appreciate being led by a man more. I would go so far as to say that.

Devaraja: Why do you think that is?

S: Well, a man usually manifests more energy and enthusiasm and that sort of thing.

Kulananda: More leadership.

S: More leadership, one might say, using the word in a positive sense. And a retreat has to be led - not in a forceful or blatant way; gently and skilfully - but none the less led. Initiative taken. And it does seem that a man is so constituted as to be able to do that more easily and naturally, especially if it's a large retreat. And one of the things that sometimes women Mitras, the more reasonable and balanced ones, complain of is they don't - though they don't actually use this term - get enough leadership from the women. And they appreciate things which are being led or taken by men, as when Subhuti goes and leads a study weekend. They say they get from that more than they get from the women Order members. They are quite frank about it, and quite grateful.

Devaraja: The same when Sagaramati led a study weekend for women down in Brighton, ...

S: So it could be that in the future some woman Order member arises who does exhibit qualities of leadership, and then we might consider, 'All right, perhaps she should lead the mixed retreat'; but I don't think they have any such person at the moment. Just to put a woman there for the sake of having a woman, simply because there are a lot of women on these retreats is again just departing from our own principles, and being unduly swayed by some foreign inimical ideology. But perhaps that's clear.

Prasannasiddhi: What puzzles me is that if by some chance men are more capable of spiritual development, or find it easier or should be more interested, how come we get more women on the retreats? [Laughter]

S: Well, this is a ..... we shouldn't go into on this occasion, but I'll just deal with it briefly.

One, this year at least, women have not had many retreats. They don't have anything like Padmaloka that we get, so men have been able to go on Order/Mitra weekends and various things on at Padmaloka, women have not had that facility; so they tended therefore to flock to the big mixed retreats.

Two, I think women still like mixed situations quite a lot, big situations. And also I think women are attracted towards a positive group as a positive group. The Movement down in London around the LBC appears to, or presents itself to a lot of women - some men too perhaps - as a positive group situation, providing positive emotional support, security, social life and so on.

I did get a letter only this morning, by the way - this is perhaps a little bit relevant - from a new woman who's been coming for some time but she said - she seems a bit exceptional - that she'd been going to the Tuesday class but didn't altogether appreciate it because she said there was a cocktail party atmosphere to it. She said that she did not appreciate this. She took it that it was as it were very English (she happened to be Irish). She attributed the cocktail party atmosphere to the Englishness of most of the people present. That may or may not be the case, but that is interesting because I'm sure a lot of people, and especially women, would be rather attracted to that sort of atmosphere, if in fact that is a justified criticism.

So I think we have to be very careful, and I have spoken, down at the LBC, in terms of strengthening the purely spiritual element there, rather than the social. I think this is very necessary.

Anyway, we must press on ..... 'Reasoned argument can be sorcery.' I think we can agree with Muhammad here. 'He evidently disapproved of it, since he likened it to sorcery.' All right let's go on then.

"Thus he said, in another traditional report:
- Abuse and argumentation are twin branches of hypocrisy."

S: 'Abuse and argumentation are twin branches of hypocrisy.' I don't know whether he means hypocrisy in quite the literal sense; but there's abuse, as when someone says to you, 'You're just a sexist' or 'you're just a male chauvinist.' That's abuse. That is not an argument. But argumentation also, if it is not sincere, not really intended to arrive at the truth, can be what Muhammad calls one of the twin branches of hypocrisy. But we're having to confront a lot of this sort of thing, abuse and argumentation, from people holding these sort of ideologies. We don't come up against orthodox Christians; we don't come up against militant Marxists, but we seem to come up against feminists. They seem to be the sort of people who impinge upon us. Maybe for a woman feminism is the near enemy of the spiritual life, because it resembles it superficially to some extent because it speaks in terms of being an individual and being independent, and all that sort of thing.

Vajrananda: What do you think he means by hypocrisy?

S: Apparently it's not hypocrisy in the literal sense here. I don't know what the original term is but it would seem to be just general dishonesty of life. You are not in this case trying to arrive at the truth. You're pretending to arrive at the truth but actually, while pretending to be trying to arrive at the truth but actually you're indulging in just abuse and argumentation - in wordy warfare, as the Buddha called it.

Subhuti: Isn't this all an illustration of these two points he's made - one of which is about not looking at your own characteristics?

S: It could be, because in abuse you're just scolding someone for his alleged negative characteristics and overlooking your own, so to that extent you are a hypocrite. Anyway just go down to the end of this paragraph.

"And further:
- God disapproves of argumentation for you: all argumentation."

S: Argumentation clearly is here being distinguished from honest discussion with a view to arrive at the truth. That doesn't need any elaboration.

"Al-Shaf'i (may God have mercy on him!) said:
- There is not one Muslim who obeys God without ever transgressing against Him, nor is there one who transgresses against Him without ever obeying Him.
If a man's obedience outweighs his transgressions, then he is righteous."

S: Well, we saw yesterday, I think, that a Buddhist wouldn't altogether agree with this because we do believe that there is a possibility of attaining a state in which one isn't transgressing, to use the Muslim term, at all, where no unskilful actions are in fact being performed. But nonetheless, for those who fall short of that, yes, however much good one may do, however many skilful actions, there will be some intermixture of the unskilful and vice versa. I think the vice versa is also interesting - that no one is ever being completely unethical. There's always an element of non-transgression, however small. And for most people, we just have to be sure that we are not transgressing to a greater extent than we are transgressing; that the positive outweighs the negative. So long as the positive outweighs the negative and continues to outweigh the negative, then progress will be made and we shall eventually reach the Point of No Return, where the positive finally and irrevocably outweighs the negative, and when there is no possibility of the negative ever outweighing the positive again, or the unskilful ever outweighing the skilful again. Would you like to complete that paragraph?

"If such a man be accounted righteous in his duty to God, how much more should you consider him righteous in his duty to you and the obligation of your brotherhood."

S: It seems that there are, in our terms, two relationships here. There is the vertical relationship to God, and there is the horizontal relationship between brother and brother. So the author is saying you cannot expect to be more than, on the whole, righteous rather than unrighteous, let us say, in respect of your relationship to God. So if you see that someone on the whole and on balance is right in his relationship with God, take it that he is right in his relationship, on the whole, with you. That is what it appears to be saying. Because a Muslim would believe apparently that one's vertical relationship with God is more important even than the horizontal relationship with one's brother. So if you see that a man is right in one respect you can take it that he is right in the other. We would say that that doesn't necessarily follow, perhaps. It does seem to mean that sometimes your horizontal relationships can be in a better state than your vertical relationships. So that the state of someone's horizontal relationships cannot necessarily be inferred from the state of their vertical relationships, and vice versa.

Nagabodhi: Looked at that way round, particularly if you were to look at their vertical relationships first, and see that somebody is enjoying good, positive vertical relationships, probably their horizontal relationships would be good. Horizontal relationships might not be a guide to vertical relationships, but I would have thought vertical relationships could be a -

S: In principle but not necessarily actually in fact, because someone - well, we've seen this, say, in the case of some of the Tibetan groups - yes, there seems to be a very good vertical relationship between disciple and guru but not much in the way of very positive relationships between or among the disciples themselves. So therefore B cannot be inferred from A, though it should really, logically, even spiritually, follow; but in practice it seems very often not to do so.

Subhuti: Would that imply some defect in the vertical relationship? .....

S: One could even argue that, yes.

Subhuti: If there is a vertical relationship, we know that about it, but we don't really know how good -

S: Yes, one could even question the apparent goodness of the vertical relationship. But in fact I would be inclined to do that myself because I would say if you had that kind of very positive vertical relationship and you were aware that somebody else had that vertical relationship with the same person, well, that must affect your relationship with that other person. So that a very positive horizontal relationship should surely spring up. This is what I would personally tend to argue.

But it may be that someone might have concentrated on the vertical relationship more for the time being and that the horizontal relationship has not as yet been worked out or worked upon. Anyway let's stop there for our morning tea.

[TEA BREAK. *Long discussion on D. H. Lawrence, women's power etc., just not audible enough for transcription.*]

"Just as it is incumbent upon you to hold your tongue from mentioning his misdeeds, so ought you to observe silence in your heart. This is done by giving up suspicions, for suspicions constitute slander in the heart, which is also unlawful. Keep within the bounds by not putting a bad construction on his action, so long as you can see it in a good light. As for what is revealed unmistakably and before your very eyes, so that it is impossible for you not to know about it, you should if possible ascribe what you witness to absentmindedness and forgetfulness."

S: Rather than to deliberate intent. So here one reaches, as it were, a different level, a deeper level.

Abhaya: I think that is quite something, 'to observe silence in your heart'. You might not say anything but it goes on in your head.

S: You should not even actually suspect somebody, even though you don't give expression to those suspicions. For instance, I mentioned the person who failed to keep an appointment. Don't even think, don't even suspect that he might have deliberately let you down. Let that thought

not even occur to you - which is a very much more difficult thing. Give him the benefit of the doubt in your heart, even.

Nagabodhi: It's hard to think of this without seeing how it could be a mature response as opposed to a naïve response.

S: In the case of someone who is well known to you then it must be based upon your knowledge of his character and his general reliability. And that kind of confidence can develop only over a definite period. Often actually people do behave in an unreliable way, and you have, so to speak, grown accustomed to that and therefore it is very difficult to put a favourable construction on yet another occasion on which they are apparently late for no valid reason.

Talking about this question of appointments, it applies also to, say, turning up for a meeting, say council meetings or Order meetings. I did notice when I was down in London, or when I read minutes, that sometimes people turn up late, and this is really very very bad. And one would like to think that it was for unavoidable reasons, but sometimes it does transpire that the person didn't attach sufficient importance to the meeting, or take sufficient care to arrive in good time for that meeting.

And 'As for what is revealed unmistakably before your very eyes, so that it is impossible for you not to know about it, you should **if possible**' - because it must be genuine - 'ascribe what you witness to absentmindedness and forgetfulness.' Forgetfulness is the basic characteristic of unenlightened humanity. Forgetfulness is absence of continuity. It's a breach in the continuity of individuality itself. So you should at least say, 'He probably just forgot.' He lapsed, he fell from his truly human state. It wasn't that he deliberately did it. He didn't take thought and deliberately do it, whatever it was; he just was forgetful. He just suffered a lapse, as anybody short of Enlightenment might do. One does know that sometimes, with the best will in the world, you do forget, because other things are present to your consciousness perhaps, or you may be very tired, or you may have a lot of other things to do; and you wanted to remember, you wished to remember, but somehow you just forgot. That particular item just got crowded out.

So one should understand that that sort of possibility does exist and not at once attribute unskilful motives to somebody. They may just have forgotten. And that is to some extent, not that they may have just forgotten, but they may have been overcome by forgetfulness generally, and that is understandable in a human being. It's a different thing from deliberate neglect of a particular duty. You're aware of the general human condition and general human frailty and with what difficulty people maintain continuity of consciousness, and recollection in the full sense, and individuality: that they can lapse from that so easily and be forgetful and apparently careless and neglectful. You should make full allowance for that if you possibly can, with honesty. But obviously that is to be distinguished from being indulgent. There is room still for fierce friendship on the appropriate occasion.

When the person, say, does appear late, there are different ways in which you can draw attention to that. You can say, 'Oh, late again!' in an aggrieved, aggressive way. Or you can say, 'We're really sorry not to see you till now. We've really been missing you.' You can say something like that. 'We're really sorry that you are late because we've just had a really interesting discussion. We're really sorry you had to miss that.' There are different ways, more or less skilful, of drawing someone's attention to the fact that they are late. They probably know it already anyway, and may be feeling a bit guilty.

Anyway, let's carry on on this deeper level.

"Suspicion is formed in two ways; first, by what is called perception, which rests on some outward sign. This causes a necessary movement of the thinking which cannot be set aside. Secondly, there is that which arises from your prejudice against someone. There emanates from him some act which could be taken in either of two ways; but your prejudice against him causes you to settle for the worse interpretation, even though there is no outward sign to justify it. This is an offence against him in the Inner, something unlawful in respect of every believer."

S: Let's deal with that first before we go on to the examples. Do you understand the account? 'Suspicion is formed in two ways; first, by what is called perception, which rests on some outward sign. This causes a necessary movement of the thinking which cannot be set aside.' Can you think of an example of this sort of thing?

Devaraja: Somebody deliberately throws a brick through a shop window, and your suspicion is that they are a thief.

S: One could say that that was an example, but here there would be a very strong suspicion amounting to certainty. Perhaps suspicion indicates something a bit short of that. I'm not sure because we don't know the original Arabic word.

Ratnavira: To go back to the example you were using of people not turning up, ... that it is a quarter past 11 and the meeting was supposed to start at 11. So you're suspicious on the basis of that outward sign.

S: 'Causes a necessary movement of the thinking' - you cannot help, in a manner of speaking, assuming that that person hasn't bothered to be on time.

Subhuti: So what you're saying is that there is some objectification, even -

S: There is **some** objectification, and in a sense perhaps you can't help thinking in that way; but even so, it is only a suspicion, however strong. It does not amount to certainty. There is a perception which rests on some outward sign and there is certainly a possibility of your suspicion being justified, but it is not necessarily so. Therefore your suspicion is only a suspicion, and if you allow your suspicion to turn into a certainty, or if your suspicion amounts to a certainty, then you are at fault.

[End of Side 1 Side 2]

..... to be an ambiguity here, because suspicion is something that you must not entertain, but on the other hand al-Ghazali refers to 'a necessary movement of the thinking which cannot be set aside.' So if it is 'necessary' and 'cannot be set aside', in what sense are you culpable in entertaining the suspicion?

Subhuti: Is he saying in the first case that you've got a reasonable suspicion if you like, and in the second that you've got an unreasonable, irrational suspicion? That's the point, isn't it? There is some evidence, but it doesn't amount to certainty.

S: Well, no, I think he's saying that it is not even definitely evidence.

Subhuti: Well, what's the 'necessary movement of the thinking which cannot be set aside'?

S: This is what I'm wondering, because that seems to be inconsistent with suspicion being something which is culpable.

Vajrananda: But if somebody is always late, and he's late again, there's a natural suspicion.

S: Yes, there's a natural - maybe it's inevitable psychologically but not necessarily logically or even spiritually. Because someone might be late, and have been late deliberately, so to speak, 99 times, but that does not mean that he is necessarily on the 100th time going to be late in that way, though there may be a strong likelihood.

Devaraja: The first one is when the person is actually late, but the second one is when you've made an appointment and you think, 'He'll probably be late.'

S: Because the text says, 'Suspicion is formed in two ways', as though there is just one kind of suspicion and that suspicion is something which you should not be guilty of. So perhaps the 'necessary movement' is necessary only subjectively and psychologically, but nonetheless it is something which you should resist. Or it is as though appearances are against someone, so to speak, but they are only appearances; but you don't take them only as appearances, you take them as certainty, and that is suspicion. The fact that something is possible you take as an actuality; that is suspicion. You think that because he may be deliberately late therefore he is deliberately late and that is suspicion, in the first instance.

And 'Secondly, there is that which arises from your prejudice against someone. There emanates from him some act which **could** be taken in either of two ways; but your prejudice against him causes you to settle for the worse interpretation.' This seems to be not really different from the first, because in the first also there are two possibilities. Because if there are not two possibilities well you cannot speak of suspicion in either case being unjustified and therefore as being an offence.

Tejamitra: I can't help holding the suspicion that there is something illogical in it!

Kuladeva: Maybe in the first instance it just seems more likely that -

S: Yes. For instance, in the second case we've seen that you have a prejudice against someone which strongly reinforces your perception of the likelihood that the other person is at fault, so that you just don't even consider giving them the benefit of the doubt.

Subhuti: Seems to me that the first one is a reasonable suspicion, but even in the case of reasonable suspicion you must recognise that your reasonable suspicion is only a suspicion - that you haven't got full knowledge.

S: Right, yes.

Subhuti: In the second case you actually want to see that he's wrong. That seems to be the difference.

S: Yes, so you don't even consider that he might be in the right, or not at fault.

Subhuti: So the first one is an error in thinking, as it were, and the second one is an error in feeling.

S: 'This is an offence against him in the Inner, something unlawful in respect of every believer.' Well, we would say it's an offence against mettā, so to speak. But clearly this requires a very high degree of awareness and control of one's own thoughts, and a high degree of positive thinking, and a positive attitude towards other people - in particular, of course, towards your brother. You are not ready even to suspect him of any wrongdoing. And even if evidence is tangibly and unmistakably presented, even then you do your best to ascribe it to forgetfulness on his part, rather than to deliberate intent. It's so contrary to what is unfortunately people's usual experience of tending, even if unconsciously, to put the worst construction on what somebody does or doesn't do.

I think - without making excuses - what does generally create a difficulty is that very often our past experience of people has not in fact been very positive. So in a manner of speaking we cannot help anticipating yet another failure on their part. It's very difficult to resist this.

Subhuti: - 'a necessary movement of the thinking which cannot be set aside.'

S: Yes; yes. Even, again, far from having a prejudice against them you may have a prejudice in their favour. You may not want to think that they are going to let you down, but in a way you can't help thinking, 'It looks as though it's going to happen yet again', and you feel sorry about it. This is, I think, sometimes at least, what happens. You're sort of praying that they'll arrive on time just for once, but they don't.

So we are not helped, partly because perhaps of our own tendency to judge people unfavourably, but also we're not helped perhaps by their own past behaviour towards us. Again, not making excuses for ourselves, but perhaps that fact can't be overlooked altogether.

But anyway, one is talking here about duties of brotherhood. If you enter into a contract of brotherhood with someone, well presumably he is a reasonably reliable person, otherwise you couldn't even consider accepting him as a brother, and so therefore in his case at the very least you should have a positive attitude which practically refuses to think ill of him in any way. Always give him the benefit of the doubt in the most positive manner. Ideally this should be the attitude of Order members to one another.

All right, some sayings of the Prophet are now quoted.

"For the Prophet (God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
- God has forbidden one believer to tamper with the blood, property or honour of another, or to hold a bad suspicion of him.
Also:
- Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the most untruthful report, and suspicion leads to prying and spying.
Further:
- Do not spy and do not pry. Do not sever relationships and do not fall out, but serve God as brothers.
Prying consists in listening to rumours, spying in visual observation."

S: There are one or two new points here. 'Suspicion is the most untruthful report'. In other words, you can't really trust your own suspicions - because sometimes suspicions can get absolutely out of hand. Almost a classic situation is within the context of a relationship. She doesn't turn up. What has happened to her? What is she doing? Who is she with? Before you know it, not to say within half a minute, all sorts of unpleasant pictures have crowded your imagination, because 'suspicion is the most untruthful report.' Sometimes our suspicions really do run away with us, particularly in that sort of very loaded and very fraught situation.

Kulananda: It shows a really strong need to continually try to pin yourself down to the observable and the immediate, rather than letting your imagination run away with itself.

S: Yes, right. Johnson uses 'imagination' in this sort of sense, and one can appreciate now why he said, [as mentioned] yesterday, that he used it in a sense completely different from that of the Romantics.

Kuladeva: In which sense?

S: [That] imagination is that faculty, one might say, which puts you out of touch with the present, and the present situation.

_____: Fantasy?

S: Yes - well, it's even worse than fantasy, though sometimes he does use the two terms synonymously.

Prasannasiddhi: So he uses imagination in a negative sense?

S: Yes, indeed, almost invariably. One must remember this when reading, for instance, Johnson's essays; or when reading *Rasselas*, because there's a chapter in *Rasselas* entitled *'On the Dangerous Prevalence of Imagination'*. It doesn't make sense if you make it in the romantic sense of imagination. It makes a lot of sense if you take it in this sense. Imagination here is that which puts you out of touch with reality, out of touch with the situation in which you actually are, out of touch with the concrete human situation. That's why I compared yesterday, I think, Johnson's concept of imagination with - admittedly rather distantly - the *abhutaparikalpa* of the Yogacara. Anyway, that is very much by the by.

But suspicion, if you get, especially in the field of politics, when you imagine everybody is plotting against you and trying to do you down. You don't trust anyone. You suspect everybody. I've had some dealings with people involved with politics, and I've really noticed this. They're so suspicious. They put a construction upon everything. I noticed this in the case of Tibetan government officials who came down to Kalimpong and settled there as refugees: they were always engaged in all sorts of Tibetan politics, and their degree of suspiciousness - mutual and towards other people - was really extraordinary. Because if, for instance, one of them went off to Darjeeling - he might have just gone to the dentist - you'd hear some extraordinary story about 'Ah, that was just a blind, he didn't really go to see the dentist; he went to see So-and-so. And why did he see So-and- so? It was for such-and-such a reason. And that was why Mr. So-and-so also went to Calcutta, to see So-and-so; and that linked up with that.' There would be this extraordinary plot woven in their minds. And certain as it were evidence seemed to fit in with all these interpretations. They were all the time bound, entangled in these sort suspicions. I noticed it with other politicians.

Nagabodhi: Isn't there a sort of objective corollary, though, that if people actually indulge these kind of suspicions for long enough they do actually start living them out, so they actually do get involved in plots?

S: Yes, yes; because if you come to know that someone is suspecting you, even if you are innocent you will start suspecting them, or you will bear in mind that they suspect you and act accordingly. And that may give rise to further suspicions which then appear to be well grounded. It's a dreadful condition into which to get, so one must nip it in the bud.

So one can perhaps understand why to entertain suspicions, especially to entertain suspicions towards your brother, even in your heart, is considered such a serious matter, apparently by the Islamic tradition from Muhammad downwards - very justifiably.

As far as I remember, no Buddhist text has dealt with suspiciousness in quite this sort of way, or even dealt with suspiciousness in this sense at all. But it is a very valid point; not to suspect, to trust, to put the best possible construction on people's actions and words, not to get entangled in this net.

Kulananda: To try not to construct.

S: And also yes, not to construct.

Subhuti: But you have got to be shrewd, haven't you? You can't be caught.

S: At the same time, yes, you've got to be shrewd; but not get taken in. It's very difficult to follow that middle way.

Kulananda: It's got to be a shrewdness based on what actually happens. You've got to stay as close to home as you can.

S: And a reasonable and provisional interpretation of what is happening.

Subhuti: You get this pseudo-positivity sometimes in the FWBO - the best possible construction is put on all events, even though it's not actually what happened at all.

S: Yes. Well, this is usually on what you yourself have done, whether individually or collectively, [Laughter] because you don't want to face up to the fact of failure; and that perhaps is rather a different kind of thing.

Subhuti: Also naïveté - you get a lot of sheer naïveté.

S: Yes.

Prasannasiddhi: One would wonder, outside such things as the FWBO, how common it would be to be in a situation where you didn't have to be suspicious of other people. How many people experience clear relationships with other people?

S: Say within the FWBO, at least in this country, one couldn't afford to be naïve with regard to visiting journalists - not journalists from the national press anyway. One mustn't be absolutely certain that they're not going to write anything good about you, but I think one would be justified in treating them with a certain amount of reserve, at least initially, until you got really to know them.

Subhuti: So how is that distinguished from suspicion?

S: Well, you don't absolutely commit yourself to the suspicion. You remain open to the possibility that your suspicions, though reasonable, may not be justified.

Vajrananda: Also, presumably, this thing of different degrees of brotherhood towards different people - is that - ?

S: Well, there is that, but what I was thinking in this case was that, say in the case of the journalist, inasmuch as there is a degree of doubt, quite reasonably, you wouldn't risk taking the journalist into your confidence to a degree that would harm you if he turned out to be untrustworthy. You might say, 'Yes, he may be quite trustworthy, but there's a possibility that he isn't, and therefore I cannot afford to be completely open with him, just in case he isn't trustworthy.' The risk is too great to take, even though it may well turn out that he was trustworthy.

But again one is speaking here - the text is speaking specifically of the duties of brotherhood. Brothers have this duty to be absolutely free from suspicion towards one another. When dealing with the outside world there is perhaps some modification called for.

Kulananda: What we find in *Windhorse Trading* is quite interesting, Because we tend not to approach people on the basis of suspicion, if there is anything in them worthy of being suspicious of, they soon expose it. Because we appear to be so naïve they show their hand very quickly. It can be quite useful.

Prasannasiddhi: But you aren't actually naïve.

Kulananda: No, we're not. [Laughter]

Vajrananda: More subtle suspicion.

S: Anyway, let's carry on. This is all quite clear, isn't it? These three quotations from the sayings of Muhammad are all intended to make clear the point that a brother must not suspect his brother. So one should not 'hold a bad suspicion of him'. 'Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the most untruthful report, and suspicion leads to prying and spying.' If you suspect someone you tend to keep a watch on them, you tend to pry, you tend to spy - that is to say, listen to rumours and engage in visual observation - as when you, for example, suspect your wife of infidelity. You keep watch, maybe even hire a private detective to follow her around.

But it also says, 'Do not sever relationships and do not fall out, but serve God as brothers.' What is the bearing of this on suspiciousness? Sometimes people may even sever relationships just on the basis of a suspicion which may turn out to be quite unjustified. In other words, on the basis of suspicion you may take precipitate action which was not in fact justified, because your suspicion was not justified. One should be very careful about this. Sometimes a suspicion is so strong and perhaps the appearances are so much against the other person, we just plunge into some kind of action, or at least into some kind of mental state, which turns out not to have been justified. As I mentioned, when we get angry with someone for being late before we really know why they are late.

Kulananda: Think of Othello.

S: Oh yes, indeed, yes. Of course in the case of Othello he was worked upon, his feelings were worked upon, by another interested party; but he was naïve, he was even stupid. Though, in a sense, of a rather noble character, he should not have allowed that to happen. All right, let's go on then.

"Concealing faults, feigning ignorance of them and overlooking them - this is the mark of religious people. You have sufficient notice of the perfect degree in concealing what is ugly and revealing what is good, in that God (Exalted is He!) is so qualified in the prayer where it is said:
- O Thou Who revealest the beautiful and concealest the ugly!
What is desirable in God's sight is that we model our character after His, for He is the Veiler of faults, Forgiver of sins, Indulgent towards His creatures. So how can you fail to be indulgent towards one who is your equal or your superior, but in no way your slave or your creature?"

S: We'll go into this question of God in a minute. But clearly, 'Concealing faults, feigning ignorance of them and overlooking them - this is the mark of religious people.' This shows this is clearly regarded as an ideal by Islam, at least within the Muslim community itself. 'You have sufficient notice of the perfect degree in concealing what is ugly and revealing what is good, in that God ... is so qualified in the prayer where it is said: - O Thou who revealest the beautiful and concealest the ugly!' One could say here that this is an instance of the concept of God

embodying an actual human ideal, God being regarded as the great exemplar of what in fact is a human ideal: the ideal being that one should conceal and not reveal faults. So this is regarded as a good quality to such an extent that in Islam it traditionally is attributed to God - God, for the Islamic tradition, being the locus as it were of higher spiritual values. I can't help thinking of the Christian conception of God at the time of the Last Judgement, ruthlessly stripping people of all their rags of pretence and showing them up for what they really are, how ugly and wicked, and then sending them off to punishment. Of course Islam also shares this conception but nonetheless it is also said that God is a concealer and forgiver of faults and indulgent - it is part of what we might regard as a general inconsistency in the Muslim view of God, though again, as I said, the Muslim wouldn't regard it in that way.

Subhuti: How would he regard it? It must have been a subject of debate in .....

S: I don't know. I must say I'm not familiar with whatever debates might have been held on that topic.

Kulananda: I rest uneasy with this notion of concealment. I can understand the notion of tempering and putting things positively, putting things gently, but actually concealing faults strikes me as being a form of duplicitousness which I think is inappropriate to friendship.

S: Well, I think first of all there is the consideration that what appears as a fault may not be a fault at all. You have to bear that in mind. And secondly, even if there is a fault which is recognised as a fault, you have to see that in a balanced way. You have to take into account that that particular person is not simply the possessor of that fault; he may well be the possessor of a number of good qualities, so you have to see the one fault in the context of all those other good qualities. And then perhaps you have to bear in mind the general human condition, the fact that people are very liable to faults, not being very surprised, you shouldn't be too upset about it. Bear in mind that you similarly are like that. And also that someone's fault is something that perhaps he should rectify, that you should quietly help him to rectify - not something to be announced from the housetops or revealed to a lot of other people. I think 'concealing' means more that, not revealing to other people. Not that you cannot recognise it between yourselves in a positive manner, or that you cannot point it out to him if that would help him. That possibility is admitted in the first chapter, isn't it?

_____: Yes. [Pause]

S: No, it's in this chapter, where he says: 'In short, you should keep silent about any speech unpleasant to him in general and in particular - unless obliged to speak out to promote good and prevent evil, and even then only if you can find no valid excuse for saying nothing.' So it's more a question of publishing people's faults, bringing them to the notice of other people who are in no way concerned with them.

So 'Concealing faults, feigning ignorance of them and overlooking them - this is the mark of religious people. You have sufficient notice' - as a Muslim - 'of the perfect degree in concealing what is ugly and revealing what is good, in that God ... is so qualified in the prayer where it is said: - O Thou Who revealest the beautiful and concealest the ugly!' Whether God really does that, even in Islam, may be open to debate. 'What is desirable in God's sight is that we model our character after His, for He is the Veiler of faults, Forgiver of sins, Indulgent towards His creatures' - at least in one aspect of his personality! 'So how can you fail to be indulgent towards one who is your equal or your superior, but in no way your

slave or your creature?' - as everybody is the slave or creature of God. If God can be so, can veil the faults of those who are his slaves and his creatures, then how much more so should you be able to practise that virtue towards other people?

Anyway, there is a quotation from, or saying attributed in the Muslim tradition to, Jesus, who is of course regarded as a prophet, though not such a great prophet as Muhammad:

"Jesus (Peace be upon him!) said to the Disciples:
- How do you act when you see a brother sleeping, and the wind blows off his clothes?
- We screen him and cover him.
- Rather do you lay bare his private parts.
- Glory be to God! Who would do such a thing?
- One of you listens to gossip about his brother, then adds to it and passes it on exaggerated."

