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

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.

S: I think what happens - and I think this is one reason why people are fascinated by encounter groups - [is that] people's lives are so lacking in any positive experience or any sort of definite experience that they go searching for experiences, and if they find they get an 'experience' in this way they will be attracted by it; they <u>feel</u> something. Anyway, let's not linger over -

[End of tape 12 Tape 13]

"The Prophet (God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
- The believer is a mirror to the believer.
By this he meant that one can see from the other what he cannot see from himself. Thus a man can profit from his brother by learning his own faults, whereas if left to himself he would lose this advantage, just as he can benefit from an ordinary mirror by becoming aware of the faults in his outward appearance."

S: Yesterday, or the day before yesterday, I was editing a seminar extract for a forthcoming *Mitrata*, [and] I was making exactly the same point. Commenting on or discussing a Song of Rechungpa, where Rechungpa says that the Dharma is a mirror, and then we talk about that and I go on to say that the spiritual community is a mirror, the spiritual friend is a mirror. So that's the same thing as here. In the mirror of the Dharma, that is to say with the help of the standards established by the Dharma, you can ascertain where you're at. Similarly with the help of the spiritual community or the spiritual friend: the mirror will show, will reveal, a pimple on your face; in the same way, the spiritual community or the spiritual friend will point out to you some defect that you cannot see yourself.

Sometimes it doesn't need a very direct or explicit pointing out. You feel a certain disharmony between yourself and the spiritual community, especially a community in which you live. You feel a little out of step. And then perhaps you become aware that it's because of some weakness or blemish or fault on your part, and that you need to conform yourself to the community. Anyway read on.

"Al-Shaf'i (may God be pleased with him!) said:
- To admonish your brother in private is to advise him and improve him. But to admonish him publicly is to disgrace and shame him.

Mus'ir was asked:
- Would you like to be informed of your faults?
- If the advice were confidential, yes. But not in the public forum.
He spoke truly, for advice before the crowd is ignominy. On the Day of Resurrection God (Exalted is He!) will remonstrate with the believer under His Wing, in the shadow of His Veil, acquainting him with his sins privately. The book of his deeds will be handed under seal to the angels, who will escort him to the Garden of Paradise. When they near the gate of the Garden they will give him the book, still sealed, for him to read.

As for those who are full of hate, they will be summoned before throngs of witnesses and their limbs will be required to speak of their shameful acts, so that their disgrace and ignominy will be increased. We seek refuge with God from disgrace on the day of the Greatest Review!"
[Laughter]

S: So it's as though God veils only what isn't really worth veiling, or doesn't really need to be veiled, because you're going to Paradise, it seems; but unveils that which one would have thought had been better left hidden. But then we are dealing with a particular kind of god; as in the case of the Christian God, who does send people to hell for ever and ever. So if he's capable of that, he's capable of anything. Carry on. There's no new point being made.

"The distinction between rebuke and advice, then, is a matter of secrecy or publicity, just as the distinction between courtesy and hypocrisy depends on the purpose motivating your connivance. If you connive for the integrity of your religion and because you see it as conducive to your brother's good, then you are courteous. But if you connive for your own comfort, the satisfaction of your desires, and the integrity of your influence in the world, in that case you are a hypocrite."

S: What do you think is meant by 'connivance' here? This is not usually considered a very positive term, but here clearly it is being used in a positive sense.

Well, perhaps it means veiling your brother from public shame. You are not conniving at what he is doing, because you are advising him privately; but your public attitude is, so to speak, to use that term, apparently one of connivance. [Pause]

'But if you connive for your own comfort, the satisfaction of your desires, and the integrity of your influence in the world, in that case you are a hypocrite.' The so-called connivance must be only out of consideration for your brother, quite genuinely. Carry on with the next.

"Dhu'l-Nun said:
- In fellowship with God, only concord. In fellowship with men, only sincere advice. With the self, only opposition. With Satan, only enmity."

S: Anything that requires comment there, or is it perfectly clear?

Nagabodhi: It seems a little harsh towards the self.

Kulananda: To say nothing of Satan! [Laughter]

S: What does one mean by the self here?

Nagabodhi: The lower -

S: I think it's what - I'm only guessing but I think it's probably the Arabic word *nafs*, which is used for the lower self, so to speak: the *id*, almost, not to press that comparison too closely again. It's one's *lobha, dvesa and moha*, in Buddhistic terms - it's the passional soul, so to speak.

Devaraja: Where's the term you just coined - or is that an actual - ?

S: *Nafs* - (spells it): there is that Arabic word which occurs in the Koran, which is frequently used by Muslim writers. I think it may well be that word, though I'm not sure. The word isn't actually mentioned in the original.

Devaraja: The term 'passional soul' - is that your own coinage?

S: Yes, that is my own coinage. Perhaps 'ego' would have been a better translation: 'with the ego, only opposition' - because ego has a somewhat negative connotation. 'With Satan, only enmity'. Well, Satan personifies whatever is evil, in a rather more extreme fashion than Mara in Buddhism. You can't afford to be friends with Satan.

Prasannasiddhi: Although presumably a Bodhisattva would even try to make friends with Satan in order to convert him to the Dharma.

S: Well, one doesn't perhaps know what Bodhisattvas might and might not do!

Prasannasiddhi: Well, one's read things! [Laughter]

S: Some of these Maras are quite scared of Bodhisattvas and wouldn't let them come within a mile of them, if they could help it.

I think we shouldn't try to weaken the force of what the saying is trying to get at there: i.e. there are some things with which we can just not afford to have any truck, so to speak. So far as we are concerned - on our level of development - we can only take up an attitude of, so to speak - I mean metaphorically - enmity towards them. From a Buddhist point of view that would not be any person, but certainly, say, an unskilful quality, or embodiment of an unskilful quality.

Even Shantideva says you must hate hatred. You can't really speak of taking up a positive attitude towards hatred; it is a completely negative

emotion, and just to be got rid of. Yes, one can talk of sublimation, but what does that mean? Sublimation means getting rid of hatred as hatred. Hatred might in the end turn into something else, but you must get rid of it as hatred before it can turn into something else. You can't afford to think that Mara might one day become a Bodhisattva, because Mara is at present tempting you. Mara has a hostile attitude towards you. You have to be on your guard against Mara; you can't afford to think friendly thoughts about Mara - not just yet, anyway.

It's like being too friendly with women; well, no doubt they are potential individuals and will one day gain Bodhisattvahood or Buddhahood, but in your present state of development you can't afford to be too friendly with them, or friendly in the wrong sort of way. And similarly they in relation to you. Anyway carry on then.

"You may say: 'If advice includes mentioning faults, then it includes alienation of the heart, and how can that come into the duty of brotherhood?' So you must realise that alienation only results from mentioning a fault already known to your brother, while drawing his attention to what he is unaware of is compassion itself. It is encouragement for hearts; I mean the hearts of the intelligent, for it does not touch the hearts of fools."

S: Al-Ghazali is saying that you shouldn't remind someone, so to speak, of something - a fault - that he is already well aware of. That may result in alienation, because you're insisting on something unnecessarily. He already knows that he has that fault; perhaps he is trying to do something about it. There is no point in your speaking about it to him. But if he is unaware that he has a fault, a particular fault, then by all means point that out to him out of compassion. That will not result in alienation. In fact, it will help draw you closer together. Does one agree with this? (Murmurs of agreement.)

You might know, for instance - be quite well aware - that, yes, you've got a dreadful temper and you need to do something about it. But if someone is always reminding you that 'Oh, you've got a terrible temper' and all that sort of thing, it becomes rather irritating. It's bad enough having it; it's bad enough knowing that you've got it; you don't want somebody else constantly telling you and reminding you that you've got that particular fault. You know it quite well enough already.

So it isn't a sign of brotherhood and friendship to remind people of faults that they are already well aware of. But certainly remind them, or tell them, about faults that they are oblivious to, that they are unaware of. Do that out of compassion, to help them.

In the *Dhammapada* there is a verse which says that one's attitude, so to speak, towards someone who points out your faults should be the same as your attitude towards someone who points out to you a buried treasure. If someone points out where a treasure is buried, so that you can dig it up and become wealthy, you are very happy; so you feel equally happy if someone points out to you your faults. Usually people aren't - or sometimes they are. To a great extent it depends on how you do it, with what sympathy or kindliness and taking advantage of the right opportunity. You shouldn't just blurt it out regardless of circumstances, regardless of the state of mind in which your friend is. So your speech, though truthful and useful, should also be timely, and also accompanied by affection.

"Someone who draws your attention to a blameworthy action you are addicted to, or a blameworthy feature of your character, so that you can

cleanse yourself of it, is like one who warns you of a snake or scorpion under your robe - he has shown concern lest you perish, and if you disapprove of that how great is your folly! Blameful characteristics are scorpions and snakes. They are deadly perils in the Other Life, for they sting hearts and spirits and the pain they cause is worse than external physical stings. They are created of God's kindled Fire."

S: That is to say the fire of hell. In the Koran God says: 'I have kindled the fires of hell', or words to that effect.

But yes, 'Blameful characteristics are scorpions and snakes'. People tend to think of their weaknesses as just amiable little things, and they don't really matter; but, no, the text says that they are scorpions and snakes. They are sources of harm and suffering, so it's a friendly action to point out to someone that those weaknesses are there, those faults or blemishes are there. But you must do it very carefully. Just as - for instance, supposing there is a scorpion on someone, you draw his attention to it very carefully, because if he suddenly jumped up the scorpion might be disturbed and sting him.

So it's just like that pointing out someone's weaknesses. One needs to do it really carefully, so that there isn't a reaction that just makes things worse than before. So you must choose your time, choose the place; be very careful how you speak, and make sure you are speaking with genuine good will towards that person; that you really do want him to grow. [Pause]

"Therefore Umar (may God be pleased with him!) used to seek such guidance from his brothers, with the prayer:
- God have mercy on a man who shows his brother his faults!"

S: In other words, may God bless him.

"Thus Umar asked of Salman when he came to him:
- What have you, heard about me that you disapprove of? Tell me, so that I may try and put it right."

S: So he is actually inviting criticism. So what does Salman say?

"Since he insisted, Salman said:
- I have heard that you keep two sets of clothing, one to wear by day and the other by night. I have also heard that you combine two meals at one table."

S: Umar, by the way - whom I think must be the first Caliph - had the reputation of leading a very simple life. It wasn't easy to find fault with him. So all that the person can find wrong with him is that he has two sets of clothes, one of which he wears during the day and one he wears during the night, and that he combines two meals at one table - I'm not quite sure what that means. It could mean two courses, or - anyway, the suggestion is that he's just a little bit luxurious, a little bit unsimple or unascetic in these two respects. So what does Umar say?

"Said Umar (may God be pleased with him!):

- Of these two I have had enough. Have you heard anything else?"

S: In other words, he is saying: 'I've had enough of these two faults. I correct them instantly. I won't ever do these things again. Have you heard anything else?' [Laughter]

"- No!"

S: So that, I suppose, is the ideal attitude. First of all, yes, we invite someone's criticism, but they can't find very much wrong with you. They find out some small things wrong with you, and when those are pointed out you instantly correct them, so that there is nothing left to correct. That is the ideal attitude towards friendly criticism.

Some weeks ago, someone happened to come and see me - actually it was an Order member - and I had to point out to him certain things I didn't think were quite right in what he was doing. So I could see a bit of mental struggle going on; he sort of gulped, and then he said: 'I won't attempt to justify myself.' So I thought that was quite good, because he didn't find it easy to accept the criticism, but he did accept it and he didn't try to put up any defence; so that showed quite positive qualities on his part.

"Hudhayfa al-Mar'ashi wrote to Yusuf ibn Asbat:
- I hear that you traded your religion for two grams. You stopped by a milkman and asked, 'How much is this?' He replied, 'One sixth,' but you said, 'No, one eighth.' 'It is yours!' said he. Now that man knew you. Uncover your head of the veil of the negligent, and beware of the sleep of the dead! Know that a man who reads the Qur'an and is not satisfied, but chooses this world, is surely one of those who mock God's Signs. God (Exalted is He!) has characterised the liars by their hatred of advisers, for He said, 'But you do not love advisers.'
(Qur'an 7.79)"

S: So what's the point of this? 'Hudhayfa al-Mar'ashi wrote to Yusuf ibn Asbat: - I hear that you traded your religion for two grams.' Your religion is supposed to be the most precious thing in the world to you, but you traded it, you sold it, for two grams. So how was that? 'You stopped by a milkman and asked, 'How much is this?' - that is, you saw that he had a certain quantity of milk for sale, and you asked, 'How much is it?' and he replied, 'Oh, it's one sixth' - maybe one sixth of a pint or whatever the measure was; but you said, falsely, 'No, it's one eighth', so that you could get it a bit cheaper. And he said, 'It's yours' - he accepted, 'All right, take it.' So even though it was in fact one sixth you got it for the price of one eighth, so you cheated to the extent of the two grams. In other words, you sold your honesty, you sold your religion itself, for the sake of those two grams.

Then the writer continues: 'Now that man knew you.' He wasn't taken in; he knew that you were a rascal. He knew that you were a cheat, but he was so disgusted he let you get away with it. He didn't argue.

So 'Know' - you should know - 'that a man who reads the Qur'an and is not satisfied' - that is, a man who pretends to be religious but is not satisfied with what he's got, attempts to cheat for the sake of a tiny quantity of milk, he 'chooses this world' - it means he [who] chooses this

world rather than the other world 'is surely one of those who mock God's Signs' - that is to say the Koran represents God as saying that there is this sign and that sign of the Judgement and so on - so he mocks God's signs, he mocks the fact that there will be a retribution in the after life for behaviour of that sort.

'God (Exalted is He!) has characterised the liars by their hatred of advisers, for He said, 'But you do not love advisers.' So someone who tells a deliberate lie is not likely to be very amenable to advice. Even so, the writer is writing this letter to the person who is guilty of that offence.

But anyway, this draws attention to the fact that people sacrifice so much for so little. If you were to sacrifice your religion for a kingdom, that would be understandable, but to sacrifice it for the sake of two grams worth of milk - that seems really ridiculous, even from a worldly point of view. It suggests lack of true faith in religion - that your religion is a matter of externality and formalism. You are 'a man who reads the Qur'an and is not satisfied. but chooses this world', the things of this world, the values of this world.

Anyway, some advice now about giving advice.

"All this applies to a fault he is unaware of. When you know that he knows it himself,and is merely under a compulsion from his nature, then you ought not to unveil it if he conceals it. However, if he lets it be seen you must advise him kindly, now by hints, now explicitly, though not to the point of alienating him. If you know that advice will not avail, and that he is compelled by his nature to persist, then it is better to say nothing at all about it. So much for what concerns your brother's interest in religion and in the world."

S: The important point here, since one is concerned with the duties of brotherhood, is not to alienate your brother, to keep up communication. So if he conceals a fault from you, be very cautious how you approach that fault - perhaps say nothing at all. But if he just lets you see it just a little bit, perhaps you can say something, by way of a hint or indirectly, but if he doesn't take notice of what you say because the fault is very deep and is bound up with his nature, don't pursue the matter; just drop it. Otherwise you may alienate him and your opportunities for benefiting him in other ways will come to an end. Right, next paragraph.

"When it is a matter of a shortcoming in his duty towards you, what is required of you is patience, forgiveness, pardon, and turning a blind eye. To interfere in this case has nothing to do with advice at all."

S: It's as though al-Ghazali is saying that you shouldn't advise your brother about his duty towards you. If he fails in that, you should just put up with it with 'patience, forgiveness, pardon and turning a blind eye.' It's not appropriate that you should advise him with regard to any shortcoming in the way he treats you. Can you see the sense of that, or do you not agree? You find this in relationships between men and women, and in marriage. Someone says, 'You said this', 'Oh no, I didn't', 'Yes, you did.' 'You ought to have done this' or 'You ought not to have done that'. And in that way things become very very much worse. The husband may say, 'You didn't keep my dinner hot that night I was late', and then she says, 'Ah, but you forgot my birthday.' So that sort of mutual pointing out of faults or drawing attention to faults just doesn't help relationships at all. And in the case of brotherhood, if your brother falls short, if he forgets your birthday or he judy forgetfully doesn't share something with you, just be quiet; don't point out to him that he was guilty of a weakness or fault or blemish with regard to you.

Tejamitra: This is much in the same vein as your essay in *Stepping Stones* on 'Rights and Duties', which is that you -

S: Ah, 'Rights and Duties', yes; be mindful of your duties rather than your rights.

Tejamitra: You put more emphasis on your duties .....

S: Because if you diligently perform your duties towards your brother, he cannot but notice that, and if he has any sort of decency at all he will be reminded of his own duties to you. But if each is constantly reminding the other of his duties to him, a quite difficult, not to say unpleasant, situation can be created. Because one can always find some shortcoming, human nature being what it is.

Nagabodhi: Sometimes I've found that if I've let someone down, and it's them who's telling me, for them to let me see that they are hurt, they are upset, it will bring home in quite a vivid and quick way the fact that my action has had that consequence.

S: On the other hand, they mustn't do it deliberately, in a womanish sort of way (sorry, feminists!). They sit there all sulky: 'Oh, what's the matter?' 'Oh, nothing; nothing.' [Laughter] 'What have I done?' 'Oh, no, no, nothing.' [Shouts of laughter.] It must be a hurt that you just cannot conceal; which perhaps you try to conceal, but you just can't help showing it; not that you should put it on, or appear all hurt to draw the other person's attention to the fact that he has done something dreadful which has really upset you. You see what I mean, I'm sure. I've known people like this, and I'm sorry to say not only women but men, who sometimes deliberately act all hurt and have to be coaxed and cajoled into telling you what it's all about. All right carry on then. We've nearly finished this chapter.

"Nevertheless, if the case is such that his persistence in his fault would lead to rupture, then remonstrating in private is better than rupture, allusion is better than the direct approach, correspondence is better than verbal address. Yet patience is best of all, since your object where your brother is concerned should be to correct yourself by having consideration for him, fulfilling your duty towards him, and bearing his deficiency patiently - not merely to enjoy his help and fellowship."

S: So if the case is such that his persistence, your friend's persistence, in a particular fault would lead to rupture between you, then it is better to remonstrate with him in private than to allow the rupture to take place. And if you do have to remonstrate in private, it's better just to allude to the matter indirectly rather than adopt a direct approach, and even better, perhaps, to write to him, as was the case on the previous page, rather than to speak to him; because if you write you may be able to put things in a calmer and more considered way.

'Yet patience is best of all'; there's a verse in the *Dhammapada* to that effect, isn't there? *'khanti paramam tapo titikkha'* (184) - patience and forbearance are supreme. ' - since your object where your brother is concerned should be to correct yourself by having consideration for him, fulfilling your duty towards him, and bearing his deficiency patiently - not merely to enjoy his help and fellowship.' It's as though you enjoy fellowship with him to correct yourself as much as to correct him, so if you have to practise patience you are correcting yourself; it's a good thing that you develop patience.

Anyway, there's a rather strange anecdote now.

"Abu Bakr al-Kattani said:
- A certain man kept me company and he was heavy on my heart, so one day I made him a present in the hope of relieving my heart; but to no avail. So one day I led him by the hand into the house, and said, 'Put your foot on my cheek!' He refused, but I insisted, 'You must!' Then he did it, and the thing left my heart."

S: That's rather strange, but the following story may shed a little light indirectly, so let's have that first before we discuss both stories.

"Abu al-Ribati said:
- I was companion to Abdullah al-Razi as he was going into the desert. He said, 'Either you or I must act as leader.' So I said, 'Rather you.' 'Then you must obey,' said he. 'Very well,' I agreed. Then he took a bag, filled it with provisions, and carried it on his back. When I said, 'Hand it to me!' he replied, 'Did you not say, "You are the leader"? Well then, you must obey.' That night we were caught by the rain. He stood at my head till morning, shielding me from the rain with a cloak he wore, while I sat there, saying to myself, 'If only I had died, sooner than said, "You be leader"!'"