S: The Arabs apparently were, and still are, very conscious of nudity. They were quite different from the Greeks in this respect. So to expose oneself in this way was regarded as very indecent, and to allow one's friend inadvertently to expose himself in this way was considered very improper. So therefore Jesus is represented as saying - I don't know where this saying comes from; it isn't, obviously, from the Gospels; it may be from some apocryphal or even gnostic source - to the disciples: 'How do you act when you see a brother sleeping, and the wind blows off his clothes?' - that is to say, exposing him indecently, as we would say. So the disciples naturally reply: 'We screen him and cover him' - because we wouldn't like our brother to be guilty of an indecency. So Jesus says: 'No! in fact you don't. What you actually do is lay bare his private parts.' You don't cover him up at all; you do just the opposite. And then they say: 'Glory be to God! Who would do such a thing?' They disclaim it. He says: 'No, but you do, metaphorically, because what happens is that 'one of you listens to gossip about his brother, then adds to it and passes it on exaggerated.' That's just like, far from covering him up when he exposes himself inadvertently during his sleep, it's like stripping him completely and making an even more shameful spectacle of him.

So one may not have the Arab or Semitic idea about nudity and all that sort of thing, but nonetheless the lesson does hold good: that one shouldn't ruthlessly reveal someone's weaknesses or faults to the general public, so to speak. [Pause]

Prasannasiddhi: There can be a sort of tendency - you think you're on to someone's fault or something, you start tracking down a person's fault, trying to reveal it. You think there might possibly be a fault in someone, so you are kind of looking out for it - which is related to this - rather than just being positive and quite clear and responding positively to the situation, not looking for faults.

S: But the situation which is envisaged here is even worse, even more extreme than that, because you uncover a person's faults, which may actually be there, to a lot of other people. You sort of broadcast them. You not only see them yourself, but you cause others to see them and this cannot be a friendly act, and certainly one should not behave towards one's brother in this way. Rather should you conceal his faults from the eyes of other people.

We perhaps tend to make a virtue of honesty in a rather negative sense. It reminds me of a saying I heard years and years ago, or I read it somewhere: someone once remarked how strange it is that people who pride themselves on speaking their minds always seem to have such unpleasant minds! [Laughter] Anyway let's go on.

"You must know that a man's belief is incomplete so long as he does not wish for his brother what he wishes for himself. The lowest degree in brotherhood is where you treat your brother as you would wish to be treated yourself, and there is no doubt that he would expect you to veil his shame and keep quiet about his misdeeds and faults. If shown the opposite of what he expected, he would be very annoyed and angry. How unworthy, then, if he were to expect what he himself would not conceive and intend. Woe to him then in the words of the Book of God (Exalted is He!), for He says:
- Woe to the givers of short measure, who exact in full when others measure out to them, but skimp in measuring or weighing out to others! (Qu'ran 83.1-3)
All who demand fair treatment beyond what they themselves dispense come under the import of this Verse."

S: The verse actually seems to be speaking about those who give short measure in the quite literal sense, but the application seems to have been greatly extended.

So 'You must know that a man's belief is incomplete so long as he does not wish for his brother what he wishes for himself.' In other words, do as you would be done by: that is the so-called Golden Rule, which we find of course in the gospels, and you find also in the teaching of Confucius, what to speak of Buddhist teachings. This is especially important. It is of special significance in the context of the spiritual life, but why do you think that is? I don't think that is always understood. What does it signify?

Subhuti: The ability to identify, to empathise.

S: There is the anecdote in the Pali texts of the Buddha, who found a party of boys tormenting a crow, and the Buddha said: 'Supposing someone was to torment you like that, would you not feel pain?' And they said, 'Yes.' 'If you would feel pain if someone tormented you in that way, why should you torment the crow in that way, because he also feels pain?' So this is a very simple reasoning, but really, if one goes into it, it is very significant; because you can't put yourself in the place of another, or another in the place of yourself, unless you've developed a degree of what I've called reflexive consciousness. Do you see that? It's bound up with that.

Kulananda: Does it stop there, Bhante? Because -

S: Stop there in what sense?

Kulananda: Is there not a more real situation in which you are not separate from others in the sense in which you can't begin to discriminate - ?

S: That may be, but this is how you have to start;because to begin with you're totally bound up with yourself. You identify with yourself. You

only very dimly see the other person. The other person is just an object for you, not another person.

Kulananda: So, if that is the case, we don't stand a chance of developing beyond that situation; so in order to begin to develop -

S: Yes, so you have to gradually come to the realisation that the other person, or what you perceive as a sort of object, is in fact another person. By inference you have to come to the conclusion, you have to empathise with the fact that just as behind your objectivity there is a subjectivity, so behind his objectivity - what appears to you as his objectivity - there is a subjectivity; that as you suffer, he suffers, and because you don't want to suffer you shouldn't cause him to suffer. That results in a feeling or experience of empathy. But that is very difficult to sustain or maintain, because you experience your own pleasures and pains much more intensely than you experience his. It is only with an effort of imagination that you can remind yourself that he experiences the same pleasures and pains just as intensely as you do. Otherwise, until you realise that, you will invariably give preference to yourself over him.

So that's why giving preference to another over yourself is almost a sort of supernatural act, it goes so far beyond the ordinary level of semi-animal, semi-human consciousness. So you can develop that sort of empathy only by dissociating yourself from your immediate experience, from your identification with your own physical body, and that involves the development of reflexive consciousness. In other words, a measure of alienation, in a sense, or what can become alienation if carried to an extreme.

Nagabodhi: Can it really effectively be done without Insight arising?

S: But then the question arises: 'What is Insight?' It cannot be really effectively done without Insight, but on the other hand you can't develop Insight until you have done it to some extent. You have to have this provisional, even though admittedly shifting, basis for the foundation of Insight. It's like the question of the *samatha* and *vipassana*. *Vipassana* arises, let us say, only in dependence on *samatha*, but *samatha* is something which is fleeting. It doesn't become stabilised to some extent unless you develop Insight. You have to take advantage of your admittedly fleeting state of *samatha* or *dhyana* to develop the Insight.

So here you have to take advantage of your relatively shaky self-consciousness to develop an even higher level of consciousness. But without that admittedly shaky self-consciousness, you'll never develop that higher level of consciousness, that actual insight.

So the Golden Rule is, indeed, one might say, a golden rule because without understanding this, without applying it, there is really no spiritual development, no human development at all. That development consists in one's ability to put oneself in the place of the other person, to effect that sort of transposition. Otherwise there is no ethical life possible. Why should you not inflict injury on other living beings? Why should you not take from them what they don't wish to give you - apart from fear of the police? Because you yourself would not like those things to be done to you, so you don't do it to other people. The Golden Rule has quite a considerable psychological and even existential significance.

Abhaya: So, looked at in that way, it's a sort of subtle extension of selfishness, very subtle -

S: Oh yes, oh yes; because you have to start from self. You can't negate that completely. You can refine it.

Abhaya: It can make ..... experience of suffering yourself and how unpleasant it is.

S: I mean, how can you even approach a realisation that the other person is suffering, assuming you're a highly developed spiritual being, except through the concept of suffering itself, which means suffering which you suffer? How can there be a suffering which you suffer apart from a you....

[End of tape 7 Tape 8]

..... apart from a self. So therefore 'You must know that a man's belief', or in our terms perhaps his spiritual life, 'is incomplete so long as he does not wish for his brother what he wishes for himself.' It's very difficult to do. Most of the time we're actually considering our own needs, our own pleasures, our own convenience. It's very rarely that we genuinely put ourselves out for another person or treat another person as we treat ourselves. 'The lowest degree in brotherhood is where you treat your brother as you would wish to be treated yourself, and there is no doubt that he would expect you to veil his shame and keep quiet about his misdeeds and faults.' You experience it as very unpleasant to be talked about and gossiped about and slandered so don't do it to other people, least of all to your brother.

'If shown the opposite of what he expected, he would be very annoyed and angry. How unworthy, then, if he were to expect what he himself would not conceive and intend. Woe to him then in the words of the Book of God (Exalted is He!), for He says: Woe to the givers of short measure, who exact in full when others measure out to them, but skimp in measuring or weighing out to others!' (Qur'an 83.1-3) All who demand fair treatment beyond what they themselves dispense come under the import of this Verse.' So the golden rule as it's called is really the basis of ethical and therefore of spiritual life. You cannot expect others to treat you in a way that you're not prepared to treat them, but this is what very often happens. We expect from others far more than we are prepared to give to them. I've talked about this before in other contexts. We are so demanding where others are concerned but so little demanding of ourselves. There can be no sort of even attenuation of what we may call, just for convenience, egotism, unless you can genuinely start treating another person as yourself or even preferring their interests to yours. you don't even get a glimpse of non ego until you have started doing that.

All right, next paragraph.

"The source of deficiency is veiling another's shame, and of striving to display it, is a hidden disease of the Inner, namely rancour and envy. For the rancorous and envious has his Inner full of dirt, but keeps it imprisoned in his Inner, conceals it and does not show it as long as he lacks a pretext. But when he finds an opportunity the restraint is released, the reserve is abandoned and the Inner sweats with its hidden dirt."

Kulananda: It's what we were talking about last night.

S: Yes, it's what I called this sort of quantum of negativity which is looking for an outlet. In this case the negativity takes the form of rancour

and envy.

_____: What's rancour exactly?

S: How would one define that? Rancour?

Subhuti: Resentment is quite good.

S: Resentment. A sense of grievance. Malice even.

Subhuti: Do you know much about this term the *Inner.*

S: I don't know what the original Arabic word is but it's distinguished by a capital letter. I have come across it in other texts. It seems to correspond say to the Heart with a capital 'H', the Chitta, the whole subjective side of life.

"Whenever the Inner is wrapped up with rancour and envy it is better to break off relations. Some wise men say that open blame is better than hidden rancour. The only thing to soften the rancorous is isolation. If a man carries in his heart a bad feeling towards another Muslim, then his belief is weak, his affair is risky, and his heart is dirty and unfit to meet God."

S: So 'Whenever the Inner is wrapped up with rancour and envy it is better to break off relations.', that is to say break off relations with a person of that type. Would one agree with this. It is difficult for such a person to be a friend, or such a person to be a brother, if his Inner is wrapped up, which is quite a strong term, with rancour and envy. Such a person can't be a brother to you so you're better really having nothing to do with him, breaking off relations with him, at least as a brother. Has anyone any experience of this sort of thing or this sort of person?

'Some wise men say that open blame is better than hidden rancour.' Would one agree with those wise men? At least if it's out in the open it can be dealt with.

Kulananda: Open blame is a way of releasing them.

S: Also it's a form of communication, however unsatisfactory, and 'the only thing to soften the rancorous is isolation'. How is this. Does one agree with this? Is a solitary retreat the solution. And why? How does it work.

Subhuti: You experience you on the .....

S: Yes perhaps you appreciate other people more so you are more inclined to think kindly of them.

Kuladeva: Also the projection which is involved in your inflicting your rancour on anybody in the first place is withdrawn and you just experience it subjectively.

S: Yes, you don't experience it as a projection or as identified with the other person. You just experience it in isolation by itself.

Kulananda: One does hear of rancorous solitary people. If one is keeping up a spiritual practice though it would be difficult but in other contexts it could just get worse.

S: Cantankerous solitary people. But when you go from a situation which you are having contact with other people to a situation in which you are not, then you are more easily able to see that your mental state was not due to them, that it was due to your own self, that it springs from within. It's part of your Inner, not part of the outer. I know some people have experienced this on solitary retreat in respect of other negative emotions. For instance anger and hatred. They continue to be angry even though there's nothing to make them angry. They then conclude that the anger is entirely subjective. It's waiting to latch itself onto some external situation.

'If a man carries in his heart a bad feeling towards another Muslim, then his belief is weak, his affair is risky', his affair I think means whether he'll go to heaven or to hell, 'and his heart is dirty and unfit to meet God.'

Ratnavira: In terms of brotherhood this is actually a quite extreme degeneration. Normally if you've got someone who's a quite close friend you can normally sort things out. It might be more difficult and it's actually suggesting here.

S: Well for instance in the case of marriage, there is an analogy to some extent between marriage and brotherhood, if you are married to a jealous wife or a jealous husband well the only solution may be divorce, because it's very very difficult to live with someone who is jealous or who is rancorous and envious and so on. All right, now for a story.

"Abd al-Rahman ibn Jubayr ibn Nafir reported that his father told him:
-When I was in the Yemen I had a Jewish neighbour who used to tell me about the Torah. This Jew came to me after a journey, and I said to him, 'God has sent a Prophet amongst us, who has summoned us to Islam, and we have submitted. He has also revealed to us a Book, which confirms the Torah.' The Jew said, 'You speak the truth, yet you cannot carry out what he has brought you. We find his description and that of his community in the Torah; he does not allow a man to cross the doorstep with hatred in his heart for his Muslim brother.'"

S: I think we'd better sort the import of this story out. [Pause] 'When I was in the Yemen', his father said, 'I had a Jewish neighbour who used to tell me about the Torah.' The Torah stands in relation to the Old Testament for Jews in much the same relation that Shastras stand to Sutras for Buddhists. Records of discussions by learned Rabbis on particular topics and often allegorical interpretations of texts of the Old Testament. 'This Jew came to me after a journey, and I said to him, 'God has sent a Prophet amongst us, who has summoned us to Islam, and we have submitted. He has also revealed to us a Book, which confirms the Torah.' In other words the Muslim is trying to convert his Jewish neighbour.

He's saying, well yes, Judaism is all right but Islam goes even further. 'The Jew said, 'You speak the truth, yet you cannot carry out what he has brought you. We find his description and that of his community in the Torah;', that is to say our Torah has predicted your Islam and what does it say? 'he does not allow a man to cross the doorstep with hatred in his heart for his Muslim brother.' In other words the Jew is very politely rejecting the Muslim's invitation to become a Muslim saying yes we know all about your Islam, it was predicted in our holy books, and what does it say - that a real Muslim attaches so much importance to not hating another Muslim that he doesn't allow a Muslim with hatred in his heart towards another Muslim even to cross his threshold, and by implication he's saying you Muslims are not able to carry that out, so what's the point of my becoming a Muslim, I'll remain as a Jew. So, in quoting this story, as I understand it, al-Ghazali is saying that it's because of the inability of Muslims to treat other Muslims as brothers that people are hindered actually from becoming Muslims, as that Jew was. Because he was able to say well look what you teach may go beyond what we teach but you are not able to practise it, so what is the point of our joining you. Do you see the point?

There are other stories like this I've come across in Muslim tradition, especially among the Sufis, where the thoughts of the Muslims themselves are shown as hindering people from becoming Muslims and that's clearly applicable to Buddhism too. The person, the woman who wrote to me, whose letter I mentioned, that I received this morning, told me that she - I don't know whether this is justified or not of course - but she said that she's been a bit put off the FWBO by the behaviour of some, she said, Order members around the LBC. She doesn't specify what kind of behaviour and she may be completely in the wrong, she may have misunderstood, but nonetheless the possibility is there that one does put people off the Dharma by not behaving in accordance with the Dharma. If you put them off the Dharma because you behave in accordance with the Dharma well that's another matter because they have been put off the Dharma by the Dharma itself, because they don't want to accept the Dharma, perhaps they had a wrong idea about the Dharma to begin with and you've disillusioned them by showing them what the Dharma really is like and in that way putting them off the Dharma because they weren't really into the Dharma to begin with anyway, didn't want anything of that sort. Perhaps they felt the Dharma taught egalitarianism and they discover it doesn't. [Pause]

_____: ..... the Torah?

S: Ah the Torah - the first five books of Moses. That's the Torah isn't it? That is to say the Old Testament excluding the prophets and books like the psalms and the book of Jobe and so on. The Pentitude(?) is the Torah. The Tamah(?) is the discussion of the different books of the Old Testament. The Torah is Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Kings? Anyway the first five books of Moses.

"Part of the matter is keeping quiet, and not divulging a brother's secret which he has entrusted to you. You should deny knowledge of it, even if this means lying, for to speak the truth is not encumbent in every circumstance. Just as it is permitted to a man to hide his own faults and secrets, even if he needs to lie, so may he do for his brother's sake. For his brother stands in his own shoes and the pair are like one person, different only in body. This is the true nature of brotherhood."

S: So several things arise here. That is to say 'it is permitted to a man to hide his own faults and secrets, even if he needs to lie'. So according to Islam it would seem lying is justifiable under some circumstances and so naturally the question arises what is the Buddhist view? The Buddhist view, well the Theravada view which would seem to be the Buddha's personal view, would be that lying is not permissible under any

circumstances, but the Mahayana rather modifies that in the case of the Bodhisattva, that the Bodhisattva might tell a lie for the benefit of others or to save life. But even the Mahayana does not say that lying is skilful. It still says lying is unskilful but a small unskilfulness they say must be balanced against a great skilfullness. So if you are in the unfortunate position of either having to tell a lie or being responsible for somebody's death, well then you should tell the lie. This would seem to suggest that there is such a thing as a hierarchy among the silas and that if one of them has to be sacrificed, if one of say two silas has to be sacrificed, the one which is of lesser importance should be sacrificed to the one that is of greater importance. This would be the Mahayana view, but the Theravada does not take that view. No doubt there's something to be said on both sides of the question.

Kulananda: But you will suffer the karma won't you? If you do tell a lie there will be karmic consequences and you'll have to accept those karmic consequences.

S: The Theravada would maintain that an Arahant for instance is incapable of telling a lie, that he would speak the truth whatever the consequences. Presumably, though this is not actually stated, I believe whatever the consequences for either himself or other people. In this respect he would treat others as he treated himself, even if his speaking the truth resulted in his own death, he would still speak the truth. Therefore presumably even if his speaking the truth resulted in the death of other people, he would still speak the truth. Though perhaps it might be said that he would remain silent. I think there are instances where an Arahant has remained silent under such circumstances. But supposing by remaining silent, you are responsible for people's deaths, whereas your speaking and telling a lie could save them. Is that morally justified? So is the Theravada conception of the nature of Arahantship correct, one might even ask that question.

Kulananda: It implies the Arahant doesn't have the choice, but surely.....

S: Well in a sense an Arahant doesn't have a choice between what is skilful and what is unskilful. The question is what is actually to be identified as skilful and what is actually to be identified as unskilful. Because if an Arahant has a choice in that sense it makes nonsense of the idea of irreversibility or Stream Entry.

Kuladeva: I always thought the precepts were just guidelines anyway, that they're not absolutes.

S: That's true, yes. Well that also can be rationalised as we know, but on the other hand, one has to think not just in terms of precepts taken separately but of one's total spiritual life. One has to think in terms of your total action as it were. Perhaps the key to the solution of the problem lies in that sort of area, in that sort of consideration. In other words there cannot be a sort of legalistic solution.

So 'just as it is permitted to a man to hide his own faults and secrets, even if he needs to lie, so may he do for his brother's sake.' Well one follows from the other, provided you grant the one. 'For his brother stands in his own shoes and the pair are like one person, different only in body. This is the true nature of brotherhood.' How literally can one take that, that there's in a sense literally one mind and only two bodies? One hears this sort of statement in romantic or pseudo-romantic contexts and one is a bit sceptical about it, but to what extent is it possible? What does one mean by one? Does one mean literally one? Does one mean metaphorically one? Can one actually feel what another person feels in

the same way that one feels what one does feel personally? If someone sticks a pin in you can even your best friend feel it in the way that you do yourself? It would be very very difficult. It wouldn't be the same pain because it isn't the same body, so can you even separate body from mind in that sort of way. So perhaps what is suggested is not so much an absolute unity or oneness but a sort of harmony and sympathy and even empathy and accord, which can be very very close. So that one might even speak, metaphorically, but admittedly metaphorically, in terms of their being one person and the difference being only in respect of body.

Nagabodhi: In Buddhist tradition you've got the idea of the mother's love for her child which is.... it's obviously not a physical oneness but it's beyond a mere empathy. I mean there is a definite feeling of the child being part of her.

S: Because originally the child was part of her.

Nagabodhi: Do you think that would be the kind of.....

S: I don't really think so because in the case of mother and child the child is part of the mother and the part is less than the whole. In the case of two friends there is a sort of equality on account of which one cannot be just one being a part of the other or even perhaps, except paradoxically, of their being parts of each other. It's more like each is the mirror image of the other, each is the other's whole self, not that one is a part of the other or even as I said each is a part of the other. There is a sort of mysterious - well empathy even is not the word - maybe harmony comes nearest to it or accord or concord. There are some instances in Buddhist literature of monks living in complete harmony. I came across a story the other day, I can't remember quite where it was. A group of monks who lived together in a sort of retreat. They were living in absolute harmony. The Buddha held them up as a model to other monks because there was no disagreement among them whatsoever.

Kulananda: There's a lovely story like that in Nanamoli's *Life of the Buddha*.

S: It may be the same story then. It isn't easy for people, even spiritually committed people, to live together without any disagreement or disharmony arising is very rare, but it does sometimes happen that that is the case.

Anyway we haven't got through this chapter even this morning but I think it doesn't matter because we are a third of the way through our days but we are well over a third of the way through our material. We are nearly half way through our material in fact, so we do have time in hand, and speech is apparently a very important topic. Even though we did diverge a bit this morning from the text, perhaps it doesn't really matter. Oh perhaps we aren't halfway through the text, the book rather. How far are we through the text?

Subhuti: We've done 21 pages out of 67, just under a third.

S: Anyway that's not too bad. We won't have any digressions. They are rather difficult to foresee and avoid. All right so much for today then.

[END OF SESSION - NEXT SESSION - DAY FOUR]

S: All right page 42. We're still on the section on Chapter Three which deals with the third duty which concerns the tongue.

"Furthermore, in what one does in one's brother's presence one should not by hypocritical, nor abandon one's private for one's public behaviour. For your brother's knowledge of what you do is like your own knowledge of it without distinction."

S: You notice there is a distinction made here between one's private and one's public behaviour, and the assumption would seem to be, on the part of the text, that there is a certain kind of behaviour which is appropriate for public occasions and a certain kind of behaviour which is appropriate in private, and that in private you should not behave in the manner which is appropriate for public occasions. So does one grant this assumption to begin with?

So what exactly does one mean by, so to speak, public behaviour as distinct from private behaviour, and what does the difference exactly consist of? What degree of difference even is acceptable between the two? Can you think of any examples?

Well first of all what do you think is meant by public behaviour? What does 'public' mean here?

Devaraja: Maybe wheeling and dealing in the market place.

S: Or walking in the streets or in a public assembly.

Prasannasiddhi: Outside one's own home.

Subhuti: Outside one's immediate circle of acquaintances and friends.

S: In what way would one's behaviour differ or should it differ?

_____: Perhaps more formal.

S: Yes, though of course one could ask again why is more formal behaviour appropriate on a more public occasion? What does one mean by formal behaviour anyway?

Vajrananda: Is there some sort of universally accepted guideline for addressing someone?

S: I don't think that quite covers it because there could be universally accepted modes of behaviour in private too. I think public behaviour implies a degree of distance. You shouldn't really ..... that all people are equally close to you, so public behaviour would be formal behaviour in the sense of acknowledged familiarity. For instance if you just meet someone whom you know very casually, very slightly, you don't slap him

on the back in the same way that you would slap a close friend on the back, because that kind of behaviour presupposes a degree of intimacy which does not in fact exist.

In public perhaps to some extent you need to be on your guard, you need to protect your interests. You cannot be completely open, you cannot be familiar for instance - it might give offence, whereas you know in the case of your friend, familiarity far from giving offence will be very acceptable behaviour. Perhaps this sort of distinction is possibly all the more relevant in a traditional type of society where law and order were not very strongly enforced and you had to be a bit on your guard and be careful how you spoke to people and so on and so forth, but it still, no doubt, applies to a great extent.

Vajrananda: Is this necessarily wrong that one should be not familiar with people whom you would be familiar with in public?

S: I don't think the text implies that, but nonetheless I think that is a point. For instance you may be very familiar with a friend in private but it may not be appropriate to be familiar with him in public, especially in front of people who respect him because they may misunderstand your familiarity; they may not interpret it in terms of friendship, but simply in terms of lack of respect and lack of consideration. For instance, to think of another kind of relationship between people for instance in terms of marriage, in India it is considered in traditional society most inappropriate that you should treat your wife in a familiar manner or even speak to her familiarly in public. That is appropriate of course in the privacy of your own room but not appropriate outside, certainly not in front of elders or those whom you respect.

Vajrananda: I've always felt sometimes conflicts like that, that you're with someone whom you know very well but you don't always feel it's suitable to behave in that sort of way in that formal situation.

S: But there shouldn't be really a conflict if the two friends understand the situation completely. They don't think there's any sort of lack of friendliness, they understand that it's a public situation, that sort of behaviour is not appropriate. They both accept that, and it would only be a matter of regret if they never were able to get together just by themselves and therefore always were having to behave in the manner appropriate to the public situation. Just as in India in traditional Indian societies husbands and wives absolutely accept that it would be most inappropriate, not to say indecent, to speak to each other in a certain way in front of other people, and as for touching each other in front of other people, that would be regarded as really downright indecent, except in very westernised circles.

As for the husband fooling around with the wife in front of other people, it would be considered mutually degrading. That is their view.

Vajrananda: There was quite a reaction to that in the West, a sort of Victorian.....

S: I don't know whether you can put it down entirely to the Victorians and our reaction against them. After more than a century has gone by since the heyday of the Victorian era. You could go back probably to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, that's less than a century isn't it. By that time the tide had started turning. Three or four generations have gone by since then while we are still reacting against the Victorians!

Vajrananda: I was thinking of a Victorian type of attitude rather than the actual Victorians themselves.

S: I did suggest on a seminar not so long ago that perhaps we have to get used to the idea that the Victorians were not absolutely wrong in every respect, and also that there were Victorians and Victorians, and it's been doubted now for some time whether Queen Victoria was a Victorian. Victorianism seems to in fact owe much more to Albert than Victoria. For instance twice recently I've come across a quotation from the Duke of Wellington who said, speaking about the need for moral character in public life, he said that Prince Albert is very particular about people's moral character, as for the Queen she doesn't care a straw! And the Queen has given a name to Victorianism but apparently she didn't, not before she came under Albert's tutelage anyway. She was after all a Hanoverian, she wasn't a Victorian. She was brought up during the Regency period.

So I think the anti-Victorianism has been rather overdone. I think we have to view the Victorians quite objectively, and if there was a positive quality that they, or at least some of them had, you should not be afraid to adopt it or even imitate it just because it happened to be current in the Victorian Era.

Kulananda: Their attitude to masculine friendships was very very healthy.

S: It was in a way healthy though one must recognise also that it was sometimes very ignorant. Very often they didn't realise what was going on in the sense of not take into account all the psychological and even biological factors involved. [Pause]

[End of side one side two]

There were some very ardent masculine friendships in the Victorian period but the parties concerned were convinced or would have been convinced if you'd asked them that they were completely Platonic. They would be horrified at the suggestion that there was any sort of physical element there, but clearly we can see that it was there. They were quite ignorant of that. Perhaps it's just as well that they were. Otherwise they might have shied away from the friendship itself. This led to one or two quite strange instances, like for instance of Cardinal Newman as he afterwards became - he had a very strong capacity for passionate friendships. It's as though at one stage in his career when he was quite young he did have a glimpse of what might be involved and recoiled from it very very violently. He could hardly mention it except in very veiled and indirect tones. He said he'd had a glimpse of Hell, but that glimpse was immediately covered over.

Maybe I haven't quoted him quite so specifically(?). I think he said that he sensed that Hell was near. But anyway perhaps the Victorians did realise and perhaps they carried to extremes, that a certain mode of behaviour was appropriate in public. You didn't behave in public in the same way that you behaved in private. On the other hand you mustn't let the two drift too far apart. Perhaps they tended to do that in some instances.

Prasannasiddhi: Maybe it's not even right to say that the Victorians were bad. We definitely seem to have changed patterns of behaviour since Victorian times, but when you consider there have been two world wars, maybe in some respects the whole Victorian system was just broken down so that maybe in a way they had to start again. Maybe quite a lot of the Victorian level of culture which had developed might have been quite reasonable.

Vajrananda: (unclear) ..... You say you shouldn't drift apart. Is that because it's a natural thing.....

S: No, what I'm saying is that if your public behaviour differs too much from your private behaviour, well you differ in a way from yourself too much. A sort of split develops in you. This did in certain respects happen in the Victorian period because owing to the strong or the strict moral demands in matters say of sexual morality, a man could be in public an upholder of the moral order, a faithful husband etc., etc., but in his private life he could be a frequenter of the London brothels. You see what I mean? His private behaviour was totally at variance with his public behaviour, so if there is that sort of inconsistency, not just between manners but even between morality - there's a public morality and a private morality - well then that sort of split cannot have a healthy effect on you psychologically.

Vajrananda: What I was thinking of was if the split is like a natural one and one is sensitive to the situation you're in and so on then it can't be too far.....

S: Well ultimately it must be based on that sort of sensitivity, not on rules that you practise regardless.

Ratnavira: Your public behaviour shouldn't be a sort of living out an image or pretending to be something that you're not.

S: No, it should be based on your realistic perception of the situation, on your perception of the fact that you aren't on really friendly terms with everybody. That everybody isn't equally in your confidence, that you can't relax to the same degree with everybody. But do you think this is ever superseded by say a highly spiritual person? Is it not in a sense possible to behave in the same way in public and in private with everybody? Is there a sense in which that is true?

Subhuti: Presumably inwardly it can be true.

S: Well no, that's another matter. I was speaking about outwardly. For instance in terms of the Buddha did the Buddha have a public behaviour and a private behaviour, or Milarepa?