S: So what's the point here? Why should someone experience such relief of heart when the man who had been keeping him company puts his foot on his cheek? What is happening here? What might have been the situation?

Subhuti: This puts perhaps competitiveness and -

S: Why was it heavy on his heart? Yes, yes. What is meant by being heavy on someone's heart? Perhaps it <u>was</u> competitiveness. And what does the giving of the present signify? It's sort of trying to make things equal, as it were, between them, and even that wasn't enough. It's as though in order to counter-balance the negative attitude he had towards his companion he had even to ask him to humiliate him to restore the balance. Have you any experience of anything like that ever happening?

And what about that second story? One thing it shows is that if you ask someone to be a leader you don't really know what to expect. You mustn't expect the leader to do what <u>you</u> expect him to do. Very often, unconsciously, you do: you elect someone as a leader in order to do the things and to lead you in doing the things you want to do; but if you really ask someone to be a leader, he is leader and you have to accept that. That's <u>one</u> lesson of the story; I don't think it's the main one. Some people find it very difficult to accept good offices from other people, due to a sort of pride, perhaps.

Kulananda: I don't think it's as positive a story as it's perhaps made out, because he hasn't allowed the other man to give by receiving. If he just welcomed the good turn the other man was doing to him, then he would have allowed him to give properly, but in some way he is resenting, it seems.

S: Which one are you talking about now?

Kulananda: There's one guy being sheltered from the rain. In some ways it's almost as if he resents the fact that he is not allowed to suffer for his friend. So he is not actually accepting that man's generosity.

S: Well, he is not accepting his leadership. He didn't know, he didn't realise, what was meant by saying, 'No, you be the leader.'

Kulananda: He had meant to give to him. In the end, someone gets trumped and ends up being a bit resentful.

Nagabodhi: It's not resentment, more a kind of shame. He had such a limited view of leadership.

S: It's shame. Yes, it could be. He never expected that someone would, by becoming a leader, accept that degree of responsibility and care; he never expected that. He had a very limited notion of leadership, perhaps a very wrong notion of leadership. Perhaps he thought 'leader' meant 'boss'.

Nagabodhi: Privilege.

S: Yes, privilege.

Nagabodhi: He probably thought he was giving this other person a favour.

S: Yes, that he was giving him the easier job, as it were. Even within the FWBO, people think of chairmanship in terms of its privileges. Chairmen are people always running around here and there in motor cars, and having meals in cafés and whizzing up the motorway, getting lots of letters, writing lots of letters, and being frightfully important. That's - perhaps [Laughter] an exaggerated form of - some people's idea about a chairman.

_____: ..... bit of a shock, ...

Tejamitra: So can you say that if people elect a leader they should be open to him doing anything he says?

S: They should be open to him leading.

[End of Side 1, Side 2]

S: [Any further] point that emerges from what we've done this morning?

Abhaya: The emphasis on speaking out is positive, speaking out about people's good qualities rather than -

S: Hm, and also speaking out in private rather than public.

Prasannasiddhi: There was speaking out in public as well, speaking about good qualities in public, and you speak out about a person's bad qualities in private.

Tejamitra: It's very good, actually, isn't it? It seems very comprehensive, the approach.

Abhaya: Also I think there's a tendency for us to treat speech as not quite so important, as not so much of an action as .....

S: Yes, that's right; if you just say it, it doesn't matter, you've only just said it; you haven't actually done anything.

Abhaya: As if it doesn't have all that much effect.

Tejamitra: There's a proverb to that effect, isn't there? 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words cannot harm me.' I think a lot of people still live by that.

S: All right, then, let's leave it there for today.

NEXT DAY NEXT SESSION

S: All right, chapter or section 5.

"5

The fifth duty *is forgiveness of mistakes and failings.*
The failing of a friend must be one of two kinds; either in his religion, through the commission of an offence; or in his duty to you, through an omission in brotherhood.
In the case of religion, where he commits an offence and persists in it, you must advise him kindly so as to supply his deficiency, put his affairs in order, and restore him to a correct and virtuous state.
If you are incapable of this and he remains obstinate - at this point there is a divergence in the ways followed by the Companions and Successors of the Prophet, whether to maintain his right to affection or to cut off relations."

S: So 'The failing of a friend must be one of two kinds' - that is to say, a failing by very definition logically must be one of two kinds. The word

'must' suggests that there cannot be any other kind of failing; if it isn't of one kind it must be of the other. So it's 'either in his religion,' in this case Islam, 'through the commission of an offence; or in his duty to you, through an omission in brotherhood. In the case of religion, where he commits an offence and persists in it, you must advise him kindly so as to supply his deficiency, put his affairs in order, and restore him to a correct and virtuous state. If you are incapable of this and he remains obstinate - at this point there is a divergence in the ways followed by the Companions and Successors of the Prophet, whether to maintain his right to affection or to cut off relations.'

This is in a way quite an important point: even among the companions of Muhammad himself, those who associated with him personally during his lifetime and those who are his and/or their successors, there is a difference of opinion in this matter, whether you should cut off relations with someone who persists in the commission of an offence against religion, or whether you should maintain his right to your affection. So what does this suggest, in a way?

Nagabodhi: It's the Theravada and the Mahayana approach of keeping your hand held out to help the person in case he can be brought out.

S: Yes, that is true. I wasn't thinking so much of that point but of the fact that there can be genuine disagreements even about quite important matters on the part of sincere people, even spiritually advanced people, who are agreed on fundamentals. Well, you could apply that also to the Theravada and the Mahayana: the Theravada people are sincere in their approach; the Mahayanists are sincere in their approach too, but nonetheless they differ in many important respects, even though sharing in the common fundamentals of the Teaching.

So here are the Companions and Successors of Muhammad differing as to whether you should maintain friendly relations in the case of one who persists in committing offences against religion, even after being warned, or whether you should break off relations with them.

So this also suggests that we mustn't be too rigid, perhaps, about means. We may genuinely think a particular means, the one that we favour, is the right means to a certain end or the right thing to do in certain circumstances, but I think we should be open to the possibility that equally sincere people may hold a different view, people with whom we otherwise are in agreement. An instance of this sort of thing arose in connection with our discussion on nuclear disarmament; equally sincere people can believe that unilateral disarmament or that multilateral disarmament is the way, or even the only way, to the abolition of nuclear arms. So if someone differs from you in this important respect, despite the fact that you share the aim of abolition of nuclear arms, you should not impugn the motives or sincerity of the other person. They may be as sincere as you, but they may just have arrived at a different conclusion in this particular matter. So we see the same kind of thing here.

Prasannasiddhi: Does this imply that there can be different means to the same end, in a sense, or that you -

S: No, it doesn't necessarily imply that. It may in fact be, for all you know, that there is only one means. It may be the one that you favour, it may not. But I think you must accept that people can be sincere, even though they differ from you; that because they differ from you in a respect that is very important to you as regards the means of arriving at a common end, an end upon which you are agreed, the fact that they differ from you as regards means does not justify you in impugning their sincerity and integrity. That is the point.

Prasannasiddhi: Although you can still question their means.

S: You may still question their means, you may question their reasoning, you may question their arguments. But I don't think you have the right to question their integrity. Well, you certainly don't have the right to question their integrity.

Anyway, al-Ghazali goes on to quote examples of these two different views, so let's carry on.

"Abu Dharr (May God be pleased with him!) favoured severance. He said:
- If your brother turns his back on his duty, hate him as you used to love him.
He considered this the course dictated by love for God's sake and hate for God's sake."

S: Hm! But this is a quite rigid, a quite strict view. You might almost say that it was the 'Theravada', inverted commas, view. One cannot question its sincerity or its integrity; this is a possible view - that 'if your brother turns his back on his duty,' his religious duty, 'hate him as you used to love him.' You really now have nothing in common with him, so how can you have anything to do with him? He has abandoned his religious duty. You might even argue that religious duty was a basis of brotherhood itself, so how can brotherhood survive if religious duty perishes? Surely there is an ethical, i.e. religious, basis to brotherhood itself. Such a person could argue in this way; I am not necessarily arguing in this way, but such a person - I mean such a companion - might perhaps argue in that way.

Kulananda: Are you suggesting one shouldn't accuse someone of fanaticism if they argue in this way?

S: Well, I don't think you should accuse them of anything. You may agree or disagree with their reasoning.

Kulananda: I would accuse them of fanaticism, because anyone who can turn from love to hate on those grounds - especially from love to hate on those grounds - can only be described as fanatic.

S: Well, perhaps one should ask first what is meant by 'hate' in this connection. For instance, the comment - al-Ghazali says 'He considered this the course dictated by love for God's sake and hate for God's sake': well, what does one mean by 'hate for God's sake' here? Does it mean hate in the ordinary, personal, human sense, or is it not rather an attitude of opposition to what is evil or unskilful?

Kulananda: Well, one does see examples in the Muslim world of that opposition taking a very violent and even bloodthirsty attitude.

S: That's all true, but what I am really getting at is, let's try to understand the point of view before we try to evaluate it in relation to the other point of view. It is an unfamiliar point of view, perhaps, and therefore we should make all the more effort to understand it. Just as we may not agree with the Theravadin personally, but all right, let's try to understand their point of view even though we end up by disagreeing with it. In other words, let's be quite clear what we are actually disagreeing with, or at least put the most favourable construction we can on that particular

point of view. Perhaps someone isn't fanatical, perhaps someone isn't intolerant; he genuinely believes that someone, in abandoning his religious duties, has precluded the possibility of brotherhood, so one really can have nothing to do with him. This is a point of view, let us say, without evaluating it for the moment.

Anyway, somebody else has a different point of view, so let's see what that is.

"As for Abu'l Darda and one group of the Companions, they took the opposite view. Abu'l Darda said:
- If your brother alters and changed his hue do not desert him on that account, for your brother will sometimes be crooked and sometimes straight."