Kulananda: Isn't it a question of communication. There are some people with whom you can communicate quite easily, other people require different forums. You can't cross one with the other, but that shouldn't change the person's personal demeanour as it were or his own personal feeling of equanimity of relaxation and so on. Just that he'll have to communicate more generally or more specifically depending on whom he's with.

Devaraja: And also perhaps tying in with the areas of your different types of relationships, for instance you wouldn't behave towards an employee in the same way that you would behave towards your father or best friend.

S: Well, yes and no. I think one has to be quite careful here. Yes, one can be polite, yes one can be considerate, respectful, but perhaps in the

case of your father, that had all been formed by the degree of affection that wasn't there in the case of the employee. What about your practise of mettā? Supposing you do normally practise mettā bhāvanā, well perhaps you could or would speak to your employee in the same way that you speak to your father, at least as regards outward expressions. It's conceivable I suppose.

Vajrananda: Presumably though if you meet people for the first time, there has to be of that to start with(?)

Kuladeva: But surely it has to do with the degree of familiarity which you have with somebody.

S: Of course it also raises the question of what exactly one means by familiarity. Because for instance if you read the life of the Buddha, at least as it's come down to us, episodes in the Pali Canon, one gets the impression that the Buddha was never familiar. One might say it's not appropriate for the Buddha to be familiar with anybody except with another Buddha and there just isn't one around.

Abhaya: But we don't know much about his private life.

S: He seems not to have had any. He seems to have been available practically all the time.

Abhaya: No, take for example his relationship with Ananda. A lot of the time the two of them were alone. Maybe under those circumstances he behaved in a more familiar way.

S: But what would one mean by a more familiar - yes Ananda for instance washed the Buddha's robe, others didn't wash the Buddha's robe.

Abhaya: Maybe they embraced sometimes, put their arms round each other.

S: There's no record of that, but it's not impossible.

Subhuti: For instance you get incidents where the Buddha's talking to somebody and that person goes away and then the Buddha comments to the monks on what he considers to have been happening. He presumably felt he couldn't have done that in the first instance. Different levels of communication are possible with different people. Isn't that in a way the whole essence of the thing, that with a public situation only a certain kind of communication is possible. You don't try to carry on some intimate, intense or deep communication.

S: One could say perhaps that one's behaviour, even one's demeanour, is a part of one's communication. For instance you don't slap a mere acquaintance on the back, because normally in society physical contact is regarded as an expression of, so to speak, psychological intimacy, and if that intimacy isn't there then the corresponding overt behaviour is not appropriate.

Kulananda: Presumably it's a matter of language.

S: Well yes, a matter of communication, and sensitivity to the other person and the nature of your relationship with him. Then you know the appropriate language to use.

Subhuti: If you take even the example of communication on this retreat, if you're talking to somebody, you go for a walk with someone, there's a certain kind of communication that can take place and if you're sitting down at the meal table it's not appropriate for you to continue to talk in that same sort of way because you've got to take into account everybody else there, so in a way even in this situation you've got a sort of private life.

S: I noticed that some people who move in the circles in which we move so to speak, have a tendency to assume a familiarity where familiarity doesn't exist. I sometimes wonder why they do this. I think it's to cover up perhaps embarrassment or nervousness. They assume something that isn't there. Anyway al-Ghazali himself does make, does recognise this distinction between public behaviour and private behaviour, and he is making the point which perhaps can be clearer now in the light of our discussion, that 'in one's brother's presence one should not be hypocritical, nor abandon one's private for one's public behaviour' because if you don't behave towards your brother in, so to speak, a private manner, well you are treating him just like any other person. Just like an ordinary member of the public. This is quite clear I think.

'For your brother's knowledge of what you do is like your own knowledge of it, without distinction.' In other words inasmuch as your brother is, so to speak, you - that was stated in the previous paragraph - *'For his brother stands in his own shoes and the pair are like one person'* - you should no more hide anything from your brother than you should hide it from yourself. You can in fact no more hide it from your brother than you can from yourself, so public behaviour in the case of your brother, in the presence of your brother, is quite inappropriate. It means treating your brother as not your brother because you're treating your brother as not yourself. That is rather labouring the point. I think it's sufficiently clear.

Vajrananda: It seems like you're giving it some sort of habit of cutting off intimacy at some point and being rather formal if you don't want to go into a certain area, because in the formal situation one isn't obliged to talk in those ways.

Subhuti: I get a suspicion that al-Ghazali's actually implying that there's a sort of bit of a public act. It does seem to be the strength of the way in which it's expressed, as if he almost expects public behaviour to be a little bit hypocritical. You shouldn't be hypocritical with your brother. That's not what we've talked about.

Kulananda: It's a vein running through the whole text, the sense of one particular appropriate behaviour which somehow is allowed to differ from reality and is expected to differ from reality.

Vajrananda: ..... sort of positive sort of hypocritical condition.

S: You're not expected it would seem apparently to expose all your faults and feelings in public, that might be dangerous, but not in the presence of your brother.

Kulananda: I think the split shows a strong sense of that, the need to be continually diplomatic. It's as if one gets the impression of social intercourse is a matter of diplomacy. A matter of tact.

Kuladeva: But surely when you are communicating in public with people that you don't know very well, especially outside the movement, you're not going to tell them everything. You sort of.....

S: It's a question of communication because you can't tell them everything. You could use the same words that you'd use say among your friends, but that other person would not take them in the same way, so therefore that would not be a communication.

But I think al-Ghazali may be also thinking of something relatively simple because one does notice this in the East. For instance that in public you should always sit up, you should never lean back or relax, whereas in front of your friends you can do all those things. But in public your behaviour should be, as it were, dignified, but you don't need to maintain that sort of dignity in private. Just as, certainly in the old days, if you went out, you'd never go out if you were a gentleman without a hat and coat or gloves, but in private you can just relax in a dressing gown. You wouldn't dream of going out in your dressing gown, even going to the door in your dressing gown. Maybe al-Ghazali has those sort of things also in mind. They're important in traditional society.

Vajrananda: There would be quite a sort of reaction to that. What is the point behind that? I mean is there a positive point behind being dignified in public?

S: Well one can look into that but that is the traditional view. For instance it's very much the Tibetan view. I'll give you an example of that. In Kalimpong western visitors often used to like to take photographs of Tibetans because they are colourful, but the Tibetans just could not understand why these westerners always wanted to take informal pictures. If they happened to catch the Tibetans in a state of semi-undress, you know, their hair down or in their old shirt, they wanted to take their snap immediately to just have an informal picture. The Tibetans couldn't understand this, because if they wanted their picture taken or someone expressed a wish to take their picture, their idea was to get into their best clothes, dress themselves up really well and pose themselves really formally with a carpet in front of them and vases of chrysanthemums on either side - that was their idea of a photograph, and they couldn't understand how these westerners wanted apparently to mock them and degrade them by taking pictures of them in, as it were, relative undress, because the photograph would be as it were in front of the public. Everybody would see that, not just a few friends. Do you see the line of thought?

Devaraja: It raises very interesting topics. It's almost like they become a kind of an icon. It relates to their whole approach to things like religious art and the transition maybe in the West between the sort of more iconic kind of.....

S: You notice in magazine articles on various personalities, they want to get them in an informal pose, that is to say with a banana in their mouth or falling over a chair or something like that, [Laughter] not as it were nicely posed. So it's taken for granted that the informal picture is the real picture. It shows the real person, but I think that can all be questioned. We have certain assumptions here which we've never questioned. Do

you see what I mean?

Kulananda: Inasmuch as what is formal is an aspect that someone actually wishes to present, therefore that represents something about their own desires just as much as an informal picture, but I don't see how one is necessarily preferable to the other in terms of representing the person.

S: The point I think that al-Ghazali is making that most traditional societies make is that one kind of behaviour or appearance is appropriate in public and another in private, and what is appropriate in public is not necessarily appropriate in private, and what is appropriate in private is certainly not appropriate in public. We've tended to blur or want to blur that line of distinction.

Kulananda: But we live in a much safer society. Men in the time Ghazali's living in obviously have to be wary of other men in quite a serious sort of way. They had to present themselves very carefully. Those constraints don't apply to the same extent in other societies.

S: But was it due merely to that or was it also, as has been suggested, a question of communication and language.

Kulananda: I'm trying to find in some ways an excuse for his desire for diplomacy to the same extent because I don't think it is simply a matter of communication and language. I don't think what's coming out in the text is that a man should communicate himself more accurately in public and seek to do so. I think it's a man must actually put on a front. That does seem to be the point being made.

S: I wonder whether al-Ghazali would have recognised the concept of putting on a front in our sense. In other words for him, as it were, hypocrisy was hardly hypocrisy, it was just an appropriate mode of behaviour.

Kulananda: Why it is considered appropriate in fact does not necessarily represent the man.

S: Perhaps we tend to assume that how you are in private represents you more adequately and fully than how you are in public.

Vajrananda: Is it possible that this getting dressed and speaking in a formal way is something to do with one's own ideal of what one should be like and that there's some sort of conformity of ideal.

S: For instance I've notice once or twice say down at Sukhavati, on some particular occasion there's been maybe a special meal, and people have dressed up, so in a way it's being more formal but one doesn't feel that they're really being less themselves. Perhaps it's another aspect of themselves that is finding expression.

Kuladeva: It seems that there has been a reaction to formality in the west and that the baby's been thrown out with the bathwater.

S: It seems to me that perhaps there's been a reaction against public life in favour of more and more as it were private life. Do you see what I mean? That people have withdrawn, especially more idealistic or even maybe more sensitive people, have withdrawn from public life,

withdrawn from the sort of public stage into private life, and that therefore perhaps have lost their sense or their appreciation not only of public life but of public behaviour.

Kulananda: I still think there's a distinction between public behaviour and hypocritical behaviour.

S: Well I think if there is a difference it can only lie, in the case of hypocritical behaviour, you are deliberately deceiving people for the sake of some illegitimate advantage.

Kulananda: How about in order to appear as you in fact are not, for example.....

S: Well that would be perhaps an illegitimate advantage because if you are basically dishonest and you try to appear honest, well that is for the sake of cheating people, so that would be hypocrisy. Or if you put on an air of virtue and righteousness in order to win people's confidence so that you can exploit them, well that is hypocrisy. But if for instance you pretend to be perhaps wealthier than you actually are simply so that people will not take advantage of your relative property well that perhaps is legitimate self protection.

Nagabodhi: Can I just go back to that point you were making about there being a reaction against public life in favour of private life, I am not quite sure what terms you are talking of.

S: Well I find an example of it in the withdrawal of many people say from politics or participation in public affairs, especially as I've said some people who are more idealistic and more sensitive, for instance many people in the FWBO. So therefore since you're not functioning in public you've less appreciation perhaps of the kind of behaviour that is appropriate in public or in a public situation. Perhaps in the case of public life and public behaviour there has to be a sort of well common set of procedures based on common values, but if those common values don't exist, well it's difficult for the common procedures to exist. I think nowadays people tend to withdraw into private life in the sense of also withdrawing into different values, and therefore that common basis which formerly existed for or in a public life doesn't exist to the same extent.

The other point that I was going to make was that I noticed for instance when we had the last National Order Weekend and Gunavajra was in the chair so to speak, did you not notice that he knew how to be a chairman I think probably better than anybody else who has chaired an Order Weekend, and why was that? - because he is involved in public affairs i.e. in the Trades Union movement, so he knows how to behave in that sort of situation, which many of our friends don't. They know how to behave when there are half a dozen people gathered around chatting and eating, but when there's a large meeting which therefore has to be a relatively formal meeting, and therefore have its proceedings conducted in a relatively formal manner, they just don't know what behaviour is appropriate and what the appropriate procedure is. He knew thoroughly you see, so everything went much more smoothly and everybody seemed to have more confidence in the chair than perhaps they often do have.

Kulananda: There was a mention of the fragmentation of our society.

S: Yes, I think the fragmentation and the privatisation of life are connected. For instance if you take the case of, another example from my

personal knowledge, say Christmas Humphreys, he was a judge, he was a recorder, he belonged to one of these city companies, livery companies and all the rest of it, so in that sort of public situation he would have to behave on some occasions in a manner which some Buddhists would regard as inconsistent with Buddhist principles. For instance supposing you are involved in a particular situation or particular occasion where royalty is present, well a certain kind of behaviour is expected of you on that occasion. Some Buddhists might think that that was inappropriate for a Buddhist. There is no longer as it were an agreed sort of standard of public behaviour because we don't have agreed values. I think this is one of the things that makes people awkward say greeting new arrivals at Centres and things of this sort. There is a relative lack of an agreed sort of standard of public behaviour. People would like to be able to carry their private behaviour over into public life but they don't quite have the confidence to do that - maybe they sense it wouldn't be quite appropriate but on the other hand there's no sort of common standard, at least not so far as they're concerned, to fall back on.

For instance some people feel if you greeted someone politely and shook him by the hand, you were behaving in a slightly middle class way and they wouldn't want to behave in that way. Well how do you behave because they sense you can't really go up to them and slap him on the back and say, 'hello Joe, glad to see you' sort of thing, and if they're at all sensitive they feel that that wouldn't be appropriate, so they don't do anything, they just stand there feeling uncomfortable - the visitor perhaps stands there feeling uncomfortable - and not much happens until some more resourceful person comes along.

Subhuti: Quite often they feel quite embarrassed by formal behaviour. If you do greet them and shake them by the hand they sort of giggle slightly awkwardly.

S: Why do you think that is?

Subhuti: They don't know quite how to behave and they feel silly.

S: Yes, they haven't been taught perhaps, yes. Like for instance if someone has a smattering of a particular language, you address them in that language and they feel awkward because they don't really know how to reply properly. They've just got some idea of what you said and some idea of what they should say in reply but they don't know it really well enough so they feel embarrassed. Again perhaps it is a question of language, they don't know the appropriate language. They don't know the countersigns. It's like you would go up to someone that you thought was a mason and you gave him the secret sign and he realised something was going on and that he should have given some sort of response but he didn't know what it was and he'd feel embarrassed and you'd feel you'd made a mistake and you are embarrassed too.

Vajrananda: I can only think in my experience of when I was a kid and someone would come up to me and do all these things like shaking hands and so on, I tended to feel more comfortable in that situation than had they not done anything. Because at least in whatever way they've actually expressed something and you know where you stand with them. I tend to think it's probably best to do that even though you know they'll feel completely embarrassed so it doesn't matter what you do.

S: At least some contact has been established. Perhaps the main point that emerges is that one must be sensitive to the situation and behave

accordingly and not just go sort of blundering into one situation with a mode of behaviour which is appropriate to another. I must say perhaps I've become especially sensitive to this myself having operated in India as well as in the West. Anyway let's pass on.

"The Prophet (May God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
-If a man veils his brother's shame, God will veil him in this world and the Other."

S: This is just to emphasise the point that one should veil a brother's shame, not expose it. That was dealt with yesterday wasn't it. Not expose another person's defects to the world, especially not your own brother's. If there is something to be pointed out to him do it privately, do it discretely, do it skilfully.

"Or in another report:
-...it is as if he restores life to a baby girl buried alive."

S: There's a note here - *'This is a reference to the pagan Arab custom of disposing of unwanted female offspring.'* What is the connection here? 'It is as if he restores life to a baby girl buried alive'? What is?

Nagabodhi: Could it be revealing aspects of himself that he might not comfortable about? Allowing the friend to see everything about him including the unwanted aspects.

S: It could be looked at in that way.

Kulananda: I thought it was that the restoring to life of a baby girl could be considered meritorious, just as veiling one's brother's shame is considered meritorious.

S: Yes.

Vajrananda: It is as important as that.

S: Yes, one could say that, yes.

Subhuti: It's an act of great kindness and mercy.

S: Yes. All right let's pass onto the next.

"He (God bless him and give him Peace!) also said:
-If a man gives information, then looks about him, it is a confidence."

S: In other words not to be repeated. It's private. So what is being said here is it's a question of sensitivity. It is not necessary that somebody tells, 'well look this is private, don't repeat it', you should be able to know that from the way in which he tells you. If he tells you something and then looks around like this [Laughter] well you are to take it as confidential because clearly he doesn't want other people to know. You shouldn't merely say afterwards, when you have revealed his secret, 'well you didn't tell me that it was confidential', you should have been able to infer that from the very way in which he told you. His gestures were also part of his language, part of his communication.

Nagabodhi: There's somebody I know who will repeat absolutely anything that you tell him unless you simply say 'this is not to be repeated'. He'll infallibly pass on anything you reveal if you forget to say it. You can absolutely rely on him.

S: Would you say that he was in fact insensitive or did he just have honesty and openness as a principle?

Nagabodhi: Oh I think honesty and openness as a principle. You had to be very on the ball because [Laughter] if you forget you can trust him to tell everyone. If you tell him not to pass it on you can absolutely trust him not to.

S: All right, what's next.

"And:
-All sessions are confidential bar three: that in which blood is shed unlawfully, that in which unlawful sexual intercourse takes place, and that in which property is unlawfully used."

S: In other words confidence even between friends cannot be considered absolute. 'All sessions are confidential bar three: that in which blood is shed unlawfully'. Well you are not permitted so to speak to remain silent about that. You can't say, 'oh that was a private matter'. The Nepalese, strange to say, have that view. I remember talking about this with some of my Nepalese friends and they regarded, certainly older men, regarded an affray, a stabbing or even a murder as a private affair, and some of the older men used to get quite indignant that the police thought it their business to interfere. I even heard one of them say, 'well what do the police want to come along for when I stabbed that chap, it was a private affair'. It was just between you and the other chap. That is the old fashioned notion. 'What have the police got to do with it?' But of course that is not the view here. Where the shedding of blood is concerned, where it's a question of unlawful sexual intercourse or where property is unlawfully used, where it's misappropriated or even stolen, you cannot keep quiet about such matters on the grounds of confidentiality and friendship.

Vajrananda: Do you think there's a sort of principle behind that?

Kulananda: I think it might be based on the fact that Islam is more of a social than a spiritual religion. It's more in accord with the society that those facts emerge than it is that they don't.

S: Well also there is the fact that society has an ethical basis and you cannot allow that ethical basis to be undermined in private on the grounds that what happens in private is a private affair. For instance supposing someone is killed in private, you would say in private, in front of a friend you had killed some third party, well that cannot be regarded as a private affair because that man is a member of the public community, he has his friends, he has his relations. So therefore your killing him goes beyond being a private affair. It affects people outside, it affects society at large. So it cannot be regarded as a private affair, the killing cannot be hushed up, you cannot maintain confidentiality with regard to it.

Kulananda: I think at that point your friend's got a conflict between your interests and the interests of society at large and I don't think it's necessarily a clear cut conflict.

S: Well according to al-Ghazali confidentiality is confidentiality and all sessions are confidential bar three. Here the ethical principles involved are so weighty both for the individual and society that those principles must override any considerations of private friendship. You could even argue, as Aristotle does, that there cannot be genuine friendship between people who are partners in crime. Here you would be partners in crime. In other words partners in unethical behaviour. You may consider that something was legally a crime but which in fact was not morally wrong, so you might then say that there could be confidentiality with regard to such matters.

Indirectly at least your friendship itself is based upon moral principles which are common to the whole community. So in a way if you don't observe or respect those principles you are undermining the foundations of your own friendship.

Nagabodhi: Is there any similar principle in Catholicism with regard to the confessional or is the confessor vowed to secrecy no matter what.

S: I believe, I may be open to correction here but I believe the confessional is absolutely confidential. But I believe that if the priest is given notice in confession that somebody is going to commit a crime, the priest of course is supposed to dissuade the person making the confession, but I believe that he is also permitted to warn the intended victim. But sometimes there has been a conflict between the priest in the confessional and the priest as a citizen, for instance in Northern Ireland. If someone, a member of the IRA, confesses that he's thrown a bomb and killed so many people, I believe the priest is not, according to Canon law, not obliged to pass on that information to the police, but I won't be absolutely sure of that. There may be all sort of exceptional qualifications.

Kulananda: The thing is that members of the IRA are liable to be excommunicated. I'm not sure how that would fit in with that.

[End of tape 8, tape 9]

S: Liable, as distinct from necessarily .....

Kuladeva: I'm not sure.

S: But clearly there is a conflict sometimes between the priest's duty to the church, or the canon law, and the priest's duty to civil society.

Vajrananda: You could presumably get a position in a law court or something where, although there's something that's not lawful, you considered it confidential because you didn't feel it was morally wrong, so you may be in a position of having -

S: Well, this is what I mentioned a few minutes ago - that you may feel that criminality in the legal sense does not necessarily correspond with criminality in the moral sense; that something may be prohibited by law which you do not regard as unethical.

Vajrananda: But then you can fall foul of your affirming, where you have to tell the whole truth in a law court.

S: Well, yes, you would; but then presumably you would have to be quite clear about that, either at the time of making the affirmation or when it came to the point and you realised that you were not going to be able to give the required information, and say, 'Notwithstanding the fact that I have affirmed, I am unable to give further information inasmuch as it would lead possibly to the conviction of someone for an offence which I do not regard as morally being an offence.' And then you would be open to proceedings for contempt of court and possibly for perjury. So you would have to make your choice.

But you are not in an easy position; in a way your idea of what is right is in conflict with the general ideas of society as to what is right, as embodied in law.

Abhaya: Do you by law have to make that affirmation or couldn't you make your own sort of special affirmation?

S: I believe you have to make an affirmation in set form, corresponding to the form in which you take the oath.

Abhaya: If you knew what was going to happen, surely at that stage you'd have to -

S: I think - I'm not sure of this, because it's a legal point - but I think if you were required to take the oath or to affirm, and refused to do so you might be open to proceedings for contempt of court, but I'm not sure of that.

Kulananda: Why in the first place should one go along with a state of affairs in which one perceives the legal situation to be at odds with the moral situation? So, in other words, why should you go along with the laws of the court in the first place? Why not -

S: Well, there's no moral reason why you should, but then, as a matter of fact, you will have to suffer the legal consequences because, whether you like it or not, you are under the power of the [law of the] land.

Kulananda: ..... go there and lie.

Subhuti: Haven't you also got to accept the responsibility for your action in going against the law of the land and the institutions of law and

order? You're undermining those institutions.

S: You may consider that that is a more serious matter - that, at the present juncture, even though you may disagree about that particular law, disagree about its morality, the interests of law and order are so vital that you should not undermine them at this stage in any way.

Vajrananda: Presumably it depends on how desperate the law case is.

Kulananda: I think there's a difference between law and order as it applies - this is dicey ground - to society at large and law and order, how it necessarily applies to oneself. You might recognise that law and order is a great advantage to society at large and still not be prepared to be bound by that as an individual.

S: Well, law and order cannot but be an advantage to you as an individual because you live under the protection of that system.

Kulananda: Yes, so one might accept its protection without necessarily going along with all its tenets.

Subhuti: But if you don't go along with its tenets you begin to undermine its substance.

Kulananda: Indeed, but in such an insignificant way, I think, as to be hardly worth the .....

S: Well, it depends upon the general juncture of civilisation, you know, whether the trend is towards more law and order or towards less. And also the relative importance of the particular matter that you're concerned with, or involved with.

Kulananda: So there's much to be weighed up in each specific case.

S: But I think one has to be very careful about lying, because from a Buddhist point of view to lie in court is the most serious form of lying. This is mentioned again and again in the Pali texts, and the example is given of the really heinous sort of lie, that someone is summoned to court and questioned and he tells a lie, either affirming that something happened which did not happen or denying that something happened which did happen. Because this undermines the whole basis of human communication, it undermines the whole basis of society; if there cannot be mutual trust and mutual belief, if one's word is not one's bond - if international treaties, for instance, are in fact scraps of paper - it undermines the whole basis of civilised life. So therefore Buddhism seems to attach, traditionally, considerable importance to speaking the truth, not only in general but <u>especially</u> in a court of law. I know one consideration can be weighed against another: suppose someone's <u>life</u> is at stake - you might think that under those circumstances to tell a lie is a less serious matter than to be responsible for somebody's death.

Kulananda: I think it's also a more serious matter in an intact society, and a less serious matter in the fragmented one we're living in, where one has much less human relationship to a court of law, it's part of a vast bureaucratic inhuman machine.

S: No, it's not just part of a bureaucratic machine, it's part of society - that is to say, part of the lives of all other people in the state.

Nagabodhi: But what if the state is clearly a corrupt one?

S: Well in that case, as I've said, you are in a very unfortunate position indeed; you're in a state actually of outlawry. You're almost like a member of a foreign state because you are in a state of hostility. This is for instance how IRA people regard themselves, as being in this sort of position. You are in a state of war with your own state, regardless of the fact that legally or in their eyes you belong to it. I think that is a very very difficult position to be in; I think one should hesitate - be very, very careful - before coming to the conclusion that that is in fact the situation in which you are, because in effect you deprive yourself of a community.

Nagabodhi: But if in relation to the group the individual is always right and in relation to the individual the group is always wrong -

S: Well, at least, that is true if the individual is actually an Individual; and if the interests of the two clash - But it must be the Individual and not just individualism.

Kulananda: But I think to the extent to which one genuinely aspires to be individual, to that extent, in effect, one aspires to a form of altruism, in a very psychological way.

S: No, because an individual, as part of or as an aspect of his own development, wants to improve and work upon society, too, so that it becomes easier for him and others to be individuals within society. So I think that one would be not well advised to adopt an attitude of premature hostility towards society or hostility over issues where hostility isn't called for. There can be selective hostility but, so far as possible, that hostility should find expression through, as it were, the recognised channels, that is to say legal agitation and all that sort of thing. I think one should be very careful not to place oneself, if it can possibly be avoided, in a position of open conflict with society, because society is stronger than you are, and it is in a position to crush you, and therefore to crush whatever of a more positive nature you are trying to do.

Kulananda: I've always thought of our outlawry as being of a highly subtle kind, which needs to be maintained covertly.

S: For instance E. M. Forster is celebrated for that remark of his that '*If it was a choice between betraying my friend and betraying my country, I hope I would have the guts to betray my country*'. But I think this illustrates the extreme of withdrawal into private life, the extreme of privatisation that I was speaking about. I think probably the statement is nonsense.

Abhaya: You say ideally it's nonsense, but in practice surely it isn't nonsense.

S: Well, for instance, when you speak of betraying your country, there isn't an abstract entity called country which you betray: you betray other people. In other words, for the sake of one friend you are betraying millions, perhaps, of other people, among whom are other relatively close friends of yours, presumably. It's not that you've got just this one friend and absolutely everybody else is your enemy. So can you speak in this

glib fashion of betraying your country rather than betraying your friend?

Kulananda: But it washes both ways: what he's possibly talking about is betraying one national interest to another national interest. Now in that sense millions of people will benefit if one national interest wins, people lose out if -

S: No, I don't think, from the very nature of his thought, he was balancing one national interest against another. He was balancing private values against public values, the individual friend against what he regarded as the country. So therefore I say that that is a sort of unreal abstraction, and in a sense he was talking nonsense, because you don't just betray a country, in the sense of some bureaucratic entity, you betray other people. You may have a conflict whether to betray these people or to betray those people, but it isn't a sort of noble choice of human values as against impersonal values. No, it's balancing the needs of one set of people against another set, or of a number of people who are not your friends against the interest of someone who happens to be your friend. One even could say that that is very individualistic, not to say egoistic, that you betray thousands of people just because they're not your friends. Usually Forster's statement is quoted with admiration, but personally I think it can at least be questioned. For instance, supposing - all right, you betray your country, as you think, rather than betray your friend, the result of your betraying your country perhaps [is that] several hundred people are shot but your friend is saved. Are you balancing just your friend in fact against some purely abstract bureaucratic entity that exists only on paper? You're not, so it's unrealistic to think in those terms. In other words, even Forster is sometimes guilty of sloppy thinking.

Nagabodhi: I think there must have been a lot of people who have had very very rude awakenings to that fact in wars, where they maybe, within their own terms, have done something very noble and then when it's too late realised how much trouble they've caused.

Kulananda: Forster was associated with a whole bunch of people who were very busily betraying their country -

S: Well, perhaps that wasn't so much the serious issue. He was one of the Bloomsbury group, and they attached overriding importance to personal relations. Well, yes, personal relations are very important, but it's as though they attached importance to them to such a degree that it made them almost inhuman.

Kulananda: I was thinking about him as one of the Apostles.

S: Leaving aside the question of the actual nature or positivity of those relations themselves, sometimes - judging by some diaries and biographies that have been published recently - the Bloomsburyites in some cases were in a pretty awful state, and they didn't understand by personal relations quite what we would understand, perhaps, even though our own practice may not be very much better than theirs sometimes. At least I think we've got the theory right!

So therefore al-Ghazali says: 'All sessions are confidential bar three: that in which blood is shed unlawfully' - you notice he says 'unlawfully', because Islam does not interdict the shedding of blood absolutely. I believe that if you were a Muslim husband coming home and you found your wife committing adultery, I think you would be allowed to kill her. I'm not sure about this, but I think it would be regarded as very

reprehensible. So therefore he says, 'in which blood is shed unlawfully, that in which unlawful sexual intercourse takes place' - again, sexual intercourse is not necessarily unlawful, but it may be under certain circumstances - 'and that in which property is unlawfully used' - again, there is nothing wrong in the use of property, but there is such a thing as the unlawful use of it.

_____: Because 'lawful' would ..... mean 'moral'.

S: I think in accordance with the Sharia, the Islamic law.

Subhuti: There's no distinction between law and sort of precept?

S: No, actually for Islam that sort of distinction between morality and law which we are familiar with hardly exists, because the Sharia is the divinely revealed law which all believers in their individual capacities must adhere to. This is why in Islam the judge and the lawyer - the canon lawyer, perhaps as we would say, except there's no civil law as opposed to canon law - have a sort of quasi-religious position to which there's really no analogy in the West.