S: So somebody takes the opposite point of view and gives a reason for that, a reason for taking the opposite point of view. So what is that reason? 'For your brother will sometimes be crooked and sometimes straight.' That is to say, he might have abandoned his religious duty, he might have rejected your advice that he should not abandon it, but, all right, he may come back to the right path later on. People are sometimes crooked, sometimes straight, then again they become crooked, again they become straight. There are all sorts of ups and downs in their spiritual life. So you should not abandon your brother, or cut off connection with him, sever connection with him - which is a final act, as it were - because he has changed in this way: he may change again in another way, so keep up connection with him, don't abandon brotherhood with him. This is the view of another person. And if somebody else takes that sort of view.

Devaraja: Al-Ghazali seems to favour this approach, because he's got about a page and a half of .....

S: Well, wait and see. I believe he was called the *'Hammer of Islam'*- the hammer on behalf of Islam, that is. Anyway, let's see what the next companion quoted says.

"Ibrahim al-Nakha'i said:
- Do not break off from your brother and do not shun him on account of a sin he has committed, for he may commit it today but give it up tomorrow."

S: The same line of reasoning adopted by another companion. So we've only really got one argument; we haven't got an extra argument. All right, so another quote from the same person.

"He also said:
- Do not tell people of the mistake of a learned man, for the learned may make a mistake and then leave it."

S: Yes, that has some bearing on - this is to reinforce - the view that a man can change, especially if the brother in question is a learned man. He may realise his mistake, he may correct it. So don't break off connection with him, don't tell people about his mistake, because by the time you've told them he might well have changed.

And then there's a tradition cited.

"According to the tradition:
- Beware of the mistake of the learned. Do not cut him off, but await his return."

S: This is to the same general effect. What do you think is meant by 'Beware of the mistake of the learned'?

Abhaya: Beware of coming to any conclusion.

S: Yes, because a learned man is a learned man. In some ways the learned are more liable to mistakes, at least mistakes of a certain kind, because they have more subtle minds, they have a greater store of information; there are many more ways in which they can go wrong intellectually. So 'Do not cut him off, but await his return.'

"It is related about Umar that he once enquired after a man he had taken as a brother, and who had gone away to Syria. He asked someone who came to him:
- What has my brother been doing?
- That man is Satan's brother.
- Eh?
- He has committed the major sins, even lapsing into wine-drinking.
Telling his informant to let him know when he intended to return, Umar wrote to his brother:
*- In the name of God All-Merciful. **Ha-Mim**. The revelation of the Book is from God, Almighty, All-Knowing, Forgiver of sins, Accepter of repentance, Stern in punishment ... (Qur'an 40.1-3)*
He remonstrated with him under this quotation, and chided him. His brother wept when he read the letter, saying:
- God speaks true, and Umar advises me truly.
So he repented and came back."

S: This story or anecdote isn't strictly relevant, because earlier on al-Ghazali says: 'In the case of religion, where he commits an offence and persists in it, you must advise him kindly ... If you are incapable of this and he **remains** obstinate' - i.e. despite the advice - 'at this point there is a divergence', but in this particular case, in this particular anecdote, as soon as the man is advised by his friend, his brother - in this case Umar - he corrects himself and changes his ways, so it is not quite the same thing. But it does serve to illustrate, in a more general way, that, yes, a man can change. Perhaps you shouldn't be satisfied with remonstrating with him once; you should try again and again, before even thinking of breaking off the contract of brotherhood.

All right, let's have the next story, which covers a couple of paragraphs.

"There is a story of two brothers, one of whom was smitten with a desire. He revealed it to his brother and said:
- I have a blemish, so if you wish you may consider yourself released from your contract of brotherhood with me.
But the other said:
- I am not one to dissolve our contract on account of your error.
Then he made a compact between him and God that he would neither nor drink till God cured his brother of his passion. For forty days he kept asking him about his desire. His brother kept saying that his heart was set in its condition, so he wasted away of sorrow and hunger. At the end of forty days the passion left his brother's heart, and he gave him the news. At last he ate and drank, having all but perished from emaciation and suffering."

S: So what do you think is the purport of this story?

Devaraja: Surely it's a kind of coercion.

S: Is it?

Devaraja: Well, if one fasts with a possibility of dying, it's -

S: But do you think that it's intended as a coercion?

Vajrananda: Is it that he feels that if the relationship is being destroyed by that blemish, then the symbolic dying of the relationship is - ?

S: No, I don't get that impression.

Subhuti: It's his strong sympathy for him.

S: Strong sympathy - for instance, don't forget the Islamic context: 'he made a compact between him and God that he would neither eat nor drink till God cured his brother of his passion.' In other words, he realises that his friend is in such a situation, such a condition, that he is as it were beyond human aid. Only God can help him, only God can cure him of his blemish. Only God can take away his passion. So he is prepared to risk or to stake his life in order to get God to change his brother's heart, to remove the blemish. In other words - leaving aside the theistic context - he is even prepared to risk his own life in order to do good to his brother and to help him. This is, I think, the real purport.

It could also be that there is a psychological significance inasmuch as the brother who has the blemish sees that the brother who makes that contract with God is willing to risk his life for him; so his awareness of the fact that his brother is willing to risk his life for him to that extent can result in a very intense experience on his part, an experience of his friend's feeling of brotherhood towards him - so intense that the blemish is eradicated. His heart, or his mind, is so filled with very strong positive emotions aroused by the contemplation of his brother's self-sacrifice, that he forgets all about that passion; the blemish just goes. You could consider it as working psychologically in this sort of way. When he

contemplates say the nobility of his brother's action or the nobility of his brother's attitude and his self-sacrifice, he really might well experience a complete change of heart: 'Here am I, indulging in this passion; here am I, permitting this blemish to exist in my heart. But look at my brother, what he is prepared to do for me.' It could have an effect in this way, psychologically speaking - leaving aside the whole question of, say, divine intervention and so on.

Prasannasiddhi: One is reminded of Gandhi when one reads this.

S: Yes, I was reminded a little bit of Gandhi, but that was when someone spoke in terms of coercion. Because I can't help feeling that in Gandhi's case, especially when he fasted for political ends, there was definitely an element of coercion.

Kuladeva: And in Gandhi's case it was more to have his own way, wasn't it, rather than to help .....

S: Yes, indeed, you could look at it this way, yes, that it was to have his own way. Maybe his own way was the right way, but still he used the weapon of fasting to enforce that. Whereas in this case there is no question of the brother wanting his own way, unless you could say it was his own way that he wanted his brother's blemish to be removed. But surely anybody would want it to be removed; the brother himself, perhaps, would have wanted it to be removed. He simply felt incapable of doing anything about it.

Clearly he felt some shame on its account, because he says at the very beginning, after being smitten with a desire: 'I have a blemish' - he acknowledges it as a blemish - 'so if you wish you may consider yourself released from your contract of brotherhood with me.' So perhaps it is that seed of shame, as it were, that his brother's action works upon. He becomes in the end so ashamed of his blemish that it is just wiped out in the end, quite genuinely.

I don't know whether there are any symbolical associations, so to speak, of the forty days; because there was Christ's forty days and nights in the wilderness, and before that there was another forty days of somebody else in the Old Testament.

Abhaya: Forty years.

S: Ah, forty years of the wanderings of the Children of Israel in the desert. Forty seems to be the fixed period for that sort of thing - forty days or forty years. It's a square number, it's four. I think that has a significance. In traditional accounts nothing is always exactly accidental.

Anyway - ah, there is a story about the people of Israel coming now.

"It is related in the stories of the People of Israel that two godly brothers were upon a mountain. One of them came down to the town to buy a pennyworth of meat. He saw a harlot at the butcher's shop, gazed upon her, fell in love with her, and carried her to a private place to copulate with her. After spending three nights with her, he was ashamed to return to his brother in view of his offence.

Meanwhile, his brother missed him and felt concern about him. He descended to the town and kept on asking about him till he was directed to him. Then he went in and found him sitting with the girl. He embraced him and began kissing him and hugging him, but the other denied all knowledge of him, being so ashamed. Then he said:
- Come my brother, for I know your condition and your story, yet you were never better loved nor dearer to me than at this moment.
Now when he realised that what had happened had not lowered him in his brother's eye he arose and went away with him.

This reflects one school of thought, which is subtler and more penetrating than that of Abu Dharr (May God be pleased with him!), though his is more proper and safer." [Laughter]

S: Very judicious! Well, there are several lessons here. First of all, 'It is related in the stories of the People of Israel that two godly brothers were upon a mountain. One of them came down to the town to buy a pennyworth of meat.' What's the moral here?

Kulananda: When you go to town you've got to be mindful.

S: Yes! This is very reminiscent of the Buddhist scriptures, where bhikkhus, young bhikkhus especially, are represented as going forth in the morning, usually for alms, from their forest dwelling in the direction of the village, and they are warned to be especially careful of the village women that they may see on the way, because they may be bathing in the river or in a pond, etc. So the young monks have to remain mindful. So this is the sort of thing that we find happening here. 'One of them came down to the town to buy a pennyworth of meat' - in a way it's quite ridiculous, just for the sake of this pennyworth of meat he gets into such trouble. 'He saw a harlot at the butcher's shop'; I don't know whether this is significant, this juxtaposition - maybe it isn't from an Islamic point of view, but from a Buddhist point of view it is - 'he saw a harlot at the butcher's shop', the two extremes meeting: extreme violence as represented by the killing of animals for flesh, and the harlot, extreme lust and craving, one might say.

Prasannasiddhi: Mind you, he was on his way to the butcher's shop to get the pennyworth of meat. So they probably don't recognise it, Islam.

S: Yes, that's what I say; yes, from a Buddhist point of view one could say it is interesting that these two things are juxtaposed.

Kulananda: Places where flesh is .....

S: 'He saw a harlot at the butcher's shop, gazed upon her, fell in love with her, and carried her off to a private place to copulate with her.' So here one notices - some people might think this is exaggerated - how quickly everything happens; but I think really it isn't so. These things can happen very very quickly, because mindfulness is completely overcome.

'After spending three nights with her, he was ashamed to return to his brother in view of his offence.' So, as in the case of the person in the previous story, he did have a sense of shame; he realised he had committed an offence, but he felt that because he had committed that offence he just couldn't return to his brother; he was ashamed. So that, in a sense, showed a certain worthiness on his part.

As for the brother, 'Meanwhile, his brother missed him and felt concern about him. He descended to the town and kept on asking about him till he was directed to him. Then he went in and found him sitting with the girl. He embraced him and began kissing him and hugging him, but the other denied all knowledge of him, being **so ashamed**.' Can you think of any parallel to this situation in Buddhist texts - a fairly distant one, but none the less a sort of parallel? It's the prodigal son and the seeking father. The son is ashamed to go in front of his father. Do you remember?

But I think we must be very careful to get the right point of the story, at least what I think is the right one. The point is not that it didn't matter that the first brother went with the harlot; the point is not that the offence was no offence. The point is that the second brother's love persisted despite the offence. It is not even that the second brother would have said, 'No, you haven't committed an offence.' 'Now when he realised that what had happened had not lowered him in his brother's eye' - I think this is not to be understood as his brother thinking that he hadn't in fact really committed an offence and was mistaken in being ashamed of it; yes, he had committed an offence, but even though he had committed an offence, as a brother he was not lowered in his brother's eyes, i.e. his brother still regarded him as a brother. If this sort of thing had occurred, say, within the context of the FWBO, perhaps the second brother would have said, 'Don't be so ashamed. You're just feeling unnecessarily guilty. You haven't really done anything wrong. You're just being yourself. You're just doing your own thing. So it's quite all right really, after all.' No, this is not the attitude or the point here - do you see the difference? Yes, he had done something wrong, he had been overcome by unmindfulness, he had committed an offence; but that did not make any difference to his brother's affection. His brother stayed with him through all that.

Nagabodhi: It suggests that the brother knew him quite deeply in the first place.

S: Yes. Because he says, 'Come my brother, for I know your condition and your story, yet you were never better loved nor dearer to me than at this moment.' Why do you think that should be so?

Tejamitra: It perhaps revealed another side to himself, and his brother had seen that.

S: Could you literally love someone all the more for their offences or their weaknesses? I know this is a popular point of view nowadays in the West, but is it really so? Do you actually love someone more on account of their weaknesses? I think that depends on the nature of your love. If it is a sort of motherly, protective love, you might love someone more on account of their weaknesses just because they are weaker; but I don't think that sort of love is referred to here.

Devaraja: I think he's trying to reassure him that he is still his friend, and that -

S: No, I think it even goes further than that. I would say that perhaps the friend himself, the friend who seeks out the friend who went off with the harlot, himself didn't realise how much he loved his friend until it was put to the test, and he realised [that] 'despite my friend's offence, I really do love him; my love is able to survive and transcend this offence.' So he could say that his friend was never dearer to him than at that moment; he had never perhaps realised before how much he did in fact love him, because now the love is being put to the test. Perhaps it can be

looked at like that.

Also you notice, 'Now when he realised that what had happened had not lowered him in his brother's eye' - that is to say, his brother still regarded him as a brother - 'he arose and went away with him'. He left the harlot, he forgot all about the harlot, just as in the case of the previous story the blemish was removed.

This is a quite interesting psychological point: that your awareness of, or your response to, somebody else's affection for you can be such an intense experience that it actually wipes out any sin or offence or blemish of yours - do you see what I mean? Not that it as it were directly wipes it out, but you are so affected yourself, your emotional state is changed to such an extent or it becomes so positive, that the negativity represented by the blemish or the desire just cannot exist any longer.

Tejamitra: Are you suggesting that has almost a wiping clear of karmic consequences?

S: It may not wipe clear the karmic consequences. For instance, let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that during those three nights the first brother had made the harlot pregnant. Well, that would have to follow its usual course: that represents karma, that would not be affected. She wouldn't miraculously cease to be pregnant; so you would still have to reap the results of what you had done under the influence of the blemish or the passion, even though in the meantime the blemish or passion had been removed from your heart. Someone did once say - I think I quoted this - we still have to experience the consequences of our actions even though in the meantime we might have repented of those actions.

Prasannasiddhi: Well, you could say there was a kind of karmic tie inasmuch as the friendship that had developed between the brothers had continuity to it, so there is a kind of karmic connection so that the brothers -

S: I was using the word karma there quite loosely. Karma means pertaining to the order of cause and effect, morally speaking; that you perform an action, skilful or otherwise, and therefore you have to suffer the consequences of that, whether pleasant or painful. This is what 'karmic' strictly means.

Prasannasiddhi: Well, you could say that the brother being re-united with his brother was due to the strength of the friendship that had developed previously; so in that sense there is in a way a kind of cause and effect.

S: Yes, but it's not karmic; you might even say that the friendship or brotherhood was to some extent one-sided, because the first brother, the one who went astray with the harlot, doubted, in a sense, his friend's sense of brotherhood, as he felt that - well, he was ashamed to go back to him; he was afraid perhaps that he had been lowered in his brother's eyes, because it says here: 'when he realised that what had happened had not lowered him in his brother's eye' - so he didn't have such a strong sense of brotherhood, perhaps, as the other person.

Anyway, what is al-Ghazali's comment? 'This reflects one school of thought, which is subtler and more penetrating than that of Abu Dharr.' In what way is it subtler and more penetrating?

Subhuti: It goes beneath the surface of things - the immediate reaction of the brother who in this case has done something unskilful, it sees that he is capable of repenting.

[End of Tape 13 Tape 14 (1)]

S: I don't think it's simply that, I think it's more than that; it's psychologically subtler and more penetrating. The fact that people can change - that is almost a truism, isn't it? - and that one should reserve judgement. But I think it shows an insight into what one might call the mechanics of transformation; how someone's consciousness that another person still has feelings of brotherhood towards him can act upon him and even change his mental state and even eradicate blemishes. And it shows insight into the way in which one human being can affect another quite positively, quite deeply, in this way.

So 'This reflects one school of thought' with regard to whether you should sever relations with a brother who has abandoned his religious duties, 'which is subtler and more penetrating than that of Abu Dharr...., though his is more proper and safer.' It's almost as though al-Ghazali in the end is recommending Abu Dharr's attitude rather than the other one: 'though his is more proper and safer'. How does one take that? He is praising one school of thought as 'subtler and more penetrating', but he speaks of the other as 'more proper and safer'.

Tejamitra: Perhaps you could go amiss with -

Subhuti: There's more room for rationalisation.

S: There's more room for rationalisation, more room for indulgence.

Tejamitra: It's saying that the other method is more penetrating - you could take from that the brother who rescues the first brother, his state is actually lifted by it, and that also one who's passed it (?) -

S: Perhaps you could say that the first attitude could really only be adopted by someone who was wise, and that for the majority of people it would be better to follow the second method. They are not in a position, really, to follow the first.

There are two points here. First of all, an offence has been committed and you cannot condone the offence; an offence against religion has been committed but you cannot condone the offence. At the same time, in the case of the second kind of person or second kind of attitude, you don't want to give up brotherhood. So your only way of preserving brotherhood in the face of that situation is by some means or other, by some subtle penetrating method, to induce your brother to give up his offence. You have to have that skill. It's almost as though the stories taken together are saying if you haven't got that degree of skill you've really no alternative but to abandon your brother, at least for the time being.

Otherwise what happens? Since your brother, since your [associate, is] committing offences against religion, maybe sooner or later, if you're not

very strong in your religious practice, you will start committing the same offences and you will both be lost. Is it better that you should both be lost and remain as it were brothers, [or] that you should not remain brothers but that one of you at least should be saved? What does one say to that?

So it's as though, an offence being an offence, you are only justified in remaining with your brother if you are able to change him; which suggests you've got to be subtler and more penetrating to be able to do that. An ordinary man can't do that, in the case of someone who is confirmed in his offence; it being assumed that you do not want to commit offences.

So, all right, take a concrete example, transferring, say, to the context of the Order. Supposing you are living with just one other Order member, and to begin with you are meditating together every day, studying every day, etc.; there's an ideal relationship between you. Well, supposing the other person gradually starts moving away from that; gives up meditating, gives up studies, starts leading a thoroughly worldly life, isn't interested, perhaps, in being an Order member any more. What is your attitude to be, if you are closely associated with him? Are you going to perhaps imperil your own spiritual life by continued association, or are you going to withdraw from that, in the hope that perhaps later you will be strong enough to help him? Or are you going to stay with him in the confidence that you are so strong in your spiritual life and commitment that you will in the end bring him round? It is a question perhaps of judging your own strength or your own weakness. You may regretfully have to sever relationships.

Kulananda: Surely only in the most very very extreme cases of your own weakness and the strength of his divergence would you actually really sever relations?

S: At what point you sever, in a way, is irrelevant; the point under discussion is whether you could ever come to that point of severing.

Kulananda: The first - I think we've got quite strong differences of degree being suggested by what you've just said and by what is being suggested in the text. Because what is being suggested in the text is almost of this offence taking place almost irrespective of matters of degree; you simply cut off all connections and begin to hate the person.

S: Well, no, there can be no question of cutting off connection regardless of the degree of offence, because it has already been made clear in previous chapters that there is no one who does not in some respects commit an offence. Brothers are not perfect, so clearly it is a question of degree; that must be admitted. But nonetheless there may be differences of opinion as to how bad things have got to get before you cut off connection; and that will, of course, partly be determined by your own degree of spiritual strength, or at least your own estimation of that.

Kulananda: In some ways could you not say that one should never absolutely cut off connections - you should always try to keep at least one line of communication?

S: Well, that depends what one means by cutting off. In the case I have mentioned - I've mentioned if, say, you are living with somebody - well, perhaps you couldn't continue to live with them. But even if you went away you could leave your address and telephone number, or you could

phone at intervals.

Kulananda: Write, and visit, and things like that.

Nagabodhi: But you wouldn't be a brother in the way that you were -

S: No, you wouldn't be brothers; brotherhood would really have come to an end. You'd be just continuing to keep in touch in the hope that brotherhood could be restored. Because brotherhood is a mutual thing, to some extent at least. It comes back to the question that Aristotle raises: whether there can be friendship between the vicious. He came to the conclusion there can be genuine friendship only between the virtuous. So if your friend has, let's say for the sake of argument, altogether abandoned his religious duties, that is undermining the foundations of friendship itself; friendship being understood in this context to be necessarily virtuous friendship, not just friendship in crime or friendship in unskilful things. If your friend will be friends with you only on condition that you are friends in unskilfulness, how can you continue to be a friend? Perhaps you wouldn't even recognise the possibility of genuine friendship of that kind.