Commenting on this question of breaking a law with which you are in moral disagreement, Mahatma Gandhi was an example of that, because he broke the law, whether in South Africa or in India, openly and even after due notice, and he recognised that he was going to be punished, he was going to suffer in one way or another, because he broke the law; and of course he was frequently sent to prison. But he made his point, that he was not going to recognise or obey a law which he considered immoral.

Kulananda: Why should he submit himself to a law which he considered immoral in that respect, why should he submit himself to punishment?

S: Well, he had no alternative but to submit himself to punishment, because he was the weaker party. Also he wanted to make the point that he did respect the law in a general sense; he was not in favour of anarchy, but that particular law he could not respect or agree to obey, on moral grounds. None the less, I think that one could say, at least one could argue, that Mahatma Gandhi in fact sowed dragon's teeth. One of the big problems in modern India is disregard for the law, and that is to some extent a legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. He has made or he did make disregard for the law, admittedly in his case on moral grounds, respectable. So people can quote the example of Mahatma Gandhi if they want to break or to disobey a law which they say they regard as wrong - well, they don't usually even say morally wrong; they say they just don't like the law, they don't agree with it, so therefore they consider themselves as free to disregard it. When too many people do that, when too many people adopt that attitude, law and order break down, and of course society breaks down; civil life, civil relations, break down; and you do have that happening here and there sometimes in India. So some people are of the opinion that Mahatma Gandhi's example, though in his case with the noblest of motives, was very unfortunate. In other words, one might even question whether even such a thing as national independence should have been preferred, at least by those means, to the maintenance of law and order in society.

Kulananda: But if one goes along with the maintenance of law and order, I think if one doesn't oppose an unjust law one will end up in a

totalitarian state which will continue indefinitely until such time as it is opposed. I don't think there's anything in human nature which will bring about a just society from within by natural means. I think it requires effort.

Nagabodhi: Well, where would the opposition to it come from? Sooner or later there would be some kind of reaction if it was an evil totalitarian regime, something from within. I think you're saying eventually it would have to be opposed, but that opposition will have to come from somewhere.

Kulananda: Indeed, but the opposition is powerless and will remain powerless for so long as the totalitarian state remains. South Africa is a clear example; unopposed, that state will continue almost indefinitely.

S: I'm not quite sure of the point that is being made.

Kulananda: Well, I think one would need to break the law to set up a moral state.

S: One also needs to examine the idea of what does one mean by law and order.

Kulananda: Are you implying that law and order is -

S: Well, is it possible, in fact, to have a situation where law and order become entirely negative terms?

Kulananda: You have, in situations in which law and order have been highly negative terms, such as Nazi Germany and I think to a certain extent South Africa today.

S: But, say, even within Nazi Germany there was internal opposition to their regime, in fact almost throughout.

Kulananda: But surely not expressed legally?

S: Well, it could not be expressed legally, no.

Kuladeva: But isn't it the same with any totalitarian state, that there will be opposition, but the nature of the government will mean that it will have to be underground?

S: I think that maybe one should make a distinction between the constitution of a country and its laws. If the constitution, let us say for the sake of argument, has an ethical basis, but the laws are not in accordance with that constitution, then you can take your stand on the constitution as against the laws, and work for a change in the laws on the basis of the constitution. Some people, of course, even in the Soviet Union, do that: they maintain that certain laws or even that certain actions on the part of the government are not in accordance with the Soviet constitution. Of

course, some of them are sent to gaol for their pains.

But take for the sake of argument a situation in which the constitution itself is unethical: all right, if you are a citizen of that state, you in effect accept that constitution. If you do not accept the constitution of that state, you have no alternative but to dissociate yourself from that state. In other words, you are in a minority of one, so to speak; so you can dissociate yourself from the state in two ways: either by actually physically leaving that state, or by remaining behind and working against the state either openly or secretly. In the second case, you could argue that inasmuch as the constitution itself was unethical, you were not working against law and order. But even in such a case, to have a society at all - even when the constitution is unethical on which it is based - there has to be some sort of positive social framework for social life and human life to go on at all. It's very difficult, by the very nature of society, to conceive a society which, while remaining a society, is unmitigatedly evil, because that would entail believing or envisaging that everybody in that society was unmitigatedly evil.

Kulananda: I've recently been quite horrified by reading accounts of events in Nazi Germany, accounts of events in the ghettos and the slave camps and the concentration camps, and all this ungraspable horror and degradation, and yet this continued, and I don't necessarily see anything internal to the situation which would have brought about its downfall.

Nagabodhi: Because all those things were illegal; there was nothing legal about the concentration camps, they were kept completely secret. Hitler never signed a single piece of paper related to the extermination of Jews, there's not one recorded piece of paper to prove that he knew anything about it, so he was clearly acting unconstitutionally. He actually rose to power entirely by constitutional means.

Kulananda: Yes, but I think at that point the constitution can be considered ..... I think it's semantic to say that Hitler was unconstitutional. I think it's semantic to talk about the possibility of his acting unconstitutionally: he was the constitution.

S: I think the basic point that emerges is that in acting against a particular society or a particular state on account of laws with which one doesn't agree, one has to be very careful that you do not in the end do more harm than good. And I think this is a point that has to be weighed, because societies like, say, those of Nazi Germany are relatively rare, relatively exceptional. But I think one must be very careful, or particularly careful, before we so to speak take the law into our own hands, because if we do that because of what we believe - well, on the same grounds anybody can do that on the grounds of what they believe, and in that way you end up with a sort of free-for-all in which violence will rule and might is right and you could be back in a worse state than you were in the first place. So I think you should weigh that very, very seriously. I think a society or a government would have to be very very corrupt and disastrous indeed for one to be justified in taking the stand that one should openly oppose or oppose by non-legal means.

Subhuti: It has been argued that the British were getting out of India anyway.

S: Yes, indeed.

Subhuti: Maybe the conditions under which they left would have been better.

Devaraja: Was that an actual movement? Were the British actually pulling out of India?

Subhuti: I think they'd known for quite a long time that they couldn't continue to govern India: there were so few British officers, about 100,000 British Imperial agents governing a country of .....

S: Well, the actual administration - there were 600 district officers responsible for the entire administration under the Viceroy. And India was developing and growing and so on, and also people were becoming a bit restive, and I think a lot of people realised that Britain couldn't continue governing in India indefinitely. The Labour Party realised - it was their policy anyway, which they put into operation as soon as they came into power. And there were a certain amount of concessions, so to speak, to the principle of Indian self-government all the way from the '30s, if not before.

One could even argue - even some Indians do - that Mahatma Gandhi, with the best of intentions, complicated the issue, and made it more difficult for the British actually to step down, because they couldn't afford to be seen to be stepping down too hastily. They wanted a very smooth transition - at least, some people did - a smooth transition to independence. Also it is argued that had it not been for Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party, the partition of India could have been avoided.

But anyway, those are quite separate issues. It only goes to show that good intentions are not enough, sincerity is not enough, idealism is not enough; there must be an intelligent understanding of the situation, there must be a grasp of facts. Because a lot of harm is done in the world, I think, by misguided idealists.

Devaraja: I think the whole question, the whole idea of national struggles are highly questionable. There's a whole myth about national rights, the whole concept of 'India' is a farce.

S: Well, this is in a way Ambedkar's basic point. He was less concerned with political independence than he was concerned with social justice. That can be put as the great issue between him and Mahatma Gandhi: Mahatma Gandhi said that national independence is the overriding consideration, we can look into questions of social justice afterwards. Ambedkar said that national independence without social justice isn't worth having, because it will represent a perpetuation of that social injustice. At least - he didn't actually say this, but this was in fact his sense - at least under the British we are not discriminated against as Untouchables to the extent we would be under a Hindu government; so therefore let's have social justice first, and then let's have political independence. But of course Gandhi's point of view prevailed. But that was the crux of the difference between them. Not that Ambedkar regarded political independence as unimportant; he regarded it as highly important, he was intensely patriotic, but he regarded social justice for his people as even more important and regarded independence without it as of very little value. In fact, he believed that if India gained independence at that particular time, when all this discussion was going on, it would simply mean handing over power from the British to the Hindu majority, which was oppressing the Untouchable minority.

So, yes, national sovereignty can't in fact be regarded as the supreme value, certainly not from the spiritual point of view. Also we must

remember that nationalism is a comparatively recent growth anyway - nationalism in the modern sense.

Anyway, let's go on.

"*And again:*
- When two sit down in session together their proceedings are confidential, and neither of them may divulge anything distasteful to the other."

S: Presumably this means divulge to the outside world. I assume so.

"A man of culture was asked:
- How do you keep a secret?
- I am its tomb!
There is a saying:
- The breasts of free men are the tombs of secrets."

S: I think the ability to keep a secret is a great test of character. Some people can't. Why do you think some people can't keep a secret?

Abhaya: They want to be seen as - or there's some sort of attention that they get from the other person in telling them the secret.

S: Yes, that's right.

Abhaya: They're the receptacle of something that's really interesting.

S: It enhances their own importance, they become the centre of attention, they've let everybody know that they are in the know. So it's definitely a weakness to reveal a secret, but I think not many people can in fact keep a secret. There's a well-known saying of old King Henry VIII: he's reported to have said, *'If I thought that my cap knew my counsel, I would throw it into the fire.'* There's that episode in the film of, I think it's the 'Wives of King Henry VIII' where the fall of Thomas Cranmer - the King's Council is waiting for Cromwell to make his appearance, and he's then at the height of his power, and he's having a friendly chat with the King in the anteroom outside and the King is saying, 'OK, you go in and take my place, take the Chair this morning; I'm not feeling like taking the Chair.' So in Cromwell sails, takes his seat and is at once indicted of high treason, as arranged previously by the King. [Laughter] But he hadn't breathed a word of it even to Cromwell, though he was at the height of his power, in his confidence and everything. So in politics probably you need to be able to keep your own counsel.

It is a weakness, in any sphere of life, not to be able to keep a secret that has been entrusted to you. If someone fails to keep your secret once, you should never trust him again, because he's just not able to keep a secret, and under certain circumstances your life may depend on that.

Tejamitra: Isn't that holding a suspicion about them, though?

S: No, because you've got proof - he has betrayed your trust. It's not a question of suspicion, there's evidence.

_____: People do grow, though.

S: Well, after a decent interval give him another chance, with a very small secret! [Laughter] And see.

So 'The breasts of free men are the tombs of secrets.' Tombs don't give up their dead; a tomb is inviolate, a tomb cannot be broken into or broken open. In the same way, your secret is safe in somebody's breast, in the breast of a free man. Carry on.

"According to another:
- The fool's heart is in his mouth, but the intelligent man's tongue is in his heart."

S: Well, this is pretty obvious; this is worldly wisdom of a very general kind, not peculiar to the Islamic tradition. Anyway, what is the comment on that?

"That is, the fool cannot conceal what is inside him, but unconsciously blurts it out. Therefore it is necessary to break off relations with fools and to beware of their company, nay the very sight of them."

S: Well, there's a verse to that effect in the *Dhammapada*: 'He who bears company with a fool' - *bala*, which I've translated as 'spiritually immature' - 'suffers for a long time'.

Vajrananda: Personally, I find it quite difficult to operate in a very discreet way. I often wish I didn't know as much as I do, sometimes.

S: You wish you didn't know?

Vajrananda: Yes, sometimes I find it very difficult not to use examples of things which I don't think are probably a good idea to voice.

S: I sometimes use examples from my own experience, even, say, experience within the FWBO, and if that involves persons, I don't mention their names; in fact, I disguise things to some extent, because I'm not concerned with those particular people, I'm concerned just with the incident as such in a representative capacity. So I might even change things: if something happened last year, I'll say it happened five years ago, or something like that. That's not technically a lie, because I'm not purporting to describe what happened in the case of those particular people, but simply what happened, say, in the case of say A or B representative personalities for the purpose of that particular point. If somebody nonetheless twigs who I'm speaking about, it is not a sign of intelligence to say, 'Ah, that was So-and-so.' [Laughter] Just sort of recognise it in your own mind, and recognise that the point is not that it was those particular people - that's quite irrelevant - it was that certain people, any people, behave in that way, in the way which is being related as an example. OK let's have our tea.

[End of Side one Side two]

[Part of TEA BREAK Discussion]

Kulananda: I don't think we need necessarily disrupt it, but I think there's a difference between disruption and acquiescence.

S: I don't see how -

Kulananda: I think one can individually and as it were covertly not acquiesce, without necessarily disrupting the fabric.

S: It depends what one means by acquiesce. Do you mean acquiesce in your own mind, or what?

Kulananda: Well, for instance, there's the question of taxation. Now I think that a large part of our taxation is being applied to what I consider highly dubious ends. If it was not possible to avoid paying taxation in a legal manner, I would consider myself to be within my own ethical terms, as it were.

S: Within your own moral rights.

Kulananda: I think it would be ethically sound to dodge it illegally - but covertly.

S: But then you have to weigh the harm that you would not be doing against the good that you'd also not be doing. You might find that you were withdrawing from more good than you were withdrawing from evil. You might, through your contribution to the tax system, be not only supporting bad things but supporting good things.

Kulananda: Indeed, but I'm also suggesting that, for instance, if one applies the whole of one's income in *dana*, therefore one is doing an enormous amount of good, so I don't think those sorts of considerations necessarily arise. The consideration which arises is one is in fact covertly breaking the law, and that really becomes the issue.

S: But then, of course, that would involve you in speaking lies, for instance, because you'd have to presumably make false returnings. Then one should weigh the effect of that upon your own personal character, and also in the affairs of society as a whole.

Devaraja: There seems to have been an interesting case recently. I think it was one of the Canons of Southwark or someone like that: there's recently been a court case against the tax authorities, in that he's not paid tax to the percentage of the quantity spent on nuclear weapons of the national what-do-you-call-it. And he's been given the right to take it forward to a higher court now, so there seems to have been a precedent established, and it will be interesting to see what happens as a result of that.

S: He presumably has acted quite openly. (Murmur of assent.)

Of course, this raises interesting general principles, whether the individual citizen, who does after all elect Members of Parliament, has the right individually to withdraw his support, or withdraw tax payments, proportionately to whatever measures the government is adopting that he disagrees with. I mean, supposing we disagreed with the principle of state enterprise, would we be justified in withholding taxation proportionate to the amount the government spends on propping up unviable state enterprises? In other words, do you take determination of spending public income out of the hands of Parliament and put it into the hands of citizens in their private, individual capacities?

Kulananda: I think that would be a very good idea.

S: But could it be done? It might be possible. It would mean - could one have a whole series of referenda?

Kulananda: Well, you could fill in your own tax return according to how you wished to apply your money.

S: But it might be impracticable, because, after all, you'd then have to weigh what everybody - supposing everybody voted that they all wanted, for instance, free beer and free cigarettes, they didn't want any taxation on beer and cigarettes, they didn't want to have to pay for education, etc.

Kulananda: You'd end up with a much more democratic state in the end; things would happen which people wanted to happen and things wouldn't happen which they didn't. They would then pretty soon learn that they'd have to pay for the things which they wanted to happen.

Subhuti: You're talking as if everybody would want the same thing. There'd be a very wide divergence of views.

Vajrananda: You wouldn't necessarily get what you wanted -

S: What people would find very difficult to accept, I think, would be that certain actions would have certain consequences. They would want certain actions without the consequences. It might take them a very very long time to learn - for instance, the trade unions haven't learnt it yet, and they're not unintelligent people - but different people might continue insisting on what they want regardless of the fact that it is followed by consequences that they themselves would regard as undesirable, and you would reach a condition of stalemate and even anarchy. Then you'd probably have a dictatorship taking over.

Kulananda: I think ..... whether such large-scale societies are viable.

S: Well, perhaps they are not. Whether even a small-scale society can be ethical, necessarily, is another matter; because Athens behaved in a very broadly speaking undemocratic, savage and barbaric fashion on more than one occasion. What about those cut-throat Italian cities? They don't seem to have behaved any better than the large-scale nationalities. Look at the smallest unit, the family: even within that it is not always

civilised.

Devaraja: Fromm makes the point - it's obviously hard to assess - you'd have to do a very thorough survey - but he's quoting from somebody else, that if citizens are given the right information, given access to the information, they do actually make quite mature decisions. He cites the examples of juries, usually, as an example - an American survey. So he was proposing putting forward that government should be more by referendum and more by sort of consultative bodies -

S: Well, I think that could well be tried on certain issues and the results perhaps carefully monitored. The word 'mature' is of course questionable. I don't know how Fromm uses it or what verdict he would regard as a mature one. Perhaps if a woman shoots her husband he would regard a jury that acquitted her as 'mature', because obviously - the rights of women and all that! So 'mature' is a very questionable word; as, for instance, we get 'mature videotapes' and all that sort of thing.

Anyway, we'd better carry on otherwise we're never going to get through this.

[End of TEA BREAK]

The next series of quotations all refer to secrecy. Maybe we should read page 43 and page 44 straight through: there's a lot about secrecy that perhaps we need to discuss in very general terms.

"Another was asked:
- How do you keep a secret?
- I deny knowledge of the informant and give my oath to the questioner.
Yet another said:
- I hide it, and hide the fact that I am hiding it.
Ibn al-Mu'tazz expressed himself in verse:
- Entrusted with a secret, I undertake to hide it.
So I bank it in my breast, and that becomes a vault for it.
Another poet, wanting to develop the theme, said:
- The secret in my breast is not like the inmate of a tomb;
For I see that one entombed expects the Resurrection. I prefer to forget it until it might seem
That I never had of it the least recollection.
Could the secret between us be hidden away,
From the heart and the bowels it would never see day.
Someone disclosed a secret of his to his brother.
He asked him later:
- Have you remembered it?

- No, I have forgotten it!
Abu Sa'd al-Thawri used to say:
- If you wish to take a man as your brother, anger him then contrive to bring him in contact with somebody who will ask him about you and your secrets. If he speaks well of you and hides your secret, then make him your fellow.
Abu Yazid was asked:
- Whom would you take as your fellow?
- One who knows of you as much as God knows, then hides it as God hides it.
Dhu'l-Nun said:
- There is no good in the fellowship of one who only likes to see you immaculate.
One who divulges a secret when angry is of base character, for all sound natures demand that it be hidden when one is content. A wise man said:
- Do not take as your fellow one whom you find changeable under four conditions: when he is angry or content, when he is greedy or desirous.
Rather should true brotherhood be firm against any change in these conditions. Thus it is said:
- See how the noble, when you sever your bond,
Still hides the bad and plays you true.
See how the vile, though you stick to your bond,
Still hides the fine and plays you false."

S: There are various points that arise here to be discussed. First of all, obviously keeping secrets that have been entrusted to you is regarded as a very very important duty of brotherhood; even, as it would appear perhaps to us, to an extreme extent, because the point that we really have to go into a little is, 'How do you keep a secret? I deny knowledge of the informant and give my oath to the questioner. Another said: I hide it and hide the fact that I am hiding it.' So are you justified in even denying knowledge of something that has been imparted to you in confidence? - because that means to tell a lie. So what has one got to say about that? Because to tell a lie is really a very serious matter, especially under oath and apparently one is allowed, in the interests of confidentiality, even to deny knowledge under oath, when one has that knowledge.

Well, this to me suggests that you should be very cautious about accepting secrets, very selective. Also it means, I think, you should be very considerate in telling other people your secrets, because in a way you may place them in a difficult position. So perhaps you should inquire beforehand: 'There's a certain matter that I'd like to be able to impart to you, but it's a rather difficult matter and you'd have to keep it secret. Are you willing to accept my confidence?' Not just blurt it out so that they know it, so in a way you've taken them by surprise, you've presented them with a *fait accompli*; you've told them a secret, maybe a very weighty secret, without giving them any notice in advance of the nature of that secret. So you've made them, perhaps, an accomplice after the fact, without taking their consent to doing that first.

So you might even feel that as someone has confided a secret to you quite unjustifiably, you then might have to say, 'Well look, I didn't ask you to tell me this. I will certainly not reveal your secret, but if I am questioned about it I shall not be able to tell a lie and deny.' I think probably you would be justified in saying that to the person on the spot - saying, for instance: 'I will keep your secret, in the sense that I will not voluntarily divulge it, but if it comes about that I am cross- questioned and I cannot keep it to myself without telling a lie or without incurring

myself or my dependants a disproportionate punishment, then I am going to have to reveal it, and you had in fact no business to tell me that.' Do you see what I mean?

If it is a brother, with whom you share everything including life and death, fair enough; perhaps a brother - if you recognise that conception of brotherhood - has that sort of right to share anything with you, any secret, and expect you to keep it at whatever cost. But there must be that understanding of brotherhood between you first, and if there isn't that, you've no right to divulge a weighty secret which may get the other person into trouble, even. So sometimes one may have to repudiate confidences, and say, 'I didn't hear that. Take it that you haven't told me that, I don't wish to know.'

So inasmuch as a secret is a serious matter, you should not only be careful how you keep a secret but how you receive a secret and how you impart a secret - I mean your secret - to somebody else. You're not always perhaps justified in doing it.

Abhaya: I suppose the question arises why would you want something to be secret anyway in the first place.

S: Well, usually you want something to be secret because if it was known it would injure you in some way. It may be an illegal act that you've committed.

Subhuti: Why do you need to impart it? Sometimes it seems almost as if you need to impart it just because you need to share it.

S: Yes, and if you need to share it, you can't blame the other person if he feels a need to share it. I think it is one of the big tests of character, the ability to keep a secret, especially your own secrets, where it is of no advantage to another person that you share your secret with them; it's almost an imposition to share your secret with another person under those conditions.

Abhaya: From the point of view of the individual, what circumstances would there be in which you'd want something to be secret, unless it was something really unskilful?

S: Not necessarily, because it might in fact be something highly skilful, but due to circumstances it would be better if it wasn't known.

Abhaya: So you'd tell it just to -

S: For instance, you might have given a large sum of money in *dana*; supposing you'd helped someone anonymously and you didn't want them to know it was you who had helped, because perhaps they would refuse the help, but you knew they really needed it, so you say, 'I did help So-and-so, but don't let him know, don't tell anybody otherwise he'll refuse the help, and maybe his family would suffer', etc. That would be skilful.

Abhaya: But why would you have to divulge that? You could keep it entirely to yourself.

S: Well, perhaps you couldn't avoid - if you had to pay the money through an intermediary, etc. But if a secret is a burden, I think we should be very careful about sharing it with other people, whether it is negative or positive.

Vajrananda: It seems almost in this text that they're suggesting that you can hold something in your mind and then refuse to know it.

S: Well, there is such a process as unconscious forgetting. I don't think you can really consciously forget, but you can almost pretend to forget, or at least not dwell upon something. You may actually come to forget in the course of time, if you don't deliberately recall that matter from time to time.

Prasannasiddhi: And probably the stronger the secret, the more likely you are to -

S: Yes, the more important, more weighty.

Prasannasiddhi: This business of needing to impart your secrets to other people - do you think you really do need to tell other people your secrets?

S: Well, some people do find it very difficult. It's almost as though they are bursting until they've imparted it. Perhaps it depends on one's character type to some extent.

Kulananda: But at a different level we have talked about the need for self-disclosure. The need for friendship and that of self-disclosure do come quite close to each other and are in a sense identical.

S: Yes. But do you necessarily advance your friendship by revealing absolutely everything?

Kulananda: No.

S: One could <u>even</u> say that it's a part of friendship that you accept that, on certain occasions, reticence is maybe necessary, but that they do not disturb you, because your trust is so implicit. You don't expect full explanations from your friend. You trust your friend's judgement; you might even think, 'Perhaps he doesn't want to bother me, that's his genuine feeling', so you won't insist that he tells you. So perhaps in genuine friendship there is an acceptance of a certain amount of reticence.

Vajrananda: There is a fact that a lot of people don't have somebody they can really talk to about things, so they tend to talk to a lot of people and in that way it -

S: It may be, of course, that you're worried about something and feel the need for advice and to talk things over to clarify them in your own mind. It's good to have a friend for that purpose. But if that involves <u>burdening</u> the friend with a serious responsibility because he knows that

particular secret, if a secret is involved, I think that is probably another matter. For instance, if you've committed a crime, if you do take a friend into your confidence, he does become in law an accessory after the fact, doesn't he, under certain circumstances? So by taking him into your confidence you're making him an accessory after the fact and therefore placing him in legal jeopardy, possibly without taking his permission first. Is that a manifestation of friendship?

Vajrananda: I was thinking more in terms of gossip. You've got this problem where everyone tends to say whatever is going on, and I think that's a lot to do with people not having anyone whom they can discuss situations with.

S: I don't know if that is true, because I'm sure that a lot of them - say, within the FWBO - do have; but nonetheless they keep up this sort of running commentary, so to speak. I think people on the whole are too garrulous. In other words, they talk too much. Perhaps we should encourage the practice of silence more. I did mention the other day the example of - what was the man's name? - McLuhan? - no, it was the one who started as an architect.

Kulananda: Buckminster Fuller.

S: Buckminster Fuller. He had a word moratorium that lasted, I think, two years - he called it a word moratorium. He wanted to be able to experience life without experiencing it through the medium of words, so earlier in his career he observed total silence for two years. So I think that would be a good practice for us sometimes. Mahatma Gandhi, towards the end of his career - I don't think this came out in the film; perhaps they didn't want to make this sort of point - he observed every Monday as a day of silence. You notice people who live in the country are usually - well, perhaps I shouldn't over-generalise - but at least sometimes, more taciturn than people who live in the cities.

Ratnavira: Quite often in the city if people aren't talking you assume there's something wrong.

S: Yes. I've become, in some circumstances, almost afraid of saying anything because it's going to be immediately repeated and also distorted in the process, and it comes back to me after a few days, weeks, months or years in a form that I can hardly recognise; and that's in a way quite a sad state of affairs. And that's talking about quite ordinary things, or expressing some quite ordinary opinions, that sort of thing. But if I say, 'Oh, I really enjoyed my trip to Italy', then it comes back a few weeks later: 'Bhante wants to live in Italy' or 'Bhante thinks that Italy is the finest country in the world', or even 'Bhante says India isn't a patch on Italy.' And I just happened to remark originally, 'I enjoyed my visit to Italy.' It makes me afraid almost to open my mouth sometimes.

Kulananda: Yes, 'Bhante said I must go to Italy'!

S: Yes, or even that 'Bhante's buying a villa in Italy' - it could even reach those proportions.

Anyway, we've discussed now this point of denying knowledge of the informant and all that, but there are other things that we need to discuss.

There's the possibility of forgetting; we've actually touched upon that. Ah, then there's another point. 'If you wish to take a man as your brother, anger him then contrive to bring him in contact with somebody who will ask him about you and your secrets. If he speaks well of you and hides your secret, then make him your fellow.' And further down there is this: 'Do not take as your fellow one whom you find changeable under four conditions: when he is angry or content, when he is greedy or desirous.' These are all states in which people tend to lose self-control or relax self-control, and therefore in which they are more likely to blurt out your secret. So if, for instance, you find that a person is prone to anger, it may well be that in anger he may blurt out your secret. So you have to be very circumspect about entrusting a secret to someone with a tendency to anger, because it's well-known that when a person becomes angry he may just say anything, even things of which he would be ashamed afterwards. Do you recognise this - that people when they become angry will blurt out anything, even your secrets? Has anybody actually observed this or do you think the observation is wide of the mark?

Kuladeva: I think people tend to lose self-control.

S: Yes, you can't really trust, either in general or with a secret, someone who is prone to lose self-control; through anger you can lose self-control. And then it's mentioned 'or content': I'm not sure what is meant by 'content' here, but it seems to mean a sort of pleased, agreeable state, complacent, compliant state -

_____: Relaxed.

S: Relaxed, yes, where you're just sort of -

Nagabodhi: Defences down.

S: Yes, and you can be pumped for information perhaps. And then 'when greedy', when you want something very much. Or 'desirous': it's a well-known situation that it's easy for a woman to get a secret out of a man under certain circumstances. The classic example is Samson and Delilah. So I think one has to be very careful of the sexual situation, because you're very greedy in that, you're very desirous, you want to please that other person, and it's quite easy for a cunning woman to wheedle a secret out of a man; this is I think a matter of common knowledge.

So you have to watch yourself in those more exposed situations in which you are rather vulnerable, and you tend to lose control; that is to say, when you're carried away, when you're beside yourself through anger, or when you're in an over-relaxed state through content, or when you're overwhelmed by greed or desire, and in fact are so overwhelmed by greed or desire that you may be even willing to trade somebody else's secret for the satisfaction of your greed or desire.

So you should be very careful about entrusting secrets to people who can be overcome by anger or by complacency, or by greed or desire. I'm not sure what greed and desire refer to specifically, but they can certainly be taken in a general sense. So 'Rather should true brotherhood be firm against any change in these conditions' - that is, when you are under the influence of these particular things.

Then there is a slightly different theme: 'See how the noble, when you sever your bond' - that is, bond of brotherhood - 'Still hides the bad and plays you true. See how the vile, though you stick to your bond, Still hides the fine and plays you false.' A person of a noble character, even if there's a breach between you, even if the bond of brotherhood is broken, will not because of that, reveal secrets that you'd formerly told him. A decent person, what to speak of a noble person, simply doesn't do that kind of thing. That's very despicable behaviour. On the other hand, the ignoble person won't even keep your secret while the bond of brotherhood is still subsisting.

Subhuti: Secrets needn't necessarily be something that's imparted; you tell somebody you don't want anyone else to know there are things about you -

S: No, they just come to know. Maybe it's personal characteristics, or it might even be weaknesses or qualities that might appear as weakness under certain conditions. The state of your finances, which you might not want anybody to know; or the relationship between yourself and your wife - well, a friend will come to know about that.

Subhuti: Somebody can use something that they know about you from their intimacy with you in anger; in anger they just blurt it out against you.

S: Yes, sometimes even to you, part of their argument with you; you do have this sort of thing in sexual relationships especially. There's a quite horrible example in the life of D.H.Lawrence, where Frieda after an argument threatened to tell everybody about such and such, and such and such; reading about that really left a sort of nasty taste in my mouth.

[End of tape nine tape ten]

Let's press on.

"Al-Abbas said to his son Abdullah:
- I see this man (meaning Umar, may God be pleased with him!) preferring you over the elders. So remember five bits of advice from me: on no account divulge a secret to him; on no account slander anyone in his presence, on no account give currency to a lie about him; on no account disobey him in anything; on no account let him catch you in any treachery."

S: That's interesting, in a way, or at least part of it is. 'Al-Abbas said to his son Abdullah: - I see this man (meaning Umar)' - presumably that is the first Caliph - '(may God be pleased with him!) preferring you over the elders.' Apparently Abdullah is quite a young man, and Umar, presumably the Caliph, is preferring that young man even over the elders; so Abdullah's father gives him this advice: 'So remember five bits of advice from me: on no account divulge a secret to him' - why not?

Subhuti: Take advantage of your position, as it were, in relation to him.

S: Yes, it could mean that.

Kuladeva: Does it specifically mean his own secrets or one that somebody - ?

S: Doesn't say. Presumably it includes a secret that somebody else has entrusted to him, because don't forget Umar is the Caliph, he's responsible for the maintenance of law and order, so you will oblige him to take action; in other words he will not be able to treat the secret as a secret, so perhaps it means that you shouldn't put him in that difficult or uncomfortable position, you should show consideration for him in that way.

So 'on no account divulge a secret to him; on no account slander anyone in his presence' - because he is the Caliph and he is very powerful, so he must be very careful what he says about other people because if the Caliph forms a bad opinion of him that could be very unfortunate for that man.

There's an interesting example of this sort of attitude in the life of Johnson, that is Dr. Samuel Johnson. Those who have read Boswell will know that towards the end of his life Dr. Johnson had a conversation with the King, King George III, in the library of the Queen's house, now Buckingham Palace. Does anyone remember reading about that conversation? Boswell, and Johnson's other friends, made Johnson repeat this and tell them the story about it again and again, so in the end a fairly accurate summary of it got written down and incorporated in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. So there was one point where the King asked Johnson about a certain scholar, and Johnson spoke frankly, giving his opinion, which was rather critical about that scholar, and he couldn't help speaking unfavourably because he was an honest man. But then he said he recollected that - I forget the exact words - he shouldn't perhaps really speak ill of a man to his King because that might affect his chances of preferment; so then he added some good words which he could honestly add about that particular person, because he did not want to depreciate him in the eyes of the King.

That is an example of this kind of thing, except here, of course, slander is mentioned: 'on no account slander anyone in his presence, on no account give currency to a lie about him' - presumably about Umar, the Caliph; because if people start believing a lie about the Caliph, the head of the social order himself, head of the socio-religious order, that could affect the stability of the government.

I think even in modern times we are very careless about this. People very readily repeat all sorts of stories about people in power without checking that they are definitely true, as though we tell these stories more to express our negativity. It may be that people in power are doing quite dreadful things - things which are a matter of fact and record - but very often, for instance, motives are attributed and even actions, for which there is no evidence whatsoever. We have to be very careful about this. Political parties ascribe attitudes and even actions to one another which are often not justified.

'On no account disobey him in anything;' - well, he is the Caliph - 'on no account let him catch you in any treachery.' I don't know whether the father distinguishes between treachery and being caught in treachery, but he does say 'on no account let him catch you in any treachery' - perhaps one shouldn't take the wording too literally - but here also is the question of keeping a secret or divulging a secret. So you should be careful who

you divulge a secret to, this seems to mean; because, as I mentioned earlier, it places a responsibility on that other person. You should consider how the possession of your secret will affect him and his position. You don't have an unlimited right to tell your secrets to just anybody unless there is an express understanding, perhaps, between you and that other person to that effect. You might even say, 'Who wants to know your miserable secret?' in some cases; it may not be anything worth knowing.

So 'Al-Shabi said: - Every word of these five is better than a thousand.' Perhaps we need not dwell upon that. All right there's something about silence and contention so let's read until the end of that paragraph.

"Silence includes abstaining from contention and contradiction whatever your brother talks about.
Ibn Abbas said:
- Do not dispute with the fool, for he will hurt you; nor with the mild man, for he will dislike you.
The Prophet (God bless him and give him peace!) said:
- If a man gives up contention when he is in the wrong, a house will be built for him within the Garden of Paradise; but if a man gives up contention even when he is in the right, a house will be built for him in the loftiest part of the Garden.
While it is his duty to give it up if he is in the wrong, the reward for what is above duty is made greater. For to remain silent when one is right is harder on the soul than keeping quiet when one is wrong. Recompense is in proportion to the effort."

S: So we're dealing in this chapter or section with silence, so in that connection 'Silence includes 'abstaining from contention and contradiction, whatever your brother talks about.' What do you think is meant by contention?

Abhaya: Taking him up on .....

S: Yes, taking him up on, unnecessary opposition, unnecessary argument and dispute and contradiction; just unnecessarily disagreeing. Some people just get into a contradictory mood; they disagree with everything you say. So one should abstain from that, and silence includes abstaining from that sort of thing. And Ibn Abbas is quoted as saying 'Do not dispute with the fool, for he will hurt you' - he will do you some harm, he'll become angry because of the dispute. And even 'nor with the mild man, for he will dislike you'. Well no one likes dispute and argumentation, unless they are of a really aggressive, hostile, negative disposition; even then their enjoyment is rather perverted. And then a saying of the Prophet: 'If a man gives up contention when he is in the wrong, a house will be built for him within the Garden of Paradise'. Well, if you're contending, if you're arguing in an unreasonable manner, for something which is wrong, then you've a duty to stop, a duty to give that up. 'But if a man gives up contention **even when he is in the right**, a house will be built for him in the loftiest part of the Garden.' In other words, there's no question of ego-assertion; he's in the right, he knows that he's in the right, but if the argument becomes, say, rather personal or a little bit loaded, he's willing to stop, even though he knows he's in the right. So that requires much greater self-restraint and the reward, so to speak, is correspondingly greater.

Sometimes one knows that when you get into an argument with someone and the other person is being really foolish or difficult or unnecessarily argumentative and you know you're in the right, or at least you believe you are, it is best that, even if you know that, even if you believe that, you

just bring the argument to an end, because it's as though it cannot end positively or it cannot continue positively.

But the comment is: 'to remain silent when one is right is harder on the soul than keeping quiet when one is wrong. Recompense is in proportion to the effort.'

Tejamitra: I suppose in a case like that you do have to weigh up whether keeping quiet about what is right isn't going to have consequences -

S: Ah, I think there's a distinction between keeping quiet about what is right and when you are in the right; I think there is a distinction there. There may be a dispute about, for instance, motives, and the other person may question your motives; and you may know that your motives were correct but he won't accept that. Well, there's no point in disputing it or continuing the dispute; just drop the matter, even though you know that you're in the right, because it's not a question of right about something in a moral sense. You're not as it were ceasing to support the right.

All right, carry on and read the next paragraph, including that next lengthy saying and the sentences afterwards.

"The most serious causes that fan the fire of rancour between brothers are contention and disputation. These are the very essence of variance and rupture. For rupture starts off with opinions, then becomes verbal and finally physical.

The Prophet (Peace be upon him!) said:
- Do not fall out one with another, do not hate one another, do not envy one another, do not break off one with another. Serve God as brothers. The Muslim is brother to the Muslim. He does not wrong him or offend him or forsake him. A man can do no worse than disgrace his Muslim brother.
The worst disgrace is contention, for if you reject what another says you accuse him of ignorance and stupidity, or of forgetfulness and absent-mindedness in understanding his subject. All this constitutes disgrace, annoyance and alienation."

S: I suppose that difference of opinion, even disagreement, is not excluded, but you must be very careful how you express that. If you, say, disagree with someone quite genuinely, say your friend or your brother, you should say, 'I don't quite see things in that way', or perhaps, 'Couldn't we look at things in such-and-such way?' Not say, 'Oh no, you're wrong, oh no, you've made a mistake, oh, you're stupid, you haven't understood that!.' That is not the way to talk, that is dispute, that is contention; and, as the author says, 'These are the very essence of variance and rupture.' Rupture starts off with opinions, it starts off with contention and dispute in that sort of way about opinions; and then it becomes verbal, you start engaging in 'wordy warfare' as the Buddha calls it, and then you may even end up with blows. So be very careful how you engage in discussion.

I think, within the Order, at least nowadays, this doesn't often happen - that discussion passes over into dispute and contention in an unpleasant and negative sense. But one must always be on the alert to avoid the danger of that sort of thing. You know exactly what I mean, how things gradually worsen and the tone of discussion changes, and the discussion itself ends up as an unpleasant argument, which becomes very subjective.

So 'The worst disgrace is contention, for if you reject what another says' - that is, especially if you reject it in a rude and abrupt fashion - 'you accuse him of ignorance and stupidity, or of forgetfulness and absent-mindedness in understanding his subject. All this constitutes disgrace, annoyance and alienation.' You should be very careful to distinguish fierce friendship from just bluntness and crudity of approach and inconsiderateness and contentiousness.

You notice also - this is another subject - Muhammad says: 'The Muslim is brother to the Muslim', and this has, I'm afraid, generally been understood to mean that the Muslim is not brother to the non-Muslim. That's rather unfortunate. Perhaps Muhammad did mean it in the sense of simply 'one who submits to God', but it does mean nowadays just a member of that particular religion. Would someone read the whole of that next paragraph.

"According to the tradition of Abu Umama asl-Bahili:
- God's Messenger (God bless him and give him Peace!) came out to us as we were disputing. He was angry and said, 'Give up contention because there is little good in it. Give up contention because the use of it is small, and it stirs up enmity among brothers.'
One of the early believers said:
- If a man quarrels and disputes with his brother his manliness diminishes and his virtue goes.
Abullah ibn-al-Hasan said:
- Beware of disputing with men, for you will never negate the cunning of the mild nor the onslaught of the vile.
One of the early believers said:
- The most impotent of men is he who falls short in seeking brothers, yet even more impotent is he who loses those he has won. Much contention causes loss and estrangement, and bequeaths enmity.
Al-Hasan said:
- Do not buy the enmity of one man for the love of a thousand men."

S: Any point there that requires particular comment?

Abhaya: It's interesting that he associates it with manliness and potency - not losing your temper and all that sort of thing.

S: Yes, it's as though the author of the saying is saying that genuine manliness is not to be confused with the sort of macho attitude of someone who is constantly engaging in quarrels and disputes, and that sort of extremely aggressive attitude, that *asura*-like attitude, has nothing to do with true manliness or true strength.

And also, in the last saying, 'Al-Hasan said: - Do not buy the enmity of one man for the love of a thousand men.' This suggests you should be very careful about making enemies; even the love of a thousand men cannot compensate for the enmity of one man. One man - or, one might even say, one woman - can do you a very great deal of harm. And unfortunately an enemy once made, even inadvertently, is very difficult to transform into a friend. Sometimes enmities seem more lasting than friendships.

This is why - we touched upon this a couple of days ago talking about my Sikkimese friend and his European wife - even if you are up against someone, or even if you're engaged in a dispute with someone or even a struggle with someone, you should always leave them a way out, you should never force them into a situation where they're really up against the wall, really in a corner and have got no alternative but to become your out-and-out enemy. You should never as it were declare all-out war on anybody else.

I think this is why it's important even to observe the courtesies, as it were, in dealing with people in that sort of situation when you are forced into opposition to them. I think this is very important. So my Sikkimese friend realised this, but I think his European wife didn't.

Always so manage things that some relaxation of hostilities becomes possible one day; I mean, don't oppose the other person to such an extent, or disgrace him to such an extent, or rub his nose in the dirt to such an extent that in this life it is really humanly impossible for him to be anything other than your enemy.

Then there is a very succinct paragraph, very much to the point.

"In general the only motive for contention is to display intellectual superiority and to belittle one's opponent by showing up his ignorance. This amounts to arrogance, contempt, hurtfulness and the insulting charge of folly and ignorance. There is no meaning to enmity but this, so what part can it have it brotherhood and true friendship?"

S: So contention is a form of enmity in fact; it's perhaps quite important to realise that. Competitiveness - certainly competitiveness in the negative sense - is in fact a form of enmity, a form of hostility. Do you see this?

Kulananda: I wonder how literally this is being taken, because there seems to be no allowance made for argument for the sake of dialectical change, of a dialectical change of opinion. There doesn't seem to be any allowance for argument made for the sake of investigation.

S: I think there is because, as I said, you can disagree with someone, but you must disagree gently and modestly and kindly, not sort of laying into the other person and telling him how ignorant he is and he doesn't understand the subject.

Kulananda: I was thinking more about friends who contend in order to sort out a point of view. They don't contend in order to compete so much as to work out -

S: Well, one is attaching here, it seems, particular meaning to the word contention; perhaps you're attaching another. Here contention would seem to mean an attitude or form of behaviour where in fact there is underlying genuine aggressiveness, in fact enmity, hostility. In fact, he says: 'In general, the only motive for contention is to display intellectual superiority and to belittle one's opponent by showing up his ignorance', so it's an expression of egotism, one would say. You're trying to establish your superiority over the other person, you're trying to beat him down, you're trying to show your own greater knowledge and his ignorance; this is an expression of enmity, in fact, and has nothing to do with true

brotherhood.

So sometimes, on the pretext, almost, of discussing things and really sorting out differences, people can be actually engaging in contentiousness, or it can pass over into contentiousness and one should be very careful of this.

Kulananda: I wonder if this tradition would actually allow for debate, in the positive sense?

S: Well, I don't see that historically it didn't, because there's been quite a lot of discussion on philosophical and religious points within the Muslim community, between scholars and so on. But I think perhaps it's being very realistic, and making the point that human nature is fairly unregenerate, and in men generally aggressive and hostile impulses are often very strong; and you have to be careful that these don't emerge, even in the course of what seems to be quite reasonable discussion and argument. These more basic passions can very easily take over, and you can find that you're guilty of just trying to establish your superiority, trying to defeat the other person, for personal reasons, and that is a form of enmity. Enmity is just that - doing the other person down, in one way or another.

So you have to be very careful that you are in fact simply engaged in a disinterested pursuit of truth, and are not in fact simply trying to do the other person down, whoever it may be that you're discussing or arguing with. And when you are in fact trying to do the other person down, usually it becomes pretty obvious because of the heated nature of the exchange and the impatience or irritation that you may in fact manifest.

Kulananda: The emotion of anger just .....

S: Yes.

Tejamitra: Unfortunately I've experienced this quite a lot under the pretext of not being emotionally blocked, just being expressive of emotion.

S: I think there's a lot of confusion in this area about expressiveness; why should you express your emotions if those emotions are negative and only going to be a nuisance to other people? What right have you to express them? Express them to yourself, or express them on paper, perhaps, and then throw away what you've written. But this plea of expression shouldn't be allowed to be an excuse for just indulgence in negative emotions. All right on we go.

"Ibn Abbas reported the Messenger of God (God bless him and give him Peace!) as saying:
- Do not dispute with your brother, do not mock him, and do not go back on your promise to him."

S: Perhaps we should deal with that saying first because it raises some different points. 'Do not dispute with your brother' - well, that supports the points already made. 'Do not mock him': here a new point is introduced, mocking. Don't mock your brother. In other words, mocking is inconsistent with brotherhood. But what does one mean by mocking? We haven't got the Arabic word, unfortunately - nor of course the Arabic dictionary - but broadly speaking, assuming this is a fairly faithful translation, what does one mean by mocking?

_____: Ridiculing.

S: Ridiculing. Do you think people do have this sort of - sometimes you can pull someone's leg or tease them or make a joke, but when does that stop and when do you start actually mocking and ridiculing? I think sometimes one does tend to pass over into the other, but perhaps the sign is how they feel. If they start feeling embarrassed or uncomfortable or a little displeased, you've gone too far; you're no longer just having a bit of fun with someone, you're actually mocking or ridiculing. Usually when you mock someone or ridicule, you're calling attention to some shortcoming. Someone mentioned this a day or two ago; was it here or somewhere else? I know - someone, I think Devaraja, mentioned how certain people had referred to your father; to you it's as though perhaps they were mocking him, or mocking you through your father, so that wouldn't be really very appropriate. Sometimes people mock, say, someone else's different accent, or maybe their middle-class manners, or even their personal appearance.

Subhuti: Often when that happens, and if you react at all, that's held against you as if you should be immune and -

S: Yes, you don't have a sense of humour. Here again perhaps one can distinguish between public and private behaviour. Perhaps you can pull someone's leg quite appropriately in private, but to say the same things to that person in front of <u>other</u> people is really quite a different matter.

But sometimes even one mocks or ridicules others with the idea of putting them down, I think. It's very difficult to refute ridicule because if you're not careful you put yourself in the wrong, of being thin-skinned or over-sensitive or unable to take a joke, or lacking a sense of humour.

Tejamitra: I remember, I think it was Vajrananda mentioned this in the reporting-in some time ago, that it's actually a very powerful way of putting someone down.

S: Well, elders very often do it to the younger people. I remember among the Nepalese - to mention them again - Nepalese fathers or elders generally used to put down their sons or grandsons almost quite systematically. One favourite expression was, if the son said something or tried to contribute something to the discussion, the old men would say, 'Be quiet, you egg!' - as if to say you're not even hatched yet, you're not even out of the shell and you're venturing to say something. And sometimes young men would come and see me, really annoyed and angry, saying that this is what their grandfather said or their great-uncle had said. They just offered an opinion about something quite legitimately, maybe something that they knew about, and the elder would turn round and say, 'Be quiet, you egg!' and they'd become really furious; but they couldn't say anything, so they'd just come away and tell me all about it. So this is a form of ridicule.

You have to be very careful. In fact, ridicule is used in some societies as a form of control - I think in Japanese society, traditionally - and you can control people through ridicule. But it's got absolutely no place within the spiritual community and therefore no place between brothers or spiritual friends.

Ratnavira: Often it can be a sort of lazy way out; it's a substitute for real communication rather than really trying to point out to someone -

S: Also I think another thing is when you make a joke of something; in a way sometimes people end discussion or suppress discussion by making a joke of the matter under discussion - do you see what I mean? They try to defuse the seriousness of the situation by just making a joke, and perhaps the seriousness of the situation should not be defused because it is a serious situation and should be treated accordingly.

Subhuti: I have heard it argued that within the context of *kalyana mitrata* leg-pulling and teasing are a valid way of getting messages across. Do you remember we disputed this before -

S: I think one has to be very careful about this, because it can give rise to ill-will so easily, or even degenerate into almost sadism. It has to be a very gentle, delicate and essentially positive sort of joking.

Subhuti: Yes, I think the other person must consent to it, in a way.

S: Yes, and be seen to consent. If they are putting up resistance or are clearly unhappy with it, I think one should instantly stop.

Subhuti: I think there's actually a bit of a school of this -

Kulananda: People should feel free to object.

S: Well, the fact that you say there's a bit of a school of this is perhaps a significant expression, because it happens at school, doesn't it, very often? - especially, shall we say -

Subhuti: No, don't! [Laughter]

S: All right, I won't make a joke about that, it's not a joking matter.

Prasannasiddhi: I don't think necessarily in that situation, anyway, because even in my own experience there was a lot of that at school, and I didn't go to a public school.

S: Oh, you went to a ..... *(drowned by laughter)*

Kulananda: I remember when I'd first come along being very impressed by Order members by the fact that they did tease each other quite mercilessly sometimes, and that it was accepted that people didn't just react.

S: But what does one mean by mercilessly? Does one mean that quite literally?

Kulananda: I think I do: not having mercy on points on which other people would react, a form of egotism -

S: Well, it means not desisting from - trying to do something about those particular points. But that doesn't necessarily involve just ridicule, in a way that antagonises the other person rather than makes them more receptive to you.

Devaraja: I remember you used it almost as a therapy on me once. It was on the *Udana* seminar.

S: Oh, which one was that?

Devaraja: The second of the *Udana* seminars, the ones in that house .....

S: Ah, that was 'Nash'. I'm afraid I've forgotten the incident, but clearly you haven't.

But anyway, don't take even my example as necessarily a precedent. Be very, very careful about ridicule or joking at other people's expense. Be very sure of your ground; be very sure of the essential friendliness of the situation and your relationship with the other person.

Devaraja: Just to appreciate what kind of leg-pulling and teasing it was, it was actually an act of kindness to me, it made me a lot happier.

S: Ah, good. Well, sometimes leg-pulling can be an expression of friendliness and familiarity, but it has to be that, and you have to be quite sure that it's that and not something else - that you aren't just being negative or overbearing or bullying in a subtle way.

Anyway, let's go back to the Messenger of God.

"He (God bless him and give him Peace!) also said:
- You will not win people with your wealth. What will win them is a cheerful face and a good character."

S: This is said because in the following line it says,

"Contention is incompatible with such goodness of character."

So 'You will not win people with your wealth', not really; 'What will win them is a cheerful face and a good character.' Well, your cheerful face they see instantly; that creates a good impression, usually, and as they get to know you better and better they will realise your good character and that will attract them even more. The cheerful face is very very important, especially if you're working in a Centre, a cheerful voice on the telephone. Someone mentioned to me the other day that they rang up a certain Centre, which will be nameless, and the person answering the phone said, 'Hello!' - and that isn't really very pleasant.

So we must watch these sort of things, present a pleasant face, speak in a pleasant way. I know some people will say, 'But supposing we're not feeling in a pleasant mood?' Well, I'd say, 'You jolly well ought to be!' Here hypocrisy, so to speak, is justified. What business have you, what right have you, to inflict your negativity on other people [Jet plane obscures words] ..... openness and honesty, and all that sort of thing. If you can't put on a pleasant smile together with your kesa, don't go down into the Centre. Go and meditate until you've got over that negative mental state. Don't show a gloomy face around the Centre, it's quite out of place. If you can't be genuinely cheerful, you ought not to be functioning around the Centre at that particular moment - not certainly with members of the public.

Some people might say, 'Why should we show ourselves as better than we actually are?' Well, one might say to that: 'Why should you show yourself at all?' [Laughter] If you have a good character, in the true sense, people learn that you're reliable, that you can be depended upon and you can be trusted; in that way friendship will develop, confidence will develop, and you'll win people, so to speak. Would someone like to read the next piece.

"Contention is incompatible with such goodness of character. The early believers went to great lengths in guarding against contention, and in urging mutual assistance; so much so that they frowned on questioning altogether. They said:
- If you say to your brother 'Come along!' and he asks 'Where?', then do not make him your fellow.
According to them he should rather come along unquestioningly."

S: Because if he questions, there's no sort of trust. Well, one experiences this with people. You say, 'Let's go for a walk.' They say, 'Why?' [Laughter] So you say, 'Well, let's just go and look down that street.' 'Why?' It's not only that they don't trust you - I don't know quite how to describe it; it's a very odd sort of attitude, almost an attitude of resistance, not going along with you and wanting a reason for everything where a reason isn't really necessary or shouldn't be necessary. So it's almost that a seed of contentiousness forms - always asking, 'Why should we do this, why do you want me to do that?' etc. in quite trivial matters. There's no trust, no co-operativeness.

So 'The early believers went to great lengths in guarding against contention, and in urging mutual assistance; so much so that they frowned on questioning altogether. They said: - If you say to your brother 'Come along!' and he asks 'Where?', then do not make him your fellow' - because the seed of contentiousness and disagreement and non-co-operativeness is there. 'According to them he should rather come along unquestioningly'. I'm afraid I've had experience of friends of this sort who want a reason for every trivial thing that you suggest doing.

[End of side one Side two]

S: - the wife always disagreeing with the husband or vice-versa sometimes, almost on principle.

Abhaya: You seem to know a lot about husbands and wives, Bhante.

S: Well, they come and tell me about each other! Sometimes they tell the same story, sometimes they give me completely different stories, Just last week I had a classic example of this disagreement as between husband and wife in talking to me about just plain matters of fact: either the

husband is lying blatantly or the wife, or both of them. On the other hand, they're both quite nice people, and I find it very difficult to believe that either is actually deliberately lying. So I just don't know what to think; so I'm not thinking about it any more, just waiting and seeing.

So perhaps I do know quite a bit about husbands and wives, on the principle that the spectator often sees more of the game than the actual players. Though the football field of marriage is a pretty rough one, pretty dirty goals are scored. [Laughter] Sometimes the referee blows his whistle in vain. Sometimes, of course, the players, husband and wife, attack the referee jointly, if they both disagree with his decision. So it's a very hazardous business being a referee in this particular game, this particular 'home match'.

It's really nice to have a friend who, if you say, 'Come on, let's go here', just comes along, without any dispute, any sort of argument. It's very nice to have a wife like that, too, though again I've no personal experience [Laughter], because - to quote again that hero Dr. Samuel Johnson - he married at the age of 25 - he married a woman of 45. It wasn't surprising that she should try to have the upper hand; so what happened apparently was that after the marriage ceremony they rode off on horseback, he was on one horse, she was on the other. And - I'm sure some of you know this story - after they'd gone a short distance, she called him to go a little faster. He went a little faster. After a few minutes she asked him to go a little slower; he went a little slower. After a few minutes she urged him to go a bit faster - because, he said, she'd apparently heard from someone that a woman of spirit should use her husband in this way! So he said he decided to begin as he intended to proceed - he was only 25 and she was 45 - so he put spurs to his horse and cantered away from her, and left her to follow him at his pace. So after a mile or two he slowed down just to give her an opportunity of catching up; which she did, and he saw that she was in tears. After that he had no trouble. [Laughter]

So here, in the case of the wife, she thought for some reason or other that it was almost part of a wife's duty to be contentious and disagree with her husband, not just go along, so to speak, either literally or metaphorically at his pace. But that sort of attitude doesn't make for marital harmony, and in most traditional societies it's sort of agreed, rightly or wrongly, that the wife keeps pace with the husband. Anyway, we're not going to go into that. Would someone like to read the remaining part of the chapter and then we'll be finished.

"Abu Sulayman al-Darani said:
- I once had a brother in Iraq. I would go to him when times were bad and say, 'Give me some of your money.' He would throw me his purse for me to take what I wanted. Then one day I came to him, and said, 'I need something.' He asked, 'How much do you want?' And so the sweetness of brotherhood left my heart."

S: Hm, so you see the difference. Anyway just read on.

"Another said:
- If you ask your brother for money and he says, 'What are you going to do with it?' he has abandoned the duty of brotherhood.
Know that the mainstay of brotherhood is concord in word and deed, and compassion. Abu Uthman al-Hiri said:
- Concurring with brothers is better than having compassion for them.
And it is as he said."

S: So 'If you ask your brother for money and **he** says, 'What are you going to do with it?' he has abandoned the duty of brotherhood', because there isn't that mutual trust and confidence. If your son asks you, and maybe he's very young and inexperienced, perhaps you should ask what he wants it for; perhaps even if your wife asks; but not if your friend asks, not if your brother asks.

So 'Know that the mainstay of brotherhood is concord in word and deed, and compassion.' It's rather interesting: Buddhism would say word and deed and thought, but here compassion is especially mentioned.

But 'Abu Uthman al-Hiri said: - Concurring with brothers is better than having compassion for them' - presumably because concurrence implies a sort of equality, which is appropriate to the relationship between brothers, whereas compassion perhaps suggests that one is in a more advantageous and the other in a less advantageous position, so to that extent there is less equality between them, and therefore perhaps less brotherhood. So I'd use in this connection, perhaps, the word co- operativeness, about which I'm thinking of giving a lecture some time.

So concurrence, concord, co-operativeness, they're all aspects of the same thing, and one could say, as I have said, that co-operativeness is an aspect of individuality, just as concurrence is an aspect of brotherhood. It's only people who are to some extent individuals who can really co-operate. Because, of course genuine co-operation is not just an adjustment of essentially conflicting interests, it's not a sort of bargain, and not a compromise.

Well, we have got to the end of this chapter, so any general point that emerges or that anyone wants to make or comment upon? Time is practically up. Anything that anyone noted in particular this morning? There is one thing that I've noticed, but I'll give you your chance first.

Abhaya: I found all the talk about the individual relating to the state, and the conflict between the moral and the legal - that's a whole area we're only just beginning to touch on.

S: Yes, this is what I was going to comment upon, this sort of conflict, almost, between duties, or between different responsibilities. It's not so straightforward, very often, as a conflict between good and bad, right and wrong; it's much more difficult than that. You know, some of our friends criticising and running down, for instance, the government, in such a way that suggests they really believe it would be better if there was a state of total anarchy and people were fighting one another in the streets. I'm sure they don't really literally mean that, but they appear to mean it, judging by their words. I think sometimes they don't realise how bad bad government can be.

Kulananda: Nonetheless if one has an ideal of a different form of anarchy, not one which involves people fighting in the streets, but one which involves mutual responsibility -

Kuladeva: But how many examples are there of such -

S: But the way that some people do talk suggests that it is not that kind of so to speak philosophical anarchism that they have in mind.

Kulananda: What was running through my mind in the earlier discussion was that even though we don't have a historical precedent for a more just state, it does not necessarily mean that we shouldn't strive for one.

S: Well, I'd have hoped that no one really felt that.

Kulananda: I think - it occurred to me in the context that very often people would say to you, if you were trying to talk about a more anarchic way of ordering government, that they would cite historical precedents as opposition to that possibility.

S: I don't think one should use the word anarchism in general conversation, because it's sure to be misunderstood. One should perhaps talk in terms of decentralisation and devolution of responsibility. I think that is something which can be argued in a very positive way and which a lot of people would accept. For instance, the present government is thinking of dismembering the Greater London Council, so what does that mean? It means that a tier of administration is removed, it means that functions which are at present exercised by the GLC would, at least in some cases, be exercised by the borough councils, that is to say by the smaller, more local units, that would thereby be more responsive, perhaps, to public opinion and local pressures.

Kulananda: Isn't the opposite also true, though - that some of its functions will be taken on by the centre?