Tejamitra: Is what Aristotle says because there's no possibility of a spiritual element to the friendship?

S: Well, Aristotle doesn't discuss in spiritual terms but in ethical terms, and he would say - I'm probably paraphrasing him - that friendship is essentially an ethical relation. So therefore there can be friendship only between ethical people. The good will that exists, for instance, among a band of robbers according to him would not be regarded as the sentiment of friendship, in his sense, because they are partners in crime.

So if your friend has abandoned, let's say, the path of virtue - well, to abandon the path of virtue is in fact to abandon the path of friendship too, inasmuch as virtue, one could argue, is the basis of friendship itself. Friendship says you should love your brother; well, love is an ethical sentiment.

Kulananda: Are you saying friendship can only be practised reciprocally?

S: Well, friendship in the full sense can only be reciprocal. There may be lapses; the brother may forget his friendship or his duties of friendship for a while, the other person can remain friends nonetheless and wait for him to come round. But I don't think there can be - well, there can't be effective friendship, let us say. There can be an attitude of friendship in a one-sided way, in the instance I've mentioned, but there cannot be effective friendship.

Kulananda: But if you maintain a friendly attitude - if you are just seeking to make that friendship effective, so you would at least keep your side open and continue to make attempts.

S: Yes, but you couldn't say that friendship in the full sense, or brotherhood, did continue to exist; and you would not wish it to continue to exist on the basis of unskilfulness, because you would not believe that that would be real friendship or real brotherhood.

For instance, supposing you were a Muslim, and your brother, having abandoned his religious duties, should suggest to you that you should break into and rob a mosque. You would say, 'No, I just can't do that.' But suppose he said, 'You're supposed to be my brother and you won't join with me?' - what can you say then? 'Sorry. Brotherhood is not of that kind, so far as I am concerned.' So you would have to sever your relationship of brotherhood with him and let him go and rob the mosque on his own, or even get caught on his own. But you might visit him in prison afterwards. Of course you would have tried your best to dissuade him from robbing the mosque, but if he couldn't be dissuaded, what are you to do? Are you to accompany him, knowing that the action or believing that the action is unskilful and an offence against religion in which you believe?

Kulananda: If you were to do that, then you would be severing your relation of brotherhood. But I would say that it is not severing your relationship of brotherhood that you don't accompany him.

S: Well, it is in effect, because brotherhood consists in doing things - by assumption, skilful things - together. If you can no longer do things together because one of you is doing only unskilful things, really you are no longer effectively brothers, and the brother who is still doing skilful things has to wait, so to speak, for the other brother eventually to come round.

Kulananda: I suppose what I'm saying is that you can maintain an attitude of being a *kalyana mitra* to someone without there necessarily being at that time *kalyana mitrata* between you.

S: Well, you can be ready to resume relations of brotherhood, let us say, the minute that becomes possible, but effective brotherhood is not in operation between you if the other person is engaged in unskilful activities.

Tejamitra: From this looking at those two methods of approach, would you say that it would be best for someone who is much more experienced to visit Order members who resign, for instance? - that should be a function of someone who is more experienced?

S: Well, yes and no; because the matter becomes more complicated. Supposing the resigned or out-of-touch Order member has got problems with authority. Well, if an older, more experienced Order member goes along - and we have known this happen in the past - he takes it as a visit from authority to check him out and tick him off. Sometimes, under those circumstances, it's better for a young, innocent, inexperienced Order member to go along, because the other Order member will perhaps start pouring out his troubles to him, making complaints to him, etc. So it may not be a good thing to expose a very young Order member to that sort of thing. It isn't always simple and straightforward. There have been instances in the past when out-of-contact Order members receive a friendly visit, a genuinely friendly visit just from a couple of Order members who just wanted to see how they were getting on, but afterwards the out-of-touch Order member reported it in such terms one would have imagined that he had received a visit from the Gestapo. It really was extraordinary. So, as I've said, it's not so easy.

So obviously here - I started by pointing out that there was a divergence in the ways followed by the Companions and Successors of the Prophet himself; so there can be a genuine difference of opinion on an issue like this. There can be a difference of opinion as to what is best to be done.

And perhaps one has to take into account one's own strength or one's own weakness.

All right, al-Ghazali's got something more to say in justification of his view now, it seems.

"You may well ask how I can call the other view subtler and more penetrating. You might argue that it is not permissible to initiate a contract of brotherhood with one who commits this offence, and that the contract would have to be dissolved; for when a legal relation holds good in the presence of an effective cause, analogy dictates that it must dissolve when the latter dissolves. In the case of brotherhood, the effective cause is mutual assistance in religion, which does not survive the commission of the offence."

S: The gist of the matter is in the last sentence: 'In the case of brotherhood, the effective cause is mutual assistance in religion, which does not survive the commission of the offence.' All right, supposing you enter into a relationship of *kalyana mitrata* with somebody else to help one another, assist one another, in the practice of the Dharma, and the other person abandons the Dharma: how can there be any *kalyana mitrata* surviving? This is the point that is made here. All right, but al-Ghazali still has something more to say.

"When I speak of the subtler view, I refer to the way in which tenderness, consolation and benevolence are effective in recalling and inspiring repentance. For the sense of shame endures with continuing fellowship, whereas when relations are severed and his appetite cut off from fellowship he will be obstinate and persist in his ways."

S: 'The sense of shame endures with continuing fellowship'. So what is the sense of shame? What is shame? In the case of the two stories, the erring brother felt shame quite spontaneously on account of his blemish; in fact he wanted to break off brotherhood on that account. But in the second story, the erring brother feels so much shame at what he has done that he doesn't want even to go back to see his brother. So shame is a very important fact - well, we know in Buddhism that shame, if one can take the two as equivalent - we know that *hiri* and *ottapa*, blame and shame - *hiri* is really shame - is one of the positive mental events, isn't it? But on what does shame depend?

Abhaya: On the realisation of what you've done.

S: No; because that is blame, self-blame; conscience will tell you what you've done - that is *ottapa*. But a sense of shame is -

Abhaya: It's in relation to your brothers.

S: It's in relation to your brothers, in relation to other people. So you don't feel shame unless there are other people, say, in whose presence you feel shame. So what happens if the other people withdraw or cut off contact with you? What happens then?

_____: You're not likely to feel that any more.

S: You're not likely to feel that any more. So therefore it's an argument for not cutting off contact with your brother, that if you don't cut off

contact with him, even though brotherhood has been seriously impaired, you are as it were ensuring that his feeling of shame continues; and so long as he continues to feel ashamed there is some possibility of repentance and change.

So 'When I speak of the subtler view, I refer to the way in which tenderness, consolation and benevolence are effective in recalling and inspiring repentance. For the sense of shame **endures** with continuing fellowship, whereas when relations are severed and his appetite cut off from fellowship he will be obstinate and persist in his ways.' A shameless person is one who has no -

Tejamitra: - spiritual friends.

S: No spiritual friends, one who doesn't care for public opinion as it were; and he doesn't care for public opinion because he has no friends. So there is no one in respect of whom he would feel ashamed. So you could even say that your spiritual friends are those in whose presence you would be ashamed to commit any unskilful action. In fact, you would be ashamed if they even knew of any unskilful action on your part. If you have no such friends, the likelihood is that you are a shameless person.

Ratnavira: So you could almost say that continued fellowship is what maintains the sense of ethics in that person, or ethical values .....

S: Yes, inasmuch as the sense of shame does itself imply a sense of ethical values. This is the more subtle view, and it really quite subtle, isn't it?

All right, let's go on and see what more al-Ghazali has to say.

"When I speak of its being more penetrating, I mean that brotherhood is a contract on the same footing as kinship; once it is contracted the duty is confirmed, and that which the contract entails must be fulfilled. Fulfilment includes not neglecting the days of his need and poverty - and poverty in religion is more acute than material poverty. He has been afflicted by calamity and harmed by adversity, in consequence of which he is impoverished in his religion. Therefore he must be watched and cared for, not neglected. No, he needs constant kindness to be helped to salvation from the disaster which has befallen him. Brotherhood is provision for the vicissitudes and accidents of time, and this is the hardest of misfortunes. Further, if the man of bad morals enjoys the fellowship of the godfearing, and observes his fear and his constancy, he will soon come back to righteousness and be ashamed to persist. Indeed, a lazy man in fellowship with an industrious one will be shamed by him into industry."

S: There seems to be some inconsistency on al-Ghazali's part here; do you notice that?

Well, he says: 'Brotherhood is a contract on the same footing as kinship'. At the very beginning he says: 'Brotherhood is a bond between two persons. like the contract of marriage between two spouses.' Are those two things not quite different? Because marriage, in the same way that it can be entered into, it can be terminated; so brotherhood was compared to marriage, the contract of brotherhood is compared with the contract of marriage; and a contract cannot only be entered into, it can be terminated when the conditions cease to be fulfilled. But now al-Ghazali is

saying, apparently, that brotherhood is a contract on the same footing as kinship.

Tejamitra: Do Muslims recognise divorce?

S: Oh yes, indeed. Divorce is very simple among Muslims - well, for men. I must admit the feminists do have a point here - perhaps!

So in a sense al-Ghazali seems to have changed his footing, as it were. 'When I speak of its being more penetrating, I mean that brotherhood is a contract on the same footing as kinship; once it is contracted the duty is confirmed, and that which the contract entails must be fulfilled. Fulfilment includes not neglecting the days of his need and poverty - and poverty in religion is more acute than material poverty.' Do you think that this is in fact a logical argument, and not sophistical? In other words, is the analogy really correct between material poverty and spiritual poverty, or religious poverty? 'He has been afflicted by calamity and harmed by adversity, in consequence of which he is impoverished in his religion.' Is this really correct?

Subhuti: Yes, it makes it seem as if it's not really his fault.

S: Yes, the language seems to suggest it is something that comes from outside. But is that really so?

Devaraja: You could argue that it's a calamity introduced by Satan, and hence the need to call in an exterior agency such as God to fight Satan and remove this calamity.

S: Well, even in Islam you can't put too much responsibility onto external agencies, otherwise there is no room for an ethical imperative at all.

Kulananda: Granted all that, but is that different from material poverty?

S: Well, material poverty may not be your own fault, whereas religious poverty, one might say, is always, or by very definition, one's own fault.

Kulananda: I'm not sure that -

S: Well, supposing someone lost all his wealth by act of God - there was a storm, his whole house was swept away, he lost everything. That is not his fault. But supposing, due to his wealth, he gets into bad ways, starts drinking, running after fast women, etc.: that is not a calamity that has befallen him in the same way. It hasn't befallen him, it is something that he has done. You could say that he has done it out of unmindfulness, but he is responsible for being unmindful. One must be mindful to be mindful.

So I am questioning al-Ghazali's reasoning here. We are not to take it as it were without questioning.

Devaraja: It's a bit confusing. You could argue that there is such a thing as poverty in religion as the result of not having had brotherhood, not

having had contact with religion. But, yes, it is arguable that once you have had contact with brotherhood then that is something that is brought about by your own fault, if you -

S: But in this particular case, the brotherhood does exist, and the question is whether someone who fails in his religious duties should be abandoned by his brother. The logical argument is that, just as you don't abandon your brother due to his having fallen into poverty, so you shouldn't abandon him because he has fallen into irreligion, because that is a species of poverty. To me that sounds rather sophistical, actually, and not really a true argument, though well-meaning, perhaps.

Devaraja: A bit sentimental.

S: Sentimental, perhaps, even.

Prasannasiddhi: I tend to feel that you are responsible for your own actions but at the same time you are affected by external actions; so until you reach a certain level of development you are prone to being distracted; though you aren't entirely a victim of circumstances. It is partly -

S: Because to some extent you are responsible for your circumstances.

So al-Ghazali goes on to say: 'Therefore he must be watched and cared for.' Well, it doesn't necessarily follow - not to say he shouldn't be watched and cared for, but not perhaps for those reasons, or not on the basis of that particular argument.

He goes on to give a further argument: 'Brotherhood is provision for the vicissitudes and accidents of time, and this is the hardest of misfortunes.' Well, that's open to the same objection, perhaps. 'Further, if the man of bad morals enjoys the fellowship of the godfearing, and observes his fear and his constancy, he will soon come back to righteousness and be ashamed to persist.' That is true, but the opposite can also happen. Therefore you have still to estimate your own strength and your own weakness.

Perhaps the most that one can say, to sum up, is that it depends first of all on the degree of, say, irreligion in the other person and the degree of your own strength in religion. Maybe you will never cut off connection to the extent of ceasing to care about the other person, but if his, say, unskilfulness is such that it would be difficult, even dangerous, for you to actually live with him, you must withdraw from living with him. But that doesn't mean that you will cut off connection with him completely. You will keep up such connection as is consistent with helping him, but not inconsistent with your own practice of what is skilful; and that is sometimes quite a fine point to determine. But effective brotherhood, in the sense of the actual mutual participation in skilful activities - that will be at an end, at least for the time being. But your sentiment of brotherhood towards him, and your wish to resume common skilful activities, will presumably not be at an end.

There's a story or anecdote now, to illustrate that 'a lazy man in fellowship with an industrious one will be shamed by him into industry'.

"Ja'afar ibn Sulayman said:

- Whenever I flagged in my labours I would look at Muhammad ibn Wasi', and his attitude to obedience, so that my energy in worship returned to me, laziness departed from me, and I could work for a week.'"

S: Of course, it can happen the other way round, that .....

"This is the proof: fellowship is a bond of flesh, like the bond of blood-kinship, and it is not permissible to shun a kinsman on account of his offence. Thus God (Exalted is He!) said to His Prophet (may God bless him and give him Peace!), concerning his kinsfolk:

- If they disobey you, say, 'I am quit of what you do.' (Qur'an 26.216)
*He did not tell him to say, 'I am quit **of you**, having regard for the duty of kinship and the bond of blood-relationship."*

S: Of course, in ancient Arabia the bond of blood-relationship was very important. You stood by your blood relations even if they were in the wrong. You didn't even inquire whether they were in the wrong or in the right; you supported them through thick and thin. If your brother, say, had killed a man belonging to some other tribe, and they were after his blood, you stood by your brother. You didn't question whether your brother had done right or wrong in killing that man. So the tie of blood was very strong in those days: much stronger than it is now.

So al-Ghazali is saying: 'This is the proof: fellowship is a bond of flesh, like the bond of blood-kinship, and it is not permissible to shun a kinsman on account of his offence.' In a way he has, as I pointed out, changed his position from saying that brotherhood is a contract that you enter into; it's as though, once you've entered into the relationship of brotherhood, you are born into it, and just as you can't retract a blood relationship you can't retract the relation of brotherhood. It is, so to speak, irreversible. You can't change your mother and your father and your brother; they are your mother and your father for good, for the whole of this life anyway. In the same way, once having made someone your brother in this sense, you can't withdraw from that. He is your brother for better or for worse.

Abhaya: It seems a strange place to introduce that inconsistency - he is discussing examples where you have to decide whether to cut off or to continue. So couldn't it be taken more metaphorically?

S: But in what way more metaphorically?

Abhaya: Brotherhood is like kinship - it's very, very strong.

S: But actually he is not saying that. Perhaps he is wavering between a legalistic and a non-legalistic view. For instance, if you compare brotherhood with marriage, and even speak of entering into the contract of brotherhood, just as you speak of entering into the contract of marriage - well, this is clearly legalistic terminology. But he seems to have half abandoned the legalistic terminology here, and he says that the relation of brotherhood is like that of blood kinship, suggesting you can't renounce it under any circumstances, whatever your brother may do; just as you can't renounce kinship with your blood brother or your father or your uncle, whatever they may do.

But nonetheless, you cannot but recognise that brotherhood is something you enter upon; it does have a beginning in this life, so it ought logically to follow that it could, under certain circumstances, have an ending. But he is not, apparently, here drawing that conclusion. So to that extent perhaps there is inconsistency.

Anyway, we haven't finished this discussion yet.

"To this Abu'l Darda referred when he was asked:
- Do you not hate your brother when he has done such and such?
and he replied:
- I only hate what he has done, otherwise he is my brother."

S: Then al-Ghazali adds something even more.

"Brotherhood in religion is firmer than brotherhood in kinship."

S: Hm! He goes even further ahead there. 'Brotherhood in religion is **firmer** than brotherhood in kinship.' He does that on the basis of this anecdote - someone asks: '- Do you not hate your brother when he has done such and such? And he replied: - I only hate what he has done, otherwise he is my brother.' Can you in fact make that distinction between what a person does and what he is? Because, according to Buddhism, you are what you do. There is not some sort of metaphysical essence which is unaffected by what you do, and stands apart from what you do. So if you dislike what somebody does, at least to some extent you are disliking them.

Devaraja: Maybe he is suggesting there that it's taking a longer-term view of the person, a longer view of them and a much wider perspective of what they are.

S: But it comes to the same thing, in a way, as what I have said, because you hate what your brother has done, let us say, but to the extent that what he does is him, to some extent you hate him, at least for the time being. You may not hate him on the whole, because not everything he does is unskilful, but if you can hate what he does, surely you must hate him, if what he does cannot be separated from him, as according to Buddhism it cannot be.

Kulananda: Except that when you are in a relationship with a person you are not just in a relationship with him in the present; the relationship extends backwards in time.

S: Well, yes, admittedly, but the point is, do you absolutely approve of him or do you absolutely not approve of him? Well, clearly it's neither. You approve in part and disapprove in part. But if you say that you hate what he has done but you don't hate him, you are as it were saying you totally approve of him - which in fact you do not.

Kuladeva: Well, except that you don't approve of his actions. Is it not saying that you don't disapprove of him as a brother but you do disapprove of - ?

S: No, but the person consists of his actions; so to disapprove even of one action is to disapprove of him to some extent, whether it's a present action or a past action or a future action, to disapprove of him to some extent, even though on the whole you approve of him. So is it not a dangerous attitude to adopt that 'I don't disapprove of you, I only disapprove of what you do'? In other words, to take an extreme example, you say, 'I thoroughly approve of Hitler. I only disapprove of what he did.' Can you really say that? From a Buddhist point of view - especially a Theravada point of view - someone consists of his actions, so I think it's a little dangerous to distinguish people from their actions and say that you approve of the person but simply not of their actions. In a way, it's a bit evasive. No, 'I disapprove of you at this moment to the extent that you are behaving unskilfully. But, yes, in other respects I don't, certainly.'

Ratnavira: Maybe the tone of it is used because it is the words that - he talks about hating, which implies an actual wish to harm -

S: I think one mustn't press that too much, because let us say Islam uses this what we may call more robust language more freely than do Buddhists.

Kulananda: But their actions are also more robust, in the same sense.

S: That's true, perhaps both in a bad sense and in a good sense - sometimes.

Devaraja: It's more like certain Western Buddhists have got a less robust -

S: Some Eastern ones, too, I must say.

Tejamitra: The other point about that, though, is they don't have the principle or the practice of mettā, so -

S: Not in the Buddhistic sense, because in the Buddhistic sense mettā, by very definition, is universal, to be extended to all; what to speak of Buddhists and non-Buddhists but to be extended towards all sentient beings, the whole of life. As far as I know, that principle is not found in Islam at all.

Tejamitra: That's quite significant. Even if someone is taking the other view in cutting off a brother, that would be a more extreme action than the corresponding one in Buddhism.

S: Well, in a way there is a corresponding one in Buddhism in the case of the Vinaya. For instance, almost the last act of the Buddha according to the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* was to decide what was to be done with regard to a certain bhikkhu who was consistently disobedient. The Buddha said: 'Apply to him the extreme penalty' - *brahmadanda*, which literally means 'the big stick', translated as 'the extreme penalty'; but

what is the extreme penalty?

_____: Expulsion from the Order.

S: Not even that.