S: Well, this is why I say at least some would be taken away - maybe some of the responsibilities discharged by the GLC are beyond the abilities of the borough councils. For instance, can borough councils take on the responsibility for transport within their own boroughs? So if the GLC isn't there to take on that responsibility, presumably the national government has to take it on. Though I think the more decentralisation and devolution of responsibility there is, the better; one can certainly urge that, as contributing to greater personal participation in government administration and therefore, hopefully, to greater justice and so on.

Devaraja: There's the whole thing of feminism - that's one thing; then there's the whole thing of broad left socialism. As Buddhists we can't just allow ourselves to just slide into one camp, willy nilly. Because the conservatives have some good ideas, the socialists have some good ideas.

S: Yes, and they all have some pretty bad ideas, too. There's not a single one that doesn't have quite a lot of bad ideas, as far as I can see.

Kuladeva: I think it's more just accepting the dogmas of a particular party. Rather than accepting the good points of various ideologies, a sort of unquestioning acceptance of everything that a particular party .....

S: One has also this whole concept of party loyalty: I think that is not in the interests of the public, that you identify yourself with a particular party, whether that party is right or wrong, so as to carry it into power.

Kulananda: What I notice a lot in Britain is what strikes me as a complacent belief in the general friendliness of the political system. I can imagine Britain slipping quite rapidly into some form of totalitarianism from its current position, and I find that most British people generally believe that the state will remain decent, by and large, and I don't necessarily believe that at all. I think -

S: Well, I think it depends on how long a foreview one takes. I suppose in the course of 100, 200, 300 years, any state could undergo a transformation of that kind - human nature, so to speak, being what it is.

Kuladeva: I would have also thought that undermining the stability of the state is more likely to contribute to that than the continuance and acceptance of a given stable government that one may not happen to agree with in total.

S: For instance, the communists, as a matter of principle, try to destabilise regimes and to create chaos and confusion, because their strategy is for a highly disciplined, highly organised, unified, though small, communist party to seize power under those circumstances; so totalitarian governments almost always come into power on a wave of very widespread unrest and breakdown of law and order.

Kulananda: It's being said that the American government's policy at the moment is to destabilise the Russian government through stepping up the arms race and driving them to economic bankruptcy.

S: That may be so.

Kulananda: So I don't necessarily see that one form of regime is that much better than another.

Subhuti: I don't think Bhante was arguing that; we're simply talking about the process of destabilisation.

S: I think that any government should think very seriously about furthering its influences by destabilising other regimes, even, or especially, neighbouring regimes, because that sort of thing can spread, and I don't think it's in anyone's interests that there should be effectively social and political confusion and chaos and breakdown of law and order. It's almost certain, I think, to make the situation worse in the long run rather than better. So if that is America's policy, I would say it is a foolish policy, as it is in the case of the Russians .....

Kulananda: When states are this foolish, to what extent does one benefit?

S: Well, it is not just the state as an abstraction; it is people, either through their elected representatives or people whom they allow to exercise power on their behalf, who are being foolish. Sometimes, of course, they've been deliberately misled by those who control the sources of information. Sometimes they don't bother too much. I think most people within most states, if life is all right, easy, comfortable for them, they don't bother much what is happening to other people, and they can turn a blind eye to quite a lot if it doesn't affect their own interests. We saw this in Germany, especially.

Subhuti: There are two tendencies in political thinking within the FWBO that have quite disturbed me recently. One is a tendency to personify the state, the government, and to oversimplify the whole process of power and government, and to see it as - you identify a definite group, which is the government, which has a single, unified policy, as it were, towards everybody else.

S: Most of it directed against you personally.

Subhuti: Yes; and my own contact with government has shown that it's an incredibly complex system of many different levels.

S: Well, Marx himself recognised that the capitalist system operated unjustly and resulted in great harm to individuals, especially those who were employees, without necessarily any active ill-will on the part of capitalists, but because the nature of the structure was such. So the nature of the bureaucratic machine is such, the nature of bureaucracy is such that, almost regardless of the intentions of the people operating the machinery, supposedly, it may do harm. It isn't that the people operating the machinery have got a personal malevolence directed towards you.

I can remember an illustration of the sort of thing you are referring to when we acquired the Archway Centre, and when two men, two officials, came from Camden Borough Council, from whom we were renting the place, to deal with us and hand it over. I believe Buddhadasa, but certainly some other people, were very surprised how agreeable they were, how friendly they were, how anxious to help, and how kind, etc. They really expected them to be sort of semi-secret police type, really brutal and going to be very rough and difficult with us; but no, they were the exact opposite, and I remember that people were surprised; and the fact that they were surprised was perhaps surprising.

Nagabodhi: I've been quite interested - there's one particular story: Vijaya, in the course of his work recently, had to operate the camera when Margaret Thatcher was being interviewed in a studio. And he in conversation passed on that he found her quite impressive, the way she was in that situation: the way she arrived, the way she dealt with it, the way she went; he was just impressed. And I remember hearing him telling me about it, and I remember him telling other people. He obviously had that conversation with several people. But a few weeks later I heard him being quite categorically vilified - 'Vijaya's quite impressed by Margaret Thatcher'. There was no reference to what he was impressed by, the fact that he should even find anything about her that was in any way interesting or admirable was being used in a slogan sort of way against him.

Subhuti: This was the other thing I was going to comment on - this adoption of political slogans: you know, anything about Margaret Thatcher is just completely awful.

S: Yes, you can't say anything which is any good at all, ever.

Subhuti: Yes, and sort of constant ridiculing jokes about her and her behaviour, caricaturing - it seems to really undermine the whole process of government. No doubt she does a lot of questionable things, things which you could argue about ideologically, but I think to resort to that sort of political sloganeering is really bad - caricaturing. Terrible - it so infects the Movement.

Nagabodhi: I've been quite surprised, over the Falklands crisis and the last election, the degree to which our society, which is in some ways

quite cut off - so few people seem to watch television or read the papers - but how quickly the stronger, more dramatic trends infiltrate the Movement. You hear Margaret Thatcher, Michael Foot being talked about by Order members who presumably very rarely see them on telly or read newspapers, exactly in the way they're being caricatured by the crudest and most simplistic cartoonists. Attitudes towards the Falklands war seemed to reflect very quickly and accurately the currents of opinion in the country at large. It's quite surprising that we're so unimmune to national sicknesses.

Kulananda: How far do you think that attitudes to the Falklands reflect attitudes in the country at large ..... ?

Nagabodhi: I don't think they were, I think there was the same kind of excitement - maybe not the crude 'down with the Argies' stuff, but I think a basic identification with Britain, a basic excitement over the war, only turning to a kind of revulsion at the time when it did generally in the nation: simplistic interest in the weaponry, etc. All the same forces seemed to be woken up in us - I don't exclude myself.

Prasannasiddhi: I would exclude the whole of the group I was associated with at the time, with the FBS team. I think everyone in that had quite a good view of the situation. They certainly weren't reacting - that's the circle I was in at the time.

Kuladeva: I must say I think there's an infantile attitude towards politics, and I've noticed within the Labour Party that there seems to be a new branch of infantile socialism which has been absorbed by quite a lot of people around the FWBO to some extent.

Devaraja: What do you mean by infantile socialism?

Kuladeva: Well, I think partly some of the things that Bhante was saying about destabilising society. I've just noticed some of the things I've heard, say, by certain politicians like Ken Livingstone, for instance. I see Ken Livingstone as a symbol of infantile socialism. He makes outrageous statements in public. He just strikes me as very irresponsible, because he has some kind of influence on what happens; he happens to be Chairman of the GLC or Leader of the GLC.

S: Well, didn't he compare the behaviour of the British Government in Northern Ireland with the Nazis? If one does that, it means that one is, in a way, minimising what the Nazis actually did.

Kulananda: One hears really brutal things about the army in Northern Ireland; one never hears them from official sources. It's very difficult to talk in those terms.

S: Yes, but then, wasn't the whole significance of the Nazi episode the <u>scale</u> of what happened? Not just that people were killed but that <u>so many</u> people were killed, and killed in such a way and on such grounds, and as it were officially, and as a result of a definite, perverted ideology; and the numbers which are given - which are disputed - as six million. So what's the population of Northern Ireland? I don't know whether it's six million.

_____: Nearly 4 million in total.

S: So to compare the one with the other does show an extreme lack of proportion.

Kulananda: But I think what it might also point out is the incredible difficulty that one has in actually opposing the *status quo* publicly - that it is very difficult to be heard; and sometimes, perhaps, people do resort to extreme statements.

Devaraja: I think it's so complex, the situation in Northern Ireland, that I don't think you can actually side with any side. It's so complex.

Kulananda: But one fact which one very rarely hears about is, for example, the behaviour of the British army. Now a book has just been published which is an account by this Major of his time in Northern Ireland which is quite horrifying, it's sickening. The people in this country who've elected the government which is perpetrating these acts don't realise what's going on, and they're never likely to realise what's going on, so there's a definite conspiracy of secrecy; and how does one break through these things? How do the facts get known when you're dealing with this scale?

Nagabodhi: By learning the facts rather than picking up the nearest handy slogan.

S: I think the majority of people in Britain are not all that interested in Northern Ireland; they're rather bored with the whole business, and they wouldn't be sorry, I think, if the troops were pulled out and the Irish were left to fight it out among themselves. I think most people just wouldn't be bothered by that, they'd say 'Let them get on with it, it's their problem.'

Devaraja: I think that's probably the government position as well! The thing is, without going into the problems of Northern Irish politics, apparently the Southern Irish are equally as reluctant to inherit the problem, so it's not as simple as that.

Kulananda: I'm not suggesting any particular alternative, any particular solution. What I'm saying is the facts aren't communicated and many facts aren't communicated.

Nagabodhi: But I still think, even knowing that you've got facts, or almost because you know that there are facts that you're not aware of, there's even less reason for jumping to conclusions; the fact that if you give any thought you realise that one is very ignorant about what's going on in Northern Ireland, about the issues surrounding nuclear disarmament. Anyone, I'd say, in the Order would probably, with any thought, realise that they know very very little about the political, military, economic aspects of questions like this, and yet we sort of expect each other to have really strong opinions.

S: It's very easy to agree about ends - for instance, that there should be nuclear disarmament, that there should be peace in Northern Ireland. It's very easy to agree upon those things, but it's very difficult to agree upon means to ends, and I think sometimes people can genuinely differ about the appropriate means without their good faith being impugned. But unfortunately what happens, if someone suggests a means which is

different from the one that you think appropriate, you will vilify them and question their motives; and I think that is very unfortunate because that disunites you and prevents you working together and hammering out a solution for the achievement of that goal that you all recognise.

So this is why I don't favour, especially within the Movement, endless arguments between unilateralists and multilateralists, because if they use all their energies in that way, who is actually going to work to bring pressure to bear on governments to do something about reducing nuclear weapons? Some governments might be only too happy that some people are using all their energies in arguments about whether to be unilateral or multilateral.

Abhaya: But it does need to be fleshed out or discussed, doesn't it? Because otherwise you can't present a false united front.

S: I think you can present a united front, initially, with regard to ends. That, in this particular issue - we had quite a discussion about it down at Sukhavati, by the way - I think it was Sukhavati, or somewhere. Your aim is, you agree, that nuclear weapons should be abolished. Everybody agrees about that. So the only people, the agencies that can do that are the agencies that have them, that is the governments. You can insist that the governments, including your government, must get together and devise some means of reducing and abolishing nuclear weapons. And I think it a bit premature for you to get together and try to tell the assembled governments what steps they should take, because it will be a very complicated business, and interest will have to be weighed against interest;but I think at least you can insist that your government take steps to get together with other governments with a view to abolishing nuclear weapons. You must bring pressure to bear on your government to do this effectively and honestly. But I don't think that you, as an individual and very, very amateur and knowing very little of the facts even in your own country, can work out a policy which you insist that everybody should then adopt.

Kulananda: Isn't that policy you've just stated of itself multilateralist?

S: Not necessarily, because, after discussions together, one government might decide, 'The most constructive move I can make, in view of what I've learned, what I've heard, is that I will disarm or start disarming unilaterally; that will break a deadlock or a log jam.' Certain governments might even have confidential talks and have an understanding among themselves: 'All right, I'll start, you'll follow.' You see what I mean? So we don't need to prejudge the issue as regards means, but we can only be very emphatic about ends and insist that our government plays its part in moving towards that end.

Abhaya: But then, people are going to ask, 'How?' I mean, how do you think that can be done?

S: I don't think that we are in a position to work that out. I certainly am not; you'd have to spend several years, perhaps, studying the material. There are experts - governments are in a position to call upon experts. Governments know a lot of things that we don't know. They have to get together and they have to sort out what is the way, because it's a very complex issue which would involve a whole network of agreements between a number of sovereign states.

We don't know - I don't know and you don't know - how, say, a particular government with nuclear weapons is going to respond in a certain

situation; what sort of bargain you will have to strike; we know nothing of that. We cannot foretell. Also the situation is changing month by month; we don't keep pace with it, we don't know what's going on. There are magazines published dealing with these things, giving you breakdowns of different forms of nuclear weapons - even the experts disagree about the interpretation of the facts, though they agree upon the facts: whether such-and-such class of weapons does mean an enhancement of nuclear striking power or not; the experts are disagreed. And these things have to be worked out and agreed upon for any sort of agreement to be possible about the abolition of nuclear weapons. How can we sort all that out in advance? I think there's too much simplistic thinking; people just read an article or two in a Sunday newspaper and think they know all about it and they can tell governments what to do. It isn't as simple as that, unfortunately.

Kulananda: The question is also, though, can you tell governments what to do at all, anyway; can we even tell them to .....?

S: I think we can if we want to. Governments, at least in democratic countries, depend upon votes, and if it's clear that you're not going to give your vote to a party which does not have, as part of its manifesto, part of its platform, a serious getting together with other states, other governments, on the issue of nuclear weapons and nuclear war, then you're not going to vote for them, they realise this, and if there is a sufficient number of people taking this attitude, they will do something. Also, you mustn't assume that governments are bellicose and they want nuclear weapons and want nuclear war necessarily. I think a lot of people assume this - that Margaret Thatcher just loves war, she's only too happy to throw about an atom bomb or two. I think this sort of thinking is really disgraceful - crediting people with those sort of motives and mental states.

Kulananda: One is occasionally horrified by the pronouncements of people like Reagan - and particularly his supporters like the National Rifle Association.

S: Well, I don't know much about conditions in the States, but I'm quite sure that in this country pressure could be brought to bear on the government much more than is at present, in a quite legal way, to take the whole question of nuclear disarmament much more seriously and pursue it much more actively. Perhaps one can't say more than that. I don't see it at the moment as my personal mission to do anything about this. I'm involved with other things. But I'd certainly give my moral support to anyone who was so engaged. But, unfortunately, it tends to become a party issue, and I think that's a terrible mistake; it's almost criminal that people make this a sort of party issue.

Abhaya: So can I get this straight, then? You could say that the unilateralists are putting pressure on the government to get rid of nuclear weapons. What you're saying is that they're pretending to know the best way of doing it, but in fact they're not in possession of all the facts.

S: Yes; I'm not convinced - I'm not saying that I believe in multilateralism, I don't know enough about the subject - but I'm not convinced that unilateralism is necessarily the best way of doing things or will necessarily work; this is what I'm saying, I just don't now.

Nagabodhi: It could make things even more dangerous.

S: So I think, therefore, that all that one can urge the government is to declare its objective as the abolition of nuclear weapons throughout the

world and to pledge that it will do whatever it can to enter into discussions and negotiations with other governments to that end. I think this actually should really be the Number One priority at present of all governments. I don't think anything is really more serious than this, politically speaking.

Kulananda: But since it obviously isn't, doesn't it give one cause to wonder about governments at the moment?

S: No, it gives one cause to wonder about peoples.

Nagabodhi: Can I just question as you are going on record saying this - are you categorically saying that you believe that nuclear weapons should be abolished? Because that does discount their possible deterrent value; there could have been very unpleasant conventional wars in Europe in the last 20 years, even though -

S: Well, you see, an unpleasant conventional war I think would have been merely unpleasant, but a nuclear war would be utterly disastrous, and one would wish to avoid even unpleasant wars, but I think that however many unpleasant wars you avoid through possession of nuclear weapons, I think, I can be almost certain that in the long run - and the long run may be 100 or 200 years - nuclear weapons are going to be used, whether by accident or in any other way, and therefore one cannot but ask for their abolition.

Kuladeva: It seems that there's so much fear and suspicion, particularly between America and Russia, that the most important thing is probably just for them to have some kind of forum for discussion.

S: Well, fortunately, despite recent events, the Geneva discussions are going ahead. What value they have or will have, I don't know. But talking, however limited - discussion, however limited - is to be welcomed. One only hopes it can be broadened out and discussion and negotiation can become real. But there does seem to be a tremendous collective paranoia on both sides of the Atlantic to a quite incredible degree. It's not going to be easy to break that down - the Soviet Union's paranoia with regard to the capitalist world and America's, especially, hostility and paranoia with regard to communism and the Soviet Union generally. I'm not saying that there are no grounds for complaint whatever: there are clearly massive grounds for complaint on both sides, but that has unfortunately given rise to a quite disproportionate paranoia. And I think it's true that Russia is out for world domination. I think it's true that America, in its own way, is out for world domination. It's inevitable that there's a clash, a clash of alleged interests. Europe is squeezed uncomfortably in between; so is much of Asia and Africa.

Prasannasiddhi: America is out for world domination as well?

S: I think so. I don't think through open war, but economic domination. Well, you could even say that the nature of the capitalist system is such that in its search for markets it cannot but want to dominate.

Kulananda: And therefore the nature of the communist system is such that it must resist.

S: Well, the nature of the communist system is also such that it must export or perish, ideologically speaking. They have adopted that principle quite ostensibly, at least, in the past.

Devaraja: But why would it perish ideologically if it didn't export its ideology?

S: Well, in terms of results, it isn't shown to be more successful than capitalism, so if it doesn't spread to other countries it looks as though it's on the defensive and isn't spreading any more; it isn't succeeding. And then perhaps people within the Soviet Union start doubting the success and value of the system.

Subhuti: It's integral to its analysis of history and the world, isn't it, that it <u>will</u> spread?

S: Marxism is a sort of historicism; its historicist approach, which <u>predicts</u> the eventual triumph of communism throughout the world. If there is communism anywhere there must be communism everywhere. And if in a sense there isn't communism everywhere, there isn't communism anywhere; that is their view. Not that they say that Russia, strictly speaking, is a communist state; it hasn't reached the level of communism yet, but it's on the way, so they believe. So both systems have an inbuilt expansiveness, let us say; both capitalism and Marxist-Leninism, let us say. So they're bound to collide, or to clash, sooner or later. And if they're armed with nuclear weapons the clash is bound to be disastrous. So I think it's probably the principal business of governments to direct themselves to a solution of this problem; whether through the United Nations or in any other way. But, as I say, I don't see that we help by advocating or insisting on any particular line of approach, any particular solution. I think that the public in general must stick firmly to first principles.

Devaraja: I suppose, for a lot of European governments, the argument for maintaining nuclear weapons is that if there weren't these nuclear weapons - conventional wars aside - that's the only factor that's keeping the Russians back from forcibly exporting their brand of ideology.

Kulananda: Well, why say conventional weapons aside?

Devaraja: Because the conventional weapons wouldn't be sufficient - enough of a - I'm not very clear, but conventional weapons wouldn't be enough of a barrier against that -

S: Well, perhaps the governments, in the course of their discussions, will come to the conclusion that nuclear weapons cannot be abolished unless conventional weapons are abolished too, and will draw up a programme for the eventual abolition of all weapons of that kind; we don't know.

Prasannasiddhi: What about the existing groups within Britain? You get the CND influence; does any one of them have a really large following, and have they actually worked things out to any detail that it would be worthwhile following them, or are they just a bit woolly, do you think?

Subhuti: CND has a definite policy

[End of Tape 10 Tape 11]

S: - sectional interest - for instance, like the feminists sort of taking over the Greenham Common demonstrations and so on. I think that's trying to make a feminist point instead of so to speak a purely human point.

Kulananda: All the Roman Catholics seem to be doing it to some extent as well in CND. My personal tutor for last year, or one of them - I have two - is actually involved in CND. I think he is the local branch secretary or something like that; he is more of a lapsed Roman Catholic, but his two interests, Roman Catholicism and CND, definitely do coincide.

S: Well, the church supports peace, the Pope is in favour of peace, so if you want peace in the world support the Catholic Church - this is sometimes the argument one hears. I mean, the Pope is a man of peace, he tries to present himself as a messenger of peace.

Prasannasiddhi: And there's not really any other group in England other than CND. There might be a general body -

S: I just wonder whether, if somebody started up an anti-nuclear movement along the lines I've suggested, what following it would gain; because, for instance, if you argue not only for the abolition of nuclear weapons but for the adoption of a unilateral policy by your government, you then expose yourself from your government to multilateral arguments.

Abhaya: I'm sorry, could you repeat the last bit - I didn't quite get it?

S: In other words, if you adopt a rigidly unilateralist line, your government can take the view that that is completely unrealistic, and therefore dismiss the appeal for nuclear disarmament altogether. But if you occupy broader ground the government can hardly do that.

Subhuti: Because they couldn't disagree with the aims of nuclear disarmament.

S: No, they couldn't disagree with the eventual objective.

Nagabodhi: So you'd be setting up a pressure group to ensure that at any possible point the government would be doing its best to eradicate the use of -

S: And of course to be seen to be doing its best. So I just wonder what sort of support that as it were more moderate but in a sense more radical approach would draw.

Kuladeva: I can imagine that once it became larger it probably would be infiltrated by other interest groups, in the same way that the peace

movement at the moment has been infiltrated by feminism, by the communist parties, and by Roman Catholicism.

S: But then that would mean we could only set up that sort of movement in the very way that we've set up the FWBO itself: it would have to be guided and directed by Order members who would keep it as it were ideologically pure.

Kulananda: But I think also, Bhante, in the long run it's almost inevitable you would get involved in policies. At some point you'd have to tell the government: 'No. you're not doing enough', and they would say: 'No, we're doing plenty, but it's a matter of policy that we can't proceed in this way.' You'd have to turn round to them and say: 'No, your statement there is inaccurate', and -

S: Yes, I would say keep up the pressure - I mean non-violent pressure, of course - even if it would seem that you were being a bit unreasonable; because the circumstances are so urgent that you can't really afford to take a chance.

Kulananda: But I'm saying you couldn't maintain your non-policy stand.

S: I'm not sure about that. We would have to see if we reached that point - if we ever did. I'm not to sure.

But I think it would be a good idea if some people, at least, tried; but I don't see that we are in a position to do that at the moment - but I would certainly welcome somebody doing it.

Nagabodhi: You'd probably win quite a lot of supporters from CND who, seeing as they're the only voice talking against nuclear weapons, people don't bother too much, aren't too fussy, but if they had an alternative.

S: Also there are people who like excitement, who like demonstrations, almost regardless of what they are about, so long as they are against something, preferably if it is against some established authority; provided it's safe to do so and there's not going to be any fear of actual retaliation. I'm afraid most demonstrators in this country are a bit pusillanimous. Not much is likely to happen to them, compared with what might happen in some other countries.

Nagabodhi: I just remember the story George Orwell tells about Sir Walter Raleigh who, while in prison awaiting execution, spent his time writing a history of the world. Apparently he'd finished the first volume and was starting work on the second, when he heard a noise outside his cell and witnessed a fight between two builders in which one was killed; and after watching the event and then talking, making discreet inquiries wherever and whenever he could, he found out he couldn't discover the truth about what had happened between these two people, whereupon he destroyed his history of the world. [Laughter]

S: Well, I think that is a bit apocryphal because actually we have his *History of the World*, at least the first great fat volume of it.

Nagabodhi: Maybe it was his work on the second volume - .....

S: But it's true, it's very difficult sometimes to ascertain what happened - even at a council meeting sometimes. Anyway, let's have lunch.

[End of side 1 side 2]

4

*"**The fourth duty** is to use the tongue for speaking out.*
Just as brotherhood calls for silence about unpleasant things, so it requires the utterance of favourable things. Indeed, this is more particularly a feature of brotherhood, because anyone satisfied with silence alone might as well seek the fellowship of the People of the Tombs. You wish for brothers so as to benefit by them, not just to escape being hurt by them, and the point of silence is to avoid hurt."

S: That last sentence is really the key sentence: 'You wish for brothers so as to benefit by them, not just to escape being hurt by them, and the point of silence is to avoid hurt.' Therefore one should also speak out positively. You don't make friends with someone just because you are afraid of his enmity, you don't make friends with him just to avoid his enmity, you make friends with him for the sake of a positive benefit. In the same way it isn't enough simply not to speak in a way which is displeasing to your friend; you should speak also in a way that is pleasing to him. That's the general statement or general principle. So let's go on and see how that works out in greater detail.

"You should use the tongue to express affection to your brother, and to enquire agreeably about his circumstances. For instance, in asking about some accident that has befallen him, you should show the heart's concern on his behalf and over his slow recovery. Thus you should indicate by word and deed that you disapprove of all circumstances that are disagreeable to him, and use your tongue to let him know that you share his joy in all conditions that give him pleasure. For brotherhood means participating together in joy and sadness.
The Prophet (God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
- If one of you loves his brother, let him know it!"

S: So this is pretty clear and pretty straightforward, isn't it? Do you think people always do this, do you think they do this sufficiently? Do you think they sufficiently use the tongue to express affection to their brother, etc? Or do they tend to take the attitude that he knows it anyway? If so, why do you think that is? Why this reluctance to express affection when you actually feel it?

Abhaya: Maybe fear of rejection.

S: Well, here, of course, by very definition, it is your brother, so there should be no question of rejection.

Prakasha: It can be an embarrassment if you have strong feelings, perhaps.

S: Why should one be embarrassed by one's own strong feelings? Maybe one's just up against the Anglo-Saxon, not to say English,

temperament, maybe this is a difficulty only within that particular culture. But even so, within the Muslim tradition, within the Islamic tradition, al-Ghazali seems to feel it necessary actually to make this point - that 'you should use the tongue to express affection to your brother and to enquire agreeably about his circumstances.' So apparently some measure of exhortation was necessary even for Muslims living in wherever it was that al-Ghazali himself was living and writing. He cites the authority of the Prophet himself: 'If one of you loves his brother, let him know it!' Sometimes people don't even suspect that you have a sneaking liking for them. They might even think you dislike them; it might come as a pleasant surprise to be told that they actually like you, and no doubt would improve relations immensely.

And what about this: 'asking about some accident that has befallen him,' and showing 'the heart's concern on his behalf and over his slow recovery'? I think sometimes people do that. Fairly recently around the FWBO there have been one or two accidents and so on, and people have shown their very strong concern, and so on. For instance, when Jayapushpa had her accident, it was very noticeable the concern shown by other people, especially other women Order members, who really did rally round, and apparently she was inundated with get-well cards and bunches of flowers and other gifts.

'Thus you should indicate by word and deed that you disapprove of all circumstances that are disagreeable to him, and use your tongue to let him know that you share his joy in all conditions that give him pleasure. For brotherhood means participating together in joy and sadness.' This is also quite an important point. You show that you feel as he feels. You share his joys, you share his sorrows. It's as though you need to show him that you're on his side, as it were; you're with him, and you do that by showing him that you feel as he feels, you rejoice when he rejoices, you're sad when he is sad; the assumption presumably being that he has, so to speak, good cause for joy or for sorrow.

Tejamitra: It's a sort of reaffirmation of the friendship.

S: Yes. There are few things so damping as when you are very enthusiastic about something, and somebody else, especially a friend, isn't. For instance, you might say, 'I went to a concert last night. I really enjoyed it, it was my favourite Mozart symphony and I was really carried away', and the other person says, 'I don't care much for Mozart.' [Laughter] It can be very damping, can't it? It certainly doesn't enhance your own joy.

All right, then, let's pass on to that next paragraph, which is very important.

"He gave this command because the communication brings about an increase in love. If the brother knows that you love him he will naturally love you, without a doubt. If you know that he loves you too, then without a doubt your love will increase. Thus love will grow progressively from either side and will multiply."

S: So it's not merely that the expression of love gives expression to, and in a way confirms, the love that is already there: the expression, the communication of love, especially the mutual communication of love, actually enhances that feeling, it increases that feeling. Obviously the expression must be sincere, it mustn't be merely frothy and effusive. [Pause]

Do you think that this is a universal rule that one should always do this? Some traditions might say otherwise; perhaps the Zen tradition would

say otherwise.

Devaraja: Why would the Zen tradition do that? It just seems common sense to take the approach he's suggesting in here.

S: Well, has one ever come across or read any sort of recommendation to that effect in Zen literature?

Devaraja: Well, it's just that you were suggesting that there might be a different approach in Zen, but I was just saying that -

S: Well, for instance, in Zen, in the case of meditation, you turn your face to the wall, at least in some Zen schools; perhaps that is of some significance. In the case of the Zen people that I've had any contact with, the whole aspect of *kalyana mitrata* doesn't seem to be much stressed. Perhaps the relationship with the *roshi* - but even that tends to be, one gets the impression, rather stern, at least on the surface, at least outwardly. One can hardly imagine a *roshi* telling his disciple what a good chap he was; the principle seems to be to clobber him all the time, to hit him over the head. Perhaps that is an exaggeration, and that is of course called 'grandmotherly kindness', but the Zen tradition seems to believe - at least as one has encountered it or as it's presented, that kindness expresses itself in ..... and strictness and discipline, not in expressions of affection or good will and so on, as though that is almost weakening.

Devaraja: I've seen photographs, though, from a Japanese Zen monastery, of some of the monks just gassing around together and obviously thoroughly enjoying each other's company.

S: Yes, there is that aspect, too; for instance, one hears about parties after sesshins where even the *roshi* gets a bit drunk. That would suggest that they almost go from one extreme to another. There's a lot of willed effort in the course of the sesshin, then they completely relax and go to the other extreme, because human nature just can't stand it. If they're to go on functioning at all they've got to unwind. That doesn't really seem very skilful to me.

But anyway, with regard to the attitude of Zen, I was only thinking aloud, but one does get this overall impression of Zen as a tradition which perhaps would not encourage the expression of positive emotion in the way that is envisaged here. But certainly in what one might call the general Buddhist tradition, going back to the Buddha himself - not that Zen doesn't profess to go back to the Buddha himself - one does perhaps find this sort of element more, the expression of positive emotion. Because the Buddha does say, I think, somewhere, that you show your affection to your brother monk through kindly words, kindly deeds and kindly thoughts. So kindly words, kindly speech, is definitely included here.

Prakasha: There's a passage in Philip Kapleau's *Zen Dawn in the West* where somebody asks a question about developing compassion, and I think the answer is roughly that if you get on with your 'just sitting' and mindfulness of breathing and those sort of practices, compassion and mettā will look after themselves; you don't actually need to do anything to cultivate them directly.

S: I would say that, in a way, that isn't true, inasmuch as no spiritual practice looks after itself, not until you've reached quite a high level of

development. So, in the same way that meditation itself doesn't look after itself, so your relations, your positive relations with other people, don't look after themselves. I think even if you are quite advanced in meditation, that doesn't necessarily automatically reveal itself fully in your relations with other people. You have, as it were, to work to bring that meditative experience right down into your relations with other people.

Devaraja: It's interesting that there's such a prevalence of marriage among Japanese *roshis*.

S: Ah, yes, indeed. I would say, despite the Theravada's reputation for aloofness and all that, in actual practice most Theravada *bhikkhus*, that I've encountered certainly, are really quite friendly - much more so, I think, than the laity that support them, in many cases. I don't say they do it deliberately as a spiritual practice or that it's carried to a very great extent, but it is certainly there and it is quite noticeable.

Prasannasiddhi: There was a magazine - I think it was *Voice of the Buddha* or one of these Eastern magazines - where the Dalai Lama was meeting the head of the - I think it was in Thailand or something like that, one of those Buddhist countries; and they were both smiling and there was a competition or something to see whose smile was the biggest, between the Dalai Lama and the head of one of these Theravadin outfits; they both had this big smile.

S: But this whole question of giving expression to positive emotion is based in a way on the principle that the outer should be as the inner; that it isn't enough to have an inner realisation or inner feeling, however positive, but that that must find expression throughout your whole being, in terms of your action and also in terms of your speech. Otherwise you don't fully and completely experience it. It isn't enough to have thoughts of mettā, there must be actions expressive of mettā and words expressive of mettā. In other words, an experience, to be complete, cannot be confined to the mental plane or the mental aspect.
This is the whole point of the distinction between the Path of Vision and the Path of Transformation. The vision is as it were mental, but it must find expression through all the other aspects of your personality: first of all in your emotional life itself, then in your actions, your whole way of life, your lifestyle, even your way of earning a living, your speech, and so on. And these reinforce the original mental experience, they feed back into it.

One can depict the Eightfold Path in the form of a circle - do you see this? Because you start off with the Transcendental experience which is, so to speak, mental; that informs your emotional life; that finds expression in speech and in action and in your whole way of life, your livelihood, your economic activities. And it finds broader expression, one might say, in continual mindfulness which refines; or - I've forgotten one stage: in the concentration of all your energies; and then it finds expression in the suffusion of everything that you do with the quality of awareness, and that leads you gradually, naturally, into *samadhi*, which is not just concentration but it represents that sort of reinforced mental state; which acts as a further support, or an even stronger support, for the development of Insight, so the Insight itself can be carried a stage further, so the vision is enhanced and the process of transformation can become yet more radical; it goes round and round. Do you see what I mean?

So in the same way, if you express - if you have, say, an experience of mettā and you give expression to that and you act upon that, and another person experiences that and reciprocates, then you have an increased, an enhanced experience of your original mettā. So a point comes when the way to the intensification of the experience is through the expression of the experience; especially when it happens that you get a feedback, so to

speak, as in terms of reciprocated mettā, from another person.

One could draw a quite interesting diagram of the Eightfold Path in the form of a circle - perhaps somebody should try to do that - with the different stages circling round and then the stage of *samadhi* as it were coming to rest underneath the stage of Insight - do you see what I mean? - so the stage of Insight rests upon the stage of *samadhi*; because there could not have been any Insight to begin with unless there was some degree at least of *samadhi* there. So the degree of *samadhi* on which the *vipassana*, the Insight, originally rested would be reinforced as a result of the whole process of transformation.

Anyway, 'communication brings about an increase in love'; this is the principle here. And one can see here a difference between positive emotion and negative emotion. If you express a negative emotion, what's the result - I mean, if you express it in a positive manner, what happens to that? Does it increase or decrease? I would have thought it decreased, that you gained relief from that. If you felt very angry, for instance, and then gave expression to your anger, I would have thought that tended to diminish the anger. No?

Tejamitra: You said that you gave it a positive expression rather than a negative expression.

S: Yes, when I said 'positive expression' I don't mean an expression in the form of non-anger, but you're expressing it not to indulge it but so that you may be free from it - at least in the long run. So if you give expression to a negative emotion in that 'positive', inverted commas, manner, it will decrease the original negative emotion. But in the case of the positive emotion, expression would appear to increase it rather than decrease it - the expression of a positive emotion being assumed itself to be positive and not just by way of, say, self-indulgence. Could one say that - that, if you express a negative emotion, it tends to diminish it and bring it under control, whereas if you express a positive emotion it tends to enhance it and build it up?

Ratnavira: Presumably at the same time you could give a negative emotion if you like a negative expression which will tend to increase it.

S: Yes, indeed, yes. I was thinking of Blake's poem, you see:

'I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow'

Prasannasiddhi: Would it not depend on whether you - if you just burst out with a lot of anger at someone -

S: Well, I would not regard that as positive. I did say... that's why i said a positive expression of a negative emotion. By positive, I mean one which is under control and where the expression is ultimately - despite the fact that it is an expression of a negative emotion - ultimately for a skilful end, in the long run if not in the short.

Anyway, that wasn't something I was completely sure about, but something rather that I was wondering: whether one could not say that a negative emotion, skilfully expressed (perhaps I should say skilful rather than positive), tended to diminish, whereas a positive emotion skilfully expressed would tend to increase. I think one probably could say that, although you on the whole don't seem very sure about that. Perhaps one just has to see and observe and experiment. All right let's carry on then.

"Mutual love among believers is required by the Sacred Law, and is desired in religion. Therefore the Messenger pointed out the way of it, saying:
- Guide one another, love one another."

S: This is just as it were confirmation from authority - the Messenger, of course, being Muhammad. One should not only guide one another, not only give good advice, give a good example, but love one another too.

"Part of the matter is calling your brother by his favourite names, be he absent or present. Umar (may God be pleased with him!) said:
- There are three ways of showing sincere brotherly love: give him the greeting 'Peace!' when first you meet him, make him comfortable, and call him by his favourite names."

S: Muslims greet each other by saying 'Peace!' I think there's a special formula of greetings embodying this word 'Peace', to be used only to other Muslims. And then there's 'make him comfortable' - make him welcome, make him at home as it were, and 'call him by his favourite names.'

Now what exactly does this mean? It seems that Muslims, or particularly Arabs, have a long string of names, and presumably one can't use all of them always, so perhaps someone has a favourite name that he especially likes to be called by;perhaps he doesn't like certain of his names. Or he might have various nicknames, some of which he likes and some of which he doesn't like. If, for instance, presumably someone doesn't like to be called 'Shorty', then you don't address him as 'Shorty'. [Laughter] Do you see what I mean? Sometimes it happens that someone has several, let's say, given names, and his first given name is the one by which his family knows him or calls him, and he doesn't particularly like that name; he likes perhaps his second or third given name. So, all right, if you're a friend of his and he prefers to be called by that name, if that's his favourite name, well, by all means use it.

The emphasis seems to be, the point seems to be that you should just do things that please him, say things that please him. And a person's name is quite important; at least it's important to the person. I remember reading - I don't know whether it was Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* or whether it was one of its honourable successors, but the point made in the book, whichever it was, was that you should constantly use or refer to a person's name. If you're introduced to him and someone says, 'This is Mr. Smith', you say, 'Oh, how do you do, Mr. Smith. I've been wanting to meet you for a long time, Mr. Smith. I've heard quite a lot about you, Mr. Smith.' You constantly iterate his name, because a person likes to hear the sound of their own name, and to know that you know it. It's a sort of indirect insult to say to someone, 'What did you say your name was?', because if you haven't attached importance to his name - and if you don't remember it of course you don't attach

importance to it - you're not attaching importance to him.

Abhaya: People say, 'Oh, I'm hopeless at names, I can never remember names.'

S: Yes, so that isn't really a very good sort of thing to say. It's almost like saying, 'I don't really care much about you. I don't take much notice, I don't care who they are. Mr. Smith is just the same to me as Mr. Brown.'

Kulananda: 'Excuse me, I'm not very good at remembering insignificant people's names.' *(Laughter.)*

S: It's said, for instance, of some American politicians - I believe even American presidents - that they have a remarkable faculty for remembering people's names, especially first names. So when they go to some two-horse town or two-buggy town where they haven't been for 20 years, some sort of horny-handed son of the soil comes up to them - 'Hello, Mr. President', and he can turn round and say, 'Oh, hello, Bill' - and, yes, his name is Bill; he has remembered. This is the sort of quality that makes presidents - or so we are assured by the more cynical.

Subhuti: Americans use names a lot. When you speak to them they do constantly -

S: Well, they've all read their Dale Carnegies or whatever. For instance this point comes out in the case of Order members and their families. Order members like to be called by their Order names, but sometimes families don't like to call them by their Order names. In other words, they don't like to please them; yes, this is what it really means.

Devaraja: Does your mum call you *Sangharakshita*?

S: In writing, yes, but she says she can't pronounce it, so she doesn't actually say it; but she's willing to. But when she writes to me she always uses it, because she copies it down from an envelope.

But some of you have got quite short and simple names. One of the reasons I give short and simple names whenever I can is not only to help the person himself, but - Sometimes people have been heard asking, a couple of days after an ordination, 'What is my name?' [Laughter] Meanwhile surreptitiously looking, in the case of Tuscany, at the list which has been posted outside the shrine just to check their name after a couple of days, because they weren't quite sure of it! 'There's Bill Smith - oh yes, he's So-and-so-and-so-and-so-ananda.'

But this is important, not only calling a person by their name, but calling them by the name that they like to be called by, and - perhaps some people don't like to be called by certain nicknames, for instance. And you can also understand the significance, the psychology in a way, of some of the Hindu law books, even the *Manusmrti*, where instructions are given as to the kind of names to be used by people of different castes. A brahmin is supposed to bear a name suggestive of learning, a *kshatriya* of bravery, a *vaishya* of wealth, and a *shudra* of contempt. I've mentioned in *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus* that in Kerala, for instance, I found that Untouchables there were addressed by such names as *'Dirty', 'Stupid', 'Idiot', 'Thief'*, and had to respond to such names.

Kulananda: Even use such names among themselves?

S: I expect they did, in the long run. One couldn't exactly find out that, but they responded to those names and were known by those names, and of course they were forbidden to incorporate names of gods in their names. Most Hindus incorporate names of gods in their names, like *Krishnaprasad* or *Kalidasa*, but *shudras* generally and Untouchables especially were forbidden to do that. Their names should express servitude and contempt. So this is applied psychology with a vengeance. And this is why in the case of Order members' names, the names have a definite meaning, and that meaning is, I hope, always inspiring and positive.

Devaraja: It caused a few laughs, Lokamitra saying that he always recognised brahmins in Maharashtra; they're called names like 'dik-shit'. [Laughter]

S: 'Dikshit' means 'initiated'.

Devaraja: Well, it's just that it's quite funny to a Westerner.

_____: It's backfired a bit on them.

S: Well, if one knows English and has a certain perverted sense of humour. [Laughter]

Also there is this question within the Order of abbreviating names. I must say I don't approve of names being abbreviated. I wonder why people do abbreviate names.

Abhaya: Well, in the case of the longer ones, I know of two which are always abbreviated. Vajrakumara is nearly always known as 'Vajra'; Lalitavajra is nearly always known as 'LV'.

Kulananda: And Siddhiratna as 'Siddhi'.

S: I wonder if there's any reason why those particular people have had their names abbreviated, because there are other people whose names are no less long but which have not been abbreviated.

Kuladeva: But I don't think everybody calls them by those abbreviated names.

Abhaya: Well, most people in their circle.

Kuladeva: Yes, those that they're intimate with.

Subhuti: I think that in one or two of those cases they like to be called -

S: Well, perhaps there is a thing of formality and informality; perhaps for some of them it suggests informality in a way that they would find agreeable, but one doesn't necessarily agree that using a person's full name does show formality in a sense that is undesirable between friends. For instance, in India one finds that English-speaking Indians, certainly among our own ex-Untouchable friends, regularly refer to even people who are very close friends of theirs, intimate friends, as 'Mr. So-and-so'. Yes; they wouldn't think of dropping the 'Mr.'

Tejamitra: What are you saying - is that dishonourable or something? I mean, why not shorten people's names?

S: Well, first of all, if the name represents them, or the name is them, if you cut the name in a way you cut them;you're not recognising what they fully are. And especially when it's a so to speak religious name, both parts of which have a significance for that particular person or in respect of that particular person. There is also the point that if you shorten people's names a lot of people will end up with the same name, which would be rather confusing.

I tend to think that this tendency to shorten names is expressive perhaps of a somewhat sloppy sort of attitude. I don't think one can say that if you're abbreviating names in this way you're being pleasantly informal and therefore more friendly, and if you don't abbreviate you're being formal and therefore unfriendly. That might be the assumption, but I think that would be completely mistaken.

Ratnavira: In my experience when people have called me 'RV' rather than Ratnavira, I've felt as though people have been assuming a false familiarity, and I've often objected to it.

S: But the basic point here is, according to this text, that one should call one's brother by his favourite name. If someone doesn't like being called in a particular way, well, just don't call him in that way, whether you agree or disagree with his reasons, if there are any reasons. It's enough that he just doesn't like to be called in that way, so far as you're concerned, or that he likes to be called in a particular way. If he says, 'Please don't call me that', or 'I'd rather you called me something else', one should at once go along with those wishes and should not insist on calling him in a way that he doesn't really like.

Vajrananda: I quite often get the impression with shortening names in the Friends that it's quite often trying to dissociate it from being an Order member. I've noticed that people on the fringes quite often make it into a nickname rather than anything else; they're trying to dissociate it from its meaning. I think Vajrakumara's name is shortened very often for that sort of reason.

S: Because if you use someone's initials, well then it could be any secular name. I mean someone, for instance, who was around, not connected with the FWBO, wouldn't know that 'LV' say stood for Lalitavajra, he might think it stood for Leslie someone or other. So by using initials of Order names you sort of deprive the name of its Buddhistic significance. People object to, or profess to object to, being referred to by a number, as they allege happens in bureaucratic circles; well, perhaps they should no less strongly object to being referred to by simply letters, or a

combination of letters and numbers like a motor car.

Tejamitra: It's actually an American habit, I think - that's my impression - using initials and just generally shortening names, just -

[End of Tape 11 Tape 12]

Prasannasiddhi: Can I ask a point about the people who are quoted? Are they well-known scholars or poets or something, or are they just sort of odd people?

S: Most of the names I just don't know, but I assume that they are reasonably authoritative. I think many of the sayings of the early companions of Muhammad are often quoted, and of course the sayings of well-known scholars and writers; it would be such people. Umar was quoted; Umar was almost certainly the first Caliph who was a personal companion of Muhammad.

Subhuti: Are all those followed by 'May God be pleased with him!' companions?

S: That could well be, because they are especially prescinded, yes.

Subhuti: I think it's a different formula ..... - because Ali is referred to as a companion.

"Another part is praising him for the good qualities you know him to possess, in the presence of one before whom he would choose to be praised. This is one of the most efficacious ways of attracting affection. Likewise praising his children, his family, his skill and his actions; then on to his intelligence, his character, his appearance, his handwriting, his poetry, his composition, and everything he enjoys. All this without lying or exaggeration,' -

S: Ah, here's the rub!

"though it is necessary to embellish whatever admits of embellishment." [Laughter]

S: So 'Another part is praising him for the good qualities you know him to possess,' - that's the first point, they must be genuinely good qualities - 'in the presence of one before whom he would **choose** to be praised.' There might be people in front of whom he would not choose to be praised. Those who praise him only in the presence of those by whom he would choose to be praised - So 'this is one of the most efficacious ways of attracting affection.'

Nagabodhi: It does read a bit like a Dale Carnegie manual.

S: 'Likewise praise him, his children, his family, his skill and his actions' - everything that belongs to him or pertains to him. 'Then on to his

intelligence, his character, his appearance, his handwriting' - don't forget calligraphy is highly esteemed among Arabs - well, among Islamic people generally. ' - his poetry, his compositions, and everything he enjoys. All this without lying or exaggeration, though it is necessary to embellish whatever admits of embellishment.' It's not quite clear what exactly 'embellishing' means, but perhaps it means using flowery or ornate expressions, or being slightly or mildly hyperbolical.

Tejamitra: I've certainly found this with friends; if you happen to have met someone's family or a member of their family, and you like them and you tell them that, it does seem to have a very good effect, that someone is dear(?) to them in a different way.

S: Even 'his appearance'; sometimes people like to be told that they look good in that new jumper or it's a smart pair of new boots, or something of that sort. People are quite pleased by little things of that sort; it's an indirect compliment to their good taste, or whatever. Anyway, the basic principle here is of pleasing people through your speech.

"Still more fundamental is that you communicate to him the praise of anyone who praises him, showing your pleasure, for to hide such praise would be pure envy."

S: That's pretty straightforward, isn't it? Would you agree with that? It's as though if you don't repeat to someone the praise that you heard about him, you're keeping something back, in a way you're keeping back from him something that belongs to him. It's as though you ought to pass it on to him; why should you keep it back, why should you conceal it? If you do, well, it would seem that it would be out of envy only.

One very - what shall I say? - relevant form of this kind of thing is if, say, someone has written a book and you come across a favourable review, by all means send him a copy, but if you come across an unfavourable review, don't say anything about it. I've read about friends and relations of certain authors in the past who deliberately kept back and hid unfavourable reviews, because they knew that the author concerned would find them quite upsetting.

Prasannasiddhi: Though there is this thing about giving positive critical feedback.

S: Well, the emphasis should be on the 'positive' rather than the 'critical'.

Kuladeva: Also it wouldn't be your own critical feedback in this case.

S: I'm thinking simply of a generally abusive review which shows lack of understanding, so there would be no point in bringing that to somebody's notice, unless they were especially either thick-skinned or genuinely above such things. Anyway let's carry on.

"Furthermore, you should thank him for what he does on your behalf, indeed for his very intention even if he does not succeed completely. Ali (may God be pleased with him!) said:
- He who does not praise his brother for his good intention will not praise him for his good deed."

S: So 'thank him for what he does on your behalf'. This is also important. Often one takes things for granted, doesn't one? Sometimes people take a lot of trouble on one's behalf and you don't express any thanks. I know it's the Indian tradition not to express any thanks; I'm not so sure it's the Buddhist tradition entirely not to express thanks. As I mentioned the other day, the Tibetans certainly do express thanks, and perhaps that is, in a way, more Buddhistic.

Vajrananda: Is there any mention in the sutras of the Indians giving thanks in those days?

S: Well, giving thanks is a little different from thanking. The Buddha is represented, at least in the English translations of the Pali texts, as giving thanks after a meal. But giving thanks in that sense or in that form means rather invoking a blessing upon the givers of the meal. But that is a form of thanking, isn't it? Certainly that form of thanking was quite common, if not universal, in early Indian Buddhism, in fact probably throughout Indian Buddhism. What do we mean by thanking someone? Well, when we thank someone what are we doing, actually? If someone hands you a cup of tea and you say 'Thank you' - 'I thank you' being the full expression - what does one mean by that?

Nagabodhi: You're acknowledging the fact that they have taken that trouble, they've actually taken you into account and they've acted on that.

S: You're expressing appreciation of their action, expressing gratitude, even indebtedness. I wonder what the etymology of the word 'thank' is? Can anyone tell us - 'to thank'? We use the term often enough, but it becomes a sort of verbal counter. Perhaps we'll have to look it up some time - what is meant by 'thank'. We need an etymological dictionary. Perhaps we'll go into it some other time. But, yes, it does express a positive emotion, when genuinely uttered and not uttered as a sort of social routine. Sometimes people can say 'thank you' in an ironical way or even a contemptuous way, and that isn't very pleasant.

Anyway, the text says 'you should thank him', that is to say your brother, 'for what he does on your behalf, indeed for his very intention even if he does not succeed completely.' And then Ali is quoted as saying, 'He who does not praise his brother for his good intention will not praise him for his good deed'. Because the good intention is as it were the seed of good deed. If you don't appreciate the one you're unlikely to appreciate the other. So thank a person even for his good intentions, even if he didn't succeed completely in what he tried to do for you. All right next paragraph then.

"What is even more potent in attracting affection is defending him in his absence whenever he is abused or his honour impugned, explicitly or by innuendo. Brotherhood calls for briskness in protection and aid, for rebuking the fault-finder and addressing him harshly. Not to speak out here disturbs the breast and alienates the heart. It is a shortcoming in fulfilling the duty of brotherhood. When the Messenger of God (God bless him and give him Peace!) compared two brothers to a pair of hands, one of which washes the other, he meant that one should aid the other and stand in for him."

S: This is very important indeed. I'm afraid it's an area in which people often fall down - not springing to the defence of your brother when he is attacked verbally in his absence. 'Defending him in his absence whenever he is abused or his honour impugned, explicitly or by innuendo.

Brotherhood calls for briskness in protection and aid, for rebuking the fault-finder and addressing him harshly.' So a very strong view is taken of that sort of thing, abusing someone etc. who happens to be a brother of yours in his absence. You should not tolerate any such behaviour.

'Not to speak out here disturbs the breast and alienates the heart. It is a shortcoming in fulfilling the duty of brotherhood.' It's very easy to misunderstand people if you don't know them very well. It's very easy to misrepresent them. So if you give expression to your wrong understanding of somebody, then someone else who is present who is a friend or brother of that person should instantly correct that misunderstanding.

Or sometimes it may take the form of simply insisting that the other person should be given the benefit of the doubt - at least that - or given the benefit of any doubt there may be. As when you're waiting for someone to turn up for a meeting, and somebody says, 'Ah well, I suppose he's just not bothering' - then you should at once say, 'No, let's not assume that; it could be that he's been unavoidably detained. Let's wait and see. I can't imagine that he would deliberately be late.' You can say some such thing. People generally are very ready to condemn. But even if one has had reason 99 times before to be let down by that person in that particular way, you shouldn't assume he's going to let you down even the hundredth time. He may not; you may be misjudging him. All right, let's carry on then.

"God's Messenger (God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
- The Muslim is brother to the Muslim. He does not wrong him, does not forsake him, does not betray him. What treachery and desertion to abandon him to the rending of his honour! It is like abandoning him to the rending of his flesh. How vile in a brother to see you savaged by a dog, tearing your flesh, yet remain silent and unmoved by compassion and zeal to defend you! The rending of honour is harder on souls than the rending of flesh, which is why God (Exalted is He!) compared it with the eating of carrion meat. For He said:
- Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his brother's corpse? (Qur'an 49.12)"

S: There is this well-known saying of Muhammad, 'The Muslim is brother to the Muslim', which, as was pointed out the other day, has its limitations. 'He does not wrong him, does not forsake him, does not betray him', and al-Ghazali applies it to this matter of defending your brother in his absence. He says, 'What treachery and desertion to abandon him to the rending of his honour! It is like abandoning him to the rending of his flesh.' That is, if you hear your brother being slandered in his absence and you keep quiet, it's just like standing by and doing nothing when your brother is attacked and severely bitten by a dog; suggesting that the slanderer is like a dog, almost like a mad dog.

But a point that arises here is this insistence on honour and good reputation. It's as though nowadays we don't bother so much about that as people used to.

Abhaya: It was very strong in the seventeenth century - in Shakespeare's plays, the concept of honour - very strong. We hardly use the word nowadays.

S: Well, I think the concept of honour is significant in the context of a community which is rather closely knit and where you are personally known, and in which the degree of honour in which you are held shows itself in all sorts of outward ways, even quite formal ways. Nowadays

we are not personally known to most of the people that we meet or see, for instance on the street, so we can afford not to care what they think about us. But if you're moving in a small community, that community is your community, and you live and die in that, you're in close connection with all those people. What they think of you, what they hear about you, becomes very, very important; because if you were dishonoured in any way it would affect the way that people treated you from moment to moment also, it would affect the way in which you were saluted in the street, and you would feel that. So honour seems to have been a much more important concept in former times, possibly just because communities were smaller and more closely knit. But there may be more to it than that; perhaps it's an aspect of self-respect, perhaps there is less self-respect nowadays than there used to be, and perhaps also so many things are said by so many people that you can't possibly react to them all.

Kulananda: Isn't it the case now that one doesn't concern oneself with the way people whose values you do not share see you? So if you're living in a small community you're living amongst people whose values you share; therefore their view of you will be similar to your view of yourself. Whereas in a community where there are so many different values this can be a matter of some indifference to you.

S: Well, basically, as in the case I mentioned, you care only about the opinion of you held by those people with whom you're in personal contact.

Kulananda: But it's not only a question of personal contact, but also a matter of whether you respect their values in the first place. If you don't respect their values it's not really a matter of interest to you whether they respect you.

S: In a way that's quite a dangerous position, because that means an absolute schism between one part of humanity or one part of the group, one part of the community and another. Well, maybe that has happened, but if it has it's probably quite undesirable and quite unhealthy, when you're completely indifferent to what other people with whom you've at least some contact, think about you. It almost suggests a degree of alienation between people, perhaps a degree of alienation on one's own part from them.

Kulananda: Perhaps the case you stated would be extremely unlikely to -

S: Can one not care that people misjudge you?

Nagabodhi: You'd have to care very little indeed for people .....

S: Yes. They may be completely wrong, but don't you feel it, even that they are wrong and that they are misjudging you? Does it not affect you that you are seen in that way, seen wrongly by other people? Can you in fact dismiss it, does it not have some effect upon you? Can you not care about it? You may not agree with it, but can it not affect you?

To take an extreme example - say, in a totalitarian state, for instance - take communist China. For instance, you may uphold certain values; maybe you're a Confucian scholar and everybody else that you know or are in contact with decries and denounces those values. You may think that you're right and they're wrong, but it must affect you if everybody around you is despising you and mocking you and pointing the finger of

scorn at you, and thinking you're utterly mistaken and wrong and wicked, and all the rest of it, unless you are virtually an enlightened person. You cannot not be affected by it.

Kulananda: But you shouldn't be affected by it as regards your own self-respect, surely? You should be affected with regard to -

S: But does your self-respect depend entirely upon yourself? I am leaving aside the case of what I call a virtually enlightened person, but does your self-respect in fact depend entirely upon yourself?

Kuladeva: But the fact is that conventional morality will impinge upon natural morality, so that people may disapprove of what you do not because there's anything intrinsically wrong with that, but -

S: The question of who is right and who is wrong is in a way not really at stake. One assumes, for the sake of argument, that you, the one person, are right and everybody else is totally wrong, let's say; but even then is it possible for one's self-respect to be determined entirely by oneself? Is it practically possible?

Kulananda: I can imagine situations, small ..... situations, in which one's self-respect is in fact heightened by the sense of standing up against opposition, and by sticking to your guns in the face of opposition of that sort, sticking to your individuality in the face of opposition from the group.

S: Well, one would have, in that case, to be able to divorce completely your sense of self-respect from what other people thought about you. I think that would be incredibly difficult to keep up.

Devaraja: Also it would mean that there would be virtually no bonds of affection between you and other people.

S: Yes, because the cost, the price that you'd have to pay would be to completely cut yourself off from all those other people. That's why I think one finds in - well, I've cited the instance of China because it certainly happens there many times - that, rather than suffer that, the individual in the end will break down and accuse himself or herself and say, 'Yes, I was in the wrong; yes, I confess it' in order to be restored to the group, and even perhaps genuinely believe it.

But what I'm in effect saying is that it's not so easy to stand alone, not being an enlightened being, and it isn't such an easy matter to maintain one's self-respect in view of almost universal disapproval. You may start thinking, 'Maybe I <u>am</u> wrong.' I'm thinking, for instance, of Martin Luther. He stood alone, virtually; he had the whole weight of the Catholic Church against him, and even that argument was put forward: 'Do you think, Martin, that you are right and the Church - which is 1500 years old, which has produced so many noble and holy saints and bishops and archbishops and cardinals and popes - do you think that you are right and the whole of the universal Church is wrong?' And he had to say that, yes, he believed that he was right and everybody else was wrong. But afterwards, even throughout his life, he used to have doubts, he used to have nightmares, in which he wondered, perhaps he was wrong. Well, no doubt he was a man of very strong character and very noble character.

He wasn't enlightened, we may say, in Buddhist terms, and therefore he used to suffer in this way, thinking that perhaps he was wrong after all, even after Protestantism or at least Reform had been established, years after.

But apart from that I'm still wondering whether self-respect is in some ways or to some extent not a reflex of what the group thinks about you, or at least what we usually call or think of or experience as self-respect. In other words, have we ever really experienced self-respect, because we haven't really experienced ourselves independently of the group? Can we be sure to what extent the feeling that we have about ourselves is a sort of product, a reflex, of the feeling that other people have about us? It's very difficult to get down to the rock bottom of what we actually feel about ourselves.