_____: Sending him to Coventry.

S: Yes, sending him to Coventry: that no one should speak to him and no one should advise him and no one should even reprimand him. That is regarded as the extreme penalty. And it is said that, in this case, the application of that extreme penalty brought the bhikkhu to his senses and he entered into communion again after the Buddha's Parinirvana.

Nagabodhi: In the fourth stage of the *mettā bhavana*, if we are trying to direct loving-kindness to an enemy, presumably somebody who does things that we don't approve of, don't ..... and so on - what are we directing ourselves to? If somebody consists of their actions and we can't approve of their actions - I'm just seeing a confusion over that that I've never experienced before, because somewhere I think, without thinking about it, I've assumed that such strata -

S: It's as though your mettā is without reason. You're not feeling mettā towards them on account of anything. You are in a state of mettā, and being in a state of mettā you conjure up the image of that person who becomes, so to speak, the object of your mettā, not for anything that he has done or not done but simply because he is there. Whereas usually our attitude is that if someone has done us some harm, as by definition that person has, otherwise we wouldn't classify him as an enemy, we would feel hatred towards him. So it is not that you are feeling love for your enemy so much as that even the thought of someone who has done you an injury cannot disturb your attitude of mettā towards all. Your attitude is not dependent on anything that they have done or not done. You are, irrespective of whoever is around, or whether there are any people around at all, -

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- in an attitude of mettā. In a sense, metta is essentially objectless. You conjure up different objects, in the first place to get your mettā going, in the second place to test it, but essentially mettā is objectless, or in the end it becomes objectless.

Kulananda: So you disapprove of the person's actions, you even disapprove of them as a result, you cannot be in a state of *kalyana mitrata* with them, but still you can experience mettā towards them?

S: At the time that you experience mettā there is no thought either of approval or disapproval. In the course of the practice you have to get yourself going; you may be thinking of a near and dear friend, and neutral people and enemies, but that is just to get yourself going. But in the case of - mettā is not a judgemental attitude, you might say.

Kulananda: Does that mean you need to suspend metta in order to make a judgement?

S: No, I would say you don't suspend mettā in order to make a judgement, but to the extent that you are as it were judgementally occupied, to that extent less energy, one might say, will be going into your mettā. There is a certain division of interest or attention. But when you are actually practising the *mettā bhāvanā* and have, so to speak, got going, there is no judgemental element in it. But the attitude of mettā can be resumed the instant the judgemental activity ceases.

But I think al-Ghazali is wavering, or seems to waver, between two definitions of brotherhood. If brotherhood is a common pursuit of certain values, brotherhood in that sense ceases if one of the parties, one of the brothers, ceases to subscribe to those values. But the other party can, of course, continue to cherish those values and of course can continue to cherish the hope that the other brother will return to those values and remain in contact with him for that purpose; but that contact in which he remains will fall short of brotherhood in the full sense, which is essentially a common pursuit of agreed spiritual values.

So if someone with whom you have a relationship of brotherhood, in this sense, ceases to subscribe to spiritual values, he has in fact broken with you by that very act, because he makes that common pursuit of those values impossible. But you may not relinquish your hope that that common pursuit can be resumed, so you continue to watch over him, cherish him, keep up some contact with him, do *mettā bhāvanā* towards him - but all that does not constitute brotherhood in the full effective sense.

Devaraja: So the first attitude is brotherhood as pursuit of common spiritual objectives; so what is the second one? - uncritical acceptance, or - ? It seems to be a bit vague, really, what the second one is. Sort of - brotherhood is something impossible to -

S: Well, no, it's a definition - I think the ambiguity or inconsistency in al-Ghazali is whether you define brotherhood as brotherhood <u>in</u> a common spiritual pursuit, or whether you define it as the attitude of one person to another regardless of any common pursuit in which they may be engaged.

Nagabodhi: It's quite important to see people as their actions. I don't know how far back it goes, but I'm thinking of a sort of sixties attitude, which is this belief in the essential underlying innocent, good person underneath all the Western conditioning, that sometimes takes strength from twisted Buddhism.

S: Well, the Theravada view is that basically there is *lobha, dvesa and moha*. <u>Maybe</u> underneath that there is Buddhahood, but that is only a postulate, that is only a hypothesis; and that element is not actively present in that person's personality. So that it is not that, say, Buddhahood that has actually performed that unskilful action, otherwise that is the language you would have to adopt - which, of course, is obviously self-contradictory.

This brings us into quite deep metaphysical waters. I think it's where people like Ken Wilber and other such writers, with whom I am otherwise

in sympathy, go seriously astray, and where early Buddhism at least does not go astray. But perhaps that can't be entered into now; that is a quite complex metaphysical question.

But certainly, yes, broadly speaking, Buddhism does see a person as the sum total of his actions, bodily, verbal and mental. So it is really self-contradictory on those terms or on those assumptions to speak of hating a person's actions but not hating the person himself.

Kulananda: Except that there is this enormous historical component - vastly, infinitely larger almost, than the current actions, in any person.

S: No, that's not the point. The point is you cannot logically say that you hate his actions but not the person himself. You can say you hate one action but not the remainder of the action; but you cannot say you hate the action but not the person himself, because the person includes that action which you have just said you hate.

Kulananda: Except that you could then say you love a person and hate them as well.

S: Oh yes, indeed; oh yes indeed. You approve and disapprove. You don't either totally approve or totally disapprove.

Kulananda: Because one could imagine a situation in which someone you love very much does something of which you very strongly disapprove, but you still continue to love them very much.

S: Oh yes, you love them, but what does one mean by love? One wishes them well, which means that you wish they no longer commit that offence. But you don't regard that offence as not an offence just because you love them. Loving someone does not consist in seeing them as perfect.

Nagabodhi: There's this whole notion of unconditional love as a positive thing - .....

S: Unconditional love does not mean seeing whatever somebody does as worthy of love. No, they may be unworthy of love to that extent, but if one can speak in terms of loving anyone unconditionally it can only be that you believe in the unconditioned possibility of their changing; so that you will be able to love them in the future, because they will be worthy of love then. Perhaps one should distinguish again between love which is unconditional psychologically and love which is unconditioned metaphysically. You can't really love someone unconditionally on the psychological level; on that level they don't deserve it. You can only love them unconditionally on a metaphysical plane. But that is quite meaningless, so to speak, for ordinary purposes. Perhaps it is very unwise to invoke that.

So loving someone unconditionally doesn't mean unconditionally approving whatever they do, good, bad or indifferent; it means being unconditionally willing to help them evolve regardless of the point at which they are at this present moment.

Prasannasiddhi: Sounds as if perhaps the idea of the soul - the permanent, unchanging thing that lies at the bottom of a person - is partly

responsible.

S: Yes, because you can love that while not loving anything and everything that they may do.

Nagabodhi: I think that is something that people do get an impression of that the mettā is about.

S: Oh dear.

Nagabodhi: I've definitely heard people having this sort of view. I don't think I've ever taught it, but in the fourth stage you're sort of - underneath all the bad there's something good that is lovable.

S: Well, the *mettā bhāvanā* as described in the Pali Canon never says any such thing at all, ever. Mettā is mettā.

Nagabodhi: We must make sure that that sort of view isn't put across -

S: Yes, otherwise, instead of feeling mettā you will be thinking this particular view, which is quite a different matter. You will transform the *mettā bhāvanā* from an emotional exercise [into a psychological exercise]. (Break in recording.)

Abhaya:..... fourth stage - you've got to make an imaginative leap. Supposing you have someone in the fourth stage, and you tend to be thinking of them in terms of the bad acts that they have done. So what you have to do is to posit a possibility of -

S: No, I think that would be a concession. You arrive at the beginning of the fourth stage in a state of mettā. You then conjure up the image of someone who is your enemy, as he is called: that is to say, he has done you some injury. But even the thought of that person who has done you the injury is not able to disturb your attitude of mettā, as normally it would. In other words, you persist in your attitude of mettā instead of the image of that person who has done you an injury giving rise to thoughts of anger and vindictiveness, as normally it might do. So in a sense it is not - so you don't think about how good he might be, or different aspects of his character, etc.; you can do that as a concession, but that isn't really the full practice of that fourth stage.

Kulananda: Except, though, that if you are in a state of mettā you are more likely to see him in terms of his potential than in terms of his actuality.

S: Well, that's another point; because, in the context of the practice, you are thinking of an enemy - that is to say, you are thinking of someone who has done you an injury. That is the aspect that you are directing your attention to. And why are you directing your attention to that aspect? It is as it were to test and strengthen your attitude of mettā, which is not disturbed even by such an image.

It is also true that you can consider other aspects of the same person's character, but that is not this particular practice. In this particular practice,

you are considering that aspect in which he has actually done you an injury, which normally you would resent; but you have now arrived at such a state where you do not resent it, you are incapable of resenting it.

Kulananda: In that case, I think in many instances the mettā is being incorrectly taught at our Centres; because that's very rarely - I've never heard it brought up before. It's normally talked about in terms of actually trying to see that person in a more positive light, and making the effort in the context of the practice to find .....

S: Well, one can practise it in that way, but that is a quite provisional and one might even say imperfect practice. And maybe one does have to do that to begin with. Supposing, as a result of doing the other three stages, you haven't really got up to a state of genuine mettā, you can't really practise the fourth stage. So you have to practise it in a quite provisional manner by reflecting that that particular person isn't always performing injurious actions, at least not to everybody.

Subhuti: Buddhaghosa recommends that you try out the fourth stage, and if you can't do it you retreat back to the stage where your mettā is firm, and you push forward again. So presumably you could do that within the fourth stage by thinking of good qualities, and then pushing forward from there.

S: Yes, even to think of the injury that has been done you and still have your mettā not affected.

Anyway, let's go back to al-Ghazali -

Kuladeva: So - just to - you just contemplate the bad things that you think of him as having done to you, that they have injured you rather than trying to develop any positive feelings towards them?

S: Well, the positive feeling is already there, inasmuch as the mettā is already there, towards him as well as to anybody else who happens to come within your purview. The mettā has already been developed, and it is, if anything, strengthened by surviving under those conditions