Kulananda: Even if you stand opposed you derive self-respect, in its lower form as it were, from a sense of opposition, so it's still in dependence upon your relationship with -

S: Is it even self-respect, necessarily? Perhaps there could be another word for it? Yes, you're acting very nobly, you're disagreeing with other people, but what is self-respect? Perhaps we haven't even gone into that sufficiently. What does it mean to respect oneself?

Subhuti: A sense of your own worth and value.

S: I think it is very difficult to divorce that from the feelings of the people you're in contact with about you. Hence people feeling such guilt, for instance, long after anyone in contact with them has actually started trying to make them feel guilty, those feelings persist.

Nagabodhi: If you're trying to develop individuality, doesn't your idea of self-respect shift to being - well, having a sense of the value of your <u>own</u> wisdom, your own feelings, your own thought? That is, as you begin to separate what is your experience and your thought from what you've just acquired, when you actually start to back that, that's when you actually begin to discover a real sense of self-respect.

S: Well, put it this way: before you can have self-respect you must have a self <u>to</u> respect, which means an integrated or relatively integrated self.

Anyway, this is a bit of a digression. I was only concerned to make sure that we didn't take anything for granted, so to speak. But it does seem that in former times much more importance was attached - leaving aside this question of self-respect - to being respected by other people. We have reached a position where we almost think it is <u>not</u> a good thing to be respected by other people, but it is a quite positive and healthy thing to be respected, for the right reasons, by the right people. I think we've entirely perhaps thrown away the baby with the bathwater here. We don't care for the respect of people whose respect perhaps we should care for.

Devaraja: There's something in the scriptures in that vein, isn't there? - this thing of shame -

S: Yes, not wishing to be blamed by the <u>wise</u>; the emphasis perhaps being on 'the wise'; not doing anything that those who are wise would blame you for.

Devaraja: Like, 'You are now a son of the Buddha and therefore you should act in accord with your family.'

S: Yes. In our anxiety to be individuals, we sometimes take up an unnecessarily antagonistic attitude towards whatever group we happen to belong to. 'I don't care what they think of me' - well, that isn't really a very mature attitude. Also, if you want to function in the world, what people think of you is of at least some importance. If people who are themselves worthy of respect - say, worthy of your respect - do respect you, it means very often that you can get things done much more smoothly and easily than you could otherwise.

This is not to say you should ever compromise your principles in order to win other people's approval; it must be genuine respect that they have for you. But even if you do have to disagree with them, very often if you're skilful you can do it in such a way that though you make your disagreement with them clear you can still retain their respect. You shouldn't make the disagreement, if you can possibly help it, clear in such a way that you lose their respect. In other words, their respect is worth having, assuming them to be people who are genuinely capable of giving respect.

For instance, to give an example from the Movement, if, for instance, a borough council - say Camden Borough Council or Tower Hamlets Borough Council, in the person of its officers, learns to respect people from the FWBO on account of their honesty, integrity, keeping their word, that will help us; it will help us in getting perhaps financial support and co-operation of various kinds which we need in order to function, maybe help us in getting property, and so on.

Subhuti: I suppose a difficulty comes when people's respect for you is based on their own wrong values and in a way there's a pressure on you to live up to their false expectations and unreal evaluation.

S: Well, people's respect for you may be limited, but it is not necessarily to that extent untrue. For instance, someone may respect you for your capacity to make money. Well, that may not be the whole story, say in the case of a co-op, but at least if they respect you so far, well, so far so good. The fact that they can respect you on that level will be generally helpful, and you can accept that respect without necessarily accepting the limited basis of the respect.

Subhuti: Take, say, the FWBO in relation to the Buddhist Society. The Buddhist Society, say, has the attitude that it is respect-worthy to be on good terms with all religions, and they see our position, our criticism of Christianity, as going against that.

S: I don't know whether the question of respect comes into it, that it is 'respect-worthy' - I'd go into that a little. I would say that the view could be taken that the FWBO was to be respected for its honesty and its clarity of thought in this field, and for its friendly feelings towards those with whom it in fact disagrees.

Subhuti: You might say that but - this is the point I'm getting at - they don't. They see respect in different terms.

S: Well, I think one would then have to enter into discussion or dialogue with them, inasmuch as they also do profess to be Buddhists, and try to show them that they'd got it wrong, and that our attitude was in fact one that was to be respected by other Buddhists. If they still couldn't see it, we would have to accept that there was a genuine divergence and that they were unable to respect in us a quality or characteristic which was in fact respect-worthy, which would be quite unfortunate, but if we had done our best to convince them and had failed, we wouldn't be any longer to blame.

Subhuti: All I'm really getting at is that you said that it's positive and healthy to be respected by the right people for the right reasons -

S: Well, I would say it would be a great pity if other Buddhist groups - that is to say at least I'm giving the benefit of the doubt - other groups calling themselves Buddhists were not able to respect a fellow-Buddhist movement, i.e. the FWBO, on account of qualities which are really respect-worthy because they are genuinely Buddhist. It would be very very sad if we felt that we didn't have their respect in that way, and it would be to some extent a loss on our part because it would be better that we had their full respect than otherwise; it would be unfortunate that we forfeited that by simply being more genuinely Buddhist.

Subhuti: So in a way what you're saying is that if you don't have people's respect because of a limitation on their part, then it's worth your while to try to rectify that.

S: Yes, I believe so, yes.

Subhuti: And you don't have to live up to their false idea of what respect-worthiness is, but it is incumbent on you to try to correct their attitude.

S: I think so, yes; well, not only for their sake but for yours as well. Because if you have the respect of other people whose respect you can perhaps, as in this case, naturally look for, that is a sort of accession of strength to you; you're better off with it than without it I think.

Subhuti: Because quite often what one does is that if people's expectation is false, then you just cut off, and that's actually quite-

S: Yes, I would say that that was actually quite undesirable, that you should make an effort to convince them and show them that they had misunderstood the issue, that you have not in fact deviated from Buddhism, you're being faithful to Buddhism in this particular respect, and that therefore you are deserving of their respect and not otherwise. And perhaps you can suggest that their own attitude has been mistaken. It isn't easy, of course. I mean, sometimes isolation may be forced upon one, but it is better that one is not isolated, either as an individual or as a group. If it is your principles that isolate you, you cannot compromise; but it would be, humanly speaking, better if you were not isolated.

Subhuti: But not at any price.

S: Not at any price, no, not at the cost of your principles.

One might also say that disrespect is a negative emotion, so if you are aware, if you are conscious, that other people have no respect for you, that they do not respect you, you're conscious of a negative emotion on their part towards you. In other words, you're conscious of yourself as the object of a negative emotion, and that cannot but be uncomfortable, and you may even have to use a certain amount of your energy counteracting the effect of your consciousness of that negative emotion on the part of other people towards yourself. So therefore it is in your own interest to ensure as much as you can that other people do have a positive attitude towards you or, as in this case, do feel respect for you, whether as an individual or as a group. So therefore I would say that it's in the interest, say, of the FWBO to ensure, to the extent that it possibly can, that it is in fact respected by other Buddhist groups, and that any lack of respect is not based upon ignorance and misunderstanding, because if it is we ought to do our best to remove it, in their interests as well as in our own. This in fact we have tried to do, to a great extent. Our efforts aren't always very well received, but we have tried from time to time, and in fact we are still trying.

_____: ..... next week.

S: Yes, indeed!

Anyway, the Koran is quoted as saying: 'Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his brother's corpse?', because that is in fact what you are doing when you stand by and allow your brother to be slandered in his absence.

The next paragraph introduces a slightly different subject.

"The angel, who in dreams provides sensory representation of what the spirit has learned from the Preserved Tablet, symbolises slander by the eating of carrion. Thus if someone dreams he is eating of carrion-flesh this means he is slandering people. For in his symbolism, that angel has regard for the correspondence and correlation between the thing and its symbol, the meaning of the symbol being understood spiritually and not in the outer forms."

[End of side one side two]

S: What is this Preserved Tablet?

Subhuti: Is this the sort of Transcendental Koran?

S: Yes, it is something like that. One could perhaps draw a very distant analogy and compare it with the *alaya*, the *alaya vijnana*.

So in Muslim tradition some significance is attached to dreams. In that tradition some dreams are said to contain hints or intimations of reality itself, or truth itself, and are said to be brought by angels, the angel being the intermediary between the higher and the lower worlds. So 'The angel, who in dreams provides sensory representation of what the spirit has learned from the Preserved Tablet, symbolises slander by the eating of carrion.' It's as though in dreams you have a sort of direct glimpse of what is written on the Preserved Tablet, but you can't understand it, you

can't bring it down into ordinary consciousness; it's the angel, as it were, who in dream provides you with a sort of translation into sensible terms, and those sensible terms you remember. But there is a correlation between the sensible terms and what they signify, what they symbolise. Thus, if someone dreams he is eating carrion flesh, this means he is slandering people.

'For in his symbolism, that angel has regard for the correspondence and correlation between the thing and its symbol, the meaning of the symbol being understood spiritually and not in the outer forms.' In a way that's quite Jungian, isn't it? One could of course understand the 'angel' not so much mythologically as psychologically. It's a bit like imagination - translating one's intuitions of the Transcendental world into concrete imagery which one can understand, and the concrete imagery is drawn, of course, from the sensible world, but not haphazardly, because everything in the sensible world corresponds, so to speak, to something in the suprasensory world, even in the Transcendental world.

Anyway, this is more in the nature of a note or comment on that reference to the eating of the flesh of his brother's corpse in the Koran.

"Therefore, the protection of brotherhood by repelling the blame of enemies and the criticism of fault-finders is a duty in the contract of brotherhood."

S: That's pretty clear, isn't it?

"Mujahid said:
- Refer to your brother in his absence only as you would have him refer to you in your absence."

S: So here the attention shifts from what other people say about your brother in his absence to what you yourself say about your brother in his absence, and the criterion is: 'Refer to your brother in his absence only as you would have him refer to you in your absence.' In other words, again the Golden Rule, the principle of reciprocity. That is pretty straightforward.

"There are two measures you can apply.
In the first case, when something is said about your brother, you consider what you would want him to reply on your behalf, if the same were said of you in his presence; then you must deal accordingly with the impugner of his honour.

In the second case, you suppose that he is present behind a wall, listening to your words, but thinking that you are unaware of his presence. Ask yourself how your heart would be moved to help him when you were in his hearing and sight, for so it should be in his absence."

[Break in recording]

_____: ..... indebtedness.

S: Well, it does include that, doesn't it? I'm trying to ascertain what the word actually means, not so much at this stage what it should mean, but

it does as generally used seem to include, at least sometimes, that aspect. The other person has done something for you, so you are indebted to him for that, and you acknowledge what he has done, therefore you acknowledge your indebtedness to him. Not that it necessarily means you have to pay him back something - well, not unless you want to.

Subhuti: Criticisms in *Shabda* - I've been criticised a couple of times quite recently, and I was surprised how much it affected me, entirely subjectively, objective matters aside.

S: Well, I think criticism can be very disconcerting if it is biased criticism or unjust criticism, because it means somebody else is not seeing you as you are, so to some extent that deprives you of a portion of your reality in relation to other people; you cannot but feel that. For instance the extreme example of this is when someone is unjustly accused of a crime and everybody else believes he's guilty; well, your consciousness of innocence sustains you to some extent, but I understand this is a very poor substitute for the approval of other people, other people just thinking or believing that you are innocent.

Kuladeva: What I noticed about one of the criticisms I read in *Shabda,* in a letter by ********* *[Transcriber's note - this name and one other which follows has been edited as it refers to a private communication in Shabda. As these seminars are more widely read than just within the Western Buddhist Order I have removed the name - if anyone wishes to know who it was(!) please ask someone who was present on the seminar or Silabhadra)* was that it was of quite a personal nature, and it was expressed publicly. I mean something like that should have really been written just for you. If he wanted to criticise your article, fair enough, but he shouldn't have put it in such personal terms.

Subhuti: Yes, that's what I felt. I had a letter from Siddhiratna this morning making some criticisms of some things I'd said in my book; he asked me if I minded if he put them in *Shabda*, and I feel entirely differently about that; they're put - well, he does make one innuendo, but -

Kuladeva: It was in quite strongly emotive terms.

S: Well, ********** has got another letter, hasn't he, complaining about the use of 'closed' with regard to communities. It seems rather curious because - well, not only a community but one's mind can be closed to certain things quite deliberately and positively. So in some respects one does have a closed mind, one's mind isn't a sort of thoroughfare for any thought that chooses to wander around. The Order is a closed order in the sense that it does not admit just anybody. But of course that it is closed is not the whole story; you're closed to what is negative and you're open to what is positive. So ********** mentions that closed is not a good term for what he experiences as an open space; but the point is the space was not completely open. ..... That space was closed to women, it was closed to non-community members, it was closed to certain negative influences; that is why one could enjoy an open space.

So again, though obviously positive terminology should be preferred to negative terminology, but nonetheless there's quite a bit of confusion of thought in his little article. I sometimes wonder whether it is a good idea to include everything in *Shabda* that is sent in, because sometimes confusion is just spread ..... I have thought seriously more than once that I should have my own column in each issue of *Shabda*, correcting all the confusions that appeared in the previous issue. But I thought it would be quite a long column! - and I'm -

_____: .....busy as it is.

S: But I have thought that.

[TEA BREAK]

S: So a point that arises here is that of absence and presence. I talked about this recently, you may remember, in my talk on *'Fidelity'*; do you remember that? So it is relevant here because, if you think of it, it is strange that you talk about someone in his absence in a different way than you talk about him in his presence. In other words it suggests that absence makes a difference: that when he is absent he is not present, whereas when he is absent he should be present - do you see what I mean? Because what is absence? Absence is only the absence of the physical body; it's not absence of the person himself, so to speak. But if, for you, absence is absence, it means that the physical body is all, the physical body has to be there for him to make anything of an impression upon you. I talked about all that in connection with fidelity. So here, therefore, it's important that you should, so to speak, imagine your brother as being actually there; that is to say, you should have a strong feeling or a strong realisation of his presence even in the absence of his physical body.

Devaraja: It means affections are absent if you talk about them in a different way.

S: Yes, because if you can talk about them in a negative way in their absence, it means that for you they are not present, they cease to exist almost, and your feeling for them apparently ceases to exist. In other words, there's a breach of continuity, and continuity is of the essence of individuality, recollection is of the essence of individuality. So here also you're ceasing to be an individual, not merely ceasing to be a brother, if in the absence of your brother you don't speak of him as you would speak in his presence. It means you haven't risen to the supra-physical level; the friendship exists only on the physical plane, the absence of the friend's physical body means that the friendship itself no longer exists. I think you got the point or got the message in connection with fidelity; but here it's exactly the same point, really, in a somewhat different context.

Devaraja: I remember you talking about the mettā practice once; you were saying that when we were practising mettā towards the Order, other people seemed almost in physical proximity to you.

S: That's right, yes. So in a way one should think of the Order as always present. That's the whole purpose - or part of the purpose - of the Order *mettā bhāvanā*. You feel or experience the whole Order as actually present with you; in other words, you're not confined to the physical plane, not confined to the *kamaloka*. All right someone like to read the next part.

"Another:
- Whenever a brother of mine is mentioned to me I imagine myself in his form, then I say about him what I would wish said about me."

S: Hm, this carries the whole thing even a stage further, to the stage of identification. And then al-Ghazali adds:

"This is part of genuine Islam; that you do not see fit for your brother what you do not see fit for yourself."

S: Again putting oneself in another's place, oneself in the place of the other person - reciprocity, application of the Golden Rule.

"Abu'l Darda once watched a pair of bulls ploughing in a double yoke. One of them halted to rub its body and the other halted too. He wept and said:
- So it is with two brothers working together for God. If one of them halts the other follows suit."

S: So why did he weep?

Abhaya: He was very moved.

S: He was very moved. He thought: even animals are capable of brotherhood, not to speak of human beings being capable of it. You know, 'a pair of bulls ploughing in a double yoke. One of them halted to rub its body and the other halted too.'

Abhaya: But didn't the other one have no choice, as they were in a double yoke?

S: Well, there is a choice, because you can push on with the yoke slewed round, as it were; there is room for a few paces at least. But no, the other bull - perhaps it would have been a bullock - stopped instantly. 'So it is with two brothers working together for God', or as we would say, two people with a common spiritual commitment. 'If one of them halts the other follows suit.'

Some people wouldn't like to do that, they would want to assert their individuality, so called; if the other person stops they've got to go on, to show they've got a mind of their own, but that's not the point of this story: they should be sensitive to the other person and his movements. You're supposed, after all, to be working with him. So clearly, if the other bull stops for a purpose - it needs to rub its body - so the other stops in sympathy or in harmony.

One mustn't take the story too literally; it is not that literally whenever somebody stops you should stop too. It could be under certain circumstances that you need as a friend to encourage the other person not to stop but to carry on. But the point is that you are in intimate sympathy and concord. This is more what I would call co-operativeness.

"Through concord, sincerity comes to completion; and he who is not sincere in his brotherhood is a hypocrite. Sincerity means equality between absence and presence, between the tongue and the heart, between the private and the public. Separateness, contradiction and non-conformity in any of this is adulteration of true affection. This is an infection of religion and an intrusion on the way of the believers. So one who lacks the capacity in himself would do better to cut himself off and retire, rather than seek brotherhood and fellowship; for the duty of fellowship is onerous, not to be borne except by one of true worth, and its reward is indeed generous, not to be won except by the truly fit."

S: You see that here the word 'conformity' is used in a very positive sense, and non-conformity in a highly negative sense. Often we think of non-conformity as a virtue, intrinsically, essentially; but that isn't necessarily the case. Non-conformity may be very appropriate outside the spiritual community, within the group, but even there it shouldn't be pressed to extremes or pressed unnecessarily; but within the spiritual community one should think in terms of conformity rather than non-conformity, because if within the spiritual community you continue to practise nonconformity, in effect you're treating the spiritual community as a group, and your spiritual companion or your brother as just like an outside group member - do you see that point? You don't need to assert yourself or be individualistic within the spiritual community, as you may need, perhaps, to be outside sometimes. Because after all, within the spiritual community, you are committed to the same spiritual goal; why should you not go along with the other person, why should you not keep in step with them? Why this insistence on doing things in your own way, etc?

Kulananda: Is the notion of conformity or of non-conformity appropriate at all to the spiritual community?

S: Well, yes, conformity in the positive sense, as mentioned here, is certainly appropriate; otherwise why do we all do the Puja in the same way? Why should we not all be sitting there and doing our Pujas in different ways, at different speeds, as sometimes people try to do, apparently? Why should we even have a common Puja at all? I've compared the spiritual community to an orchestra. The orchestra has to keep a common time, doesn't it, if it's going to produce a total effect. The spiritual community is rather like that.

I think probably there's been an over-emphasis on non-conformity within the FWBO, and habits and attitudes appropriate, perhaps, in the case of one's relations to the outside world are carried over within the spiritual community itself. For instance, in the current *Shabda* there is a report of the reporting-in in Sydney, and ********* is quoted there as referring to 'the powers that be, that determine who goes to Tuscany'. This is a really highly offensive expression; it's totally inappropriate. I'm going to take this up with him in one way or another. It's an absolute disgrace that an Order member should speak in that way about other people, including myself, that we're 'the powers that be'. It's really thinking in group terms about the spiritual community. I must say I get really fed up with this sort of thing.

And therefore al-Ghazali says: 'So one who lacks the capacity in himself', that is to say the capacity for equality and so on, 'would do better to cut himself off and retire, rather than seek brotherhood and fellowship; for the duty of fellowship is onerous, not to be borne except by one of true worth.' These are very strong words, but they are very true, and they do apply to us, they apply within the Order and within the Movement.

Devaraja: It seems that the people who come out with that sort of stuff about 'the powers that be' or 'the pressure of conformity' are often people who have cut themselves off from spiritual fellowship.

S: Yes - and stupid expressions about 'the party line' - this again is highly offensive. They're talking about the Dharma, and they talk about it as a 'party line'. This is absolute nonsense. So I think we perhaps have to be a little firmer about pointing these things out to people.

Nagabodhi: Nevertheless, I just wonder whether we define the term conformity in such a way that an individual can't conform - an individual

can co-operate, can -

S: Well, we speak in terms of harmony. In the public ordination ceremony we say: 'In harmony with friends and brethren'. What could be clearer? Harmony is a very positive term.

Kulananda: But harmony and conformity are different.

S: They are different, but I would nonetheless say that there is a positive meaning of conformity which is in harmony with the term 'harmony'. Conformity means 'having the same form'.

Nagabodhi: I just wonder whether you're seriously suggesting that we revamp the word in our usage - ..... to use 'co-operativeness'

S: No, the word 'conform' is probably such a loaded word already that it would be difficult to revive it and use it positively. I'm speaking in terms of conformity now only because the text uses this term. But nonetheless we shouldn't allow that to blind us to the fact that co-operativeness is of positive value, and that a sort of individualism and rebellious attitude is totally inappropriate within the spiritual community. Within the spiritual community you can't be a rebel; there's nothing for you to rebel against.

Devaraja: Maybe it's good to re-establish the positive meaning of the word 'conformity'.

S: Yes, perhaps that too; just to be a bit provocative, perhaps.

Devaraja: Well, I think that because it is provocative it does cause a deeper level of questioning, because I think even the most outspoken, inverted commas, 'non-conformist' conforms furiously - you know, say New Zealand non-conformists; well, they're all guys, they all wear trousers, so they're conforming to that.

S: All wear jeans - patched jeans. Well, they've all got girl friends; they're all conforming like mad! So one does always conform; the question is what one conforms to or what one conforms with.

Prasannasiddhi: Well, they're conforming to not conforming; they're all not-conforming together.

S: But maybe co-operativeness on the whole would be the best and most positive word. Though harmony itself is a very beautiful word with musical analogies, and recalling this image of the spiritual community as an orchestra. Perhaps I should put forward a 'polyphonic' image. I suppose everyone knows what polyphony is. I've got a vague idea myself, but it's as though in polyphony there are a number of different melodies going on; each melody is as it were doing its own thing, but almost miraculously they all fit together, and one melody does not get in the way of the others, they produce a total musical effect. So perhaps we should be a bit like that, we should think in terms of a polyphonic spiritual community. Because even 'harmony' suggests perhaps too much of closeness - closeness in the sense of identity - whereas the

polyphonic image leaves room for a great deal of individual expression within the overall unity.

Kulananda: It certainly implies orchestration and a conductor.

S: Well, we have a conductor. There's the Buddha; the Buddha, you could say, was the conductor or original composer of the piece.

Devaraja: If he was the composer, you're the conductor. [Laughter]

S: You can't have an orchestra, not a big one, without a conductor. If you've got a little orchestra, yes, the first violin can be the leader, and that's enough, but a large orchestra needs a conductor who can be seen by everybody and can give signals at the appropriate moments, and make sure that everybody is keeping time.

Devaraja: If you don't have a conductor, you have Stockhausen.

S: Well, we don't want any results in the FWBO, or in the spiritual community especially, analogous to Stockhausen.

But it does seem that we need to pay greater attention to this question of individualism within the spiritual community, and with people just not understanding the nature of the spiritual community, and taking it still as a group and insisting almost upon seeing it as a group, because they seem to have a subjective need to rebel against the group. So they don't belong to any other group that they could rebel against; we're the only group they belong to, so they rebel against us, even though they are supposedly within us. Do you see what I mean? They don't belong to a political party so they can rebel against that; they aren't even married, in most cases, so they can't rebel against their wife or their husband; they've left home so they can't rebel against their parents any more; they don't have any sort of responsible position in any group, so there's nothing to rebel against. But they do belong to the FWBO, so they rebel against the FWBO in some cases. It all seems to be so childish and silly. I don't really sympathise with it very much at all.

Anyway, let's carry on. The Prophet has something to say now.

"The Prophet (God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
- Abu Hirr! Be a good neighbour to your neighbour and you will be a Muslim. Be a good fellow to your companion and you will be a Mu'min."

S: The distinction between Muslim and Mu'min? [Note to the text] "'Muslim" means one characterised by *Islam* - literally, "submission to the will of God". Through "right belief" or "true faith" - *Iman* - he may become a "Mu'min"'. So a Mu'min is something more like a more real Muslim, so to speak. A Muslim means someone who is a Muslim in a more social sense, but a Mu'min is one who is a Muslim in his actual dealings with his brother, his companion. Go on to read Al Ghazali's comment.

"Observe how he makes Iman the reward for fellowship, and Islam the reward for neighbourliness. Thus the distinction between the excellence of

Iman and the excellence of Islam is defined as the distinction between the difficulty of fulfilling one's duty as a neighbour and that of fulfilling one's duty in fellowship. Fellowship gives rise to many duties in circumstances that follow one another in close succession, while neighbourliness gives rise to pressing duties only at wide intervals and not on a lasting basis."

S: Your relationship with your neighbour, in the literal sense, is much looser, less intense, than your relationship with your friend, or we might say that neighbourliness was appropriate to your attitude towards the group and fellowship to your attitude towards the spiritual community.

So inasmuch as fellowship is more intense and continuous than neighbourliness, the rewards of fellowship are proportionately greater. Within the group, you might say there is *mitrata*, but within the spiritual community there is *kalyana mitrata*.

"This duty to use the tongue also embraces instruction and advice. For your brother's need of knowledge is no less than his need of money. If you are rich in knowledge you are obliged to share your abundance with him, and to instruct him in all that is useful to him in religious and worldly matters. If you teach and instruct him and yet he does not act in accordance with the knowledge you convey, then you are obliged to advise. This you do by pointing out the disadvantages of what he is doing, and the benefits to be had by giving it up, by threatening him with what is distasteful to him in this world and the Other in order to deter him, by drawing attention to his shortcomings, by disapproval of what is ugly in his sight and approval of what is fine."

S: So all this is quite straightforward and obvious, isn't it? This might almost have come out of a '*Mitrata*'. Share your knowledge with your brother, as well as your worldly goods, and don't hesitate to give your brother or your friend the advantage of your fierce friendship or the benefit of your fierce friendship when that is called for. These are the very points that we've made from time to time. Anything further to be said about that?

"However, all this must be confidential so that no one else knows about it. When it takes place in public it is reproof and ignominy, whereas in confidence it is compassion and advice."

S: This reminds us of something I've said repeatedly with regard to Order meetings and Council meetings: one should never question somebody's motives in public. You can disagree with what they say on an objective, factual basis, but never challenge or question anyone's motives. If you want to do that, if you feel that the other person's motives are questionable, you should take them aside afterwards and talk that matter over with them in private.

Nagabodhi: What do you think, then, of these - I don't think it's done a lot) - 'fan-shen' sessions that are held? You hear about Councils or groups of Order members getting together and having mutual criticism sessions.

Kuladeva: It isn't even just Order members, is it? I've heard of Mitras and even Friends going away on retreat -

S: I must say I haven't heard about this.

Kuladeva: There was quite a lot of it a couple of years ago. I don't know whether it's still around now.

Nagabodhi: I've heard of something quite recently, I can't remember where it was.

S: To me it smacks rather of encounter group techniques. I'm a bit suspicious about this.

Kulananda: I think it depends a lot on the circumstances. Once we did it here at the end of a retreat. But what had marked that retreat was that the team on it developed very strong feelings for one another, and very positive communication going on, so in those circumstances we decided we would evolve resolutions for the coming year, as it was a winter retreat, by discussing them together in that way, and people gave each other some very positive feedback, very useful feedback.

S: Well, that's rather different from going away in order to have such a session.

Kuladeva: I think it also makes a difference whether Order members do it, especially when they've got a certain amount of long association, or maybe they've just been on a retreat at Vajraloka. There's a difference between that and, let's say, a co-op, where there aren't that many Order members involved - a co-op business ..... - because those are the contexts that I've actually heard of.

Kulananda: I know one Order member who said his life was very positively changed by one such session.

S: But nonetheless, I would say we must be very cautious. I don't know who that is, but it could be that he could have been changed no less by being told privately rather than publicly.

Kuladeva: But I think what I noticed about 'fan-shens' is that they became fashionable; so it was felt that everybody had to take part in a 'fan-shen' at some time or you weren't really .....

S: Isn't it interesting that the term is used - which comes, I believe, from communist China - 'fan-shen'? I think Order members must keep their ears to the ground a bit and let me know what is going on, because I have not even heard of these things before.

Subhuti: It was in *Shabda*.

S: Was it?

Subhuti: Ratnaguna mentioned it.

S: 'Fan-shen'? *(confusion of voices)* ..... that that is what it was.

Kuladeva: I read a couple of books on the communist Chinese in Tibet, and it was used there as a technique for getting monks to conform with the group, the communes that they had established.

S: Because you confess your failure to conform, conform in a quite negative sense - from our point of view. I don't like the flavour of the associations of the thing. So I think nothing like that should be introduced without proper consultation within the Order and with me. I'm quite surprised that it has grown apparently to that extent, or did grow, without it being properly discussed or brought to my notice.

Nagabodhi: I'm not sure - I don't want to give the impression - I've never taken part in one, it's just that we've heard of - I don't know how many or whether it has become fashionable.

S: Well, someone should know; for instance you are, say, a Council member down at the LBC, you and other Council members should know what is going on among the Order members, Mitras and Friends in the area; that's part of your job. Or the Chapter should know.

Kuladeva: I was under the impression that something of that sort had actually happened in the Chairmen's meeting, some kind of mutual criticism and rejoicing in merits, and that it had somehow been taken by other people as well and used in other contexts.

Subhuti: It was some time ago, about three years ago. I don't think it was particularly good, actually, in one or two cases. It's only good if there's very good communication already, and if there was it was quite .....

S: I think one has to concentrate on communication and friendship. If there is communication and friendship, that kind of thing will happen, if one is at least a little mindful and concerned about one's fellow Order members.

Subhuti: I think that because it's quite intense it has quite a strong effect, which you can mistake for being a positive effect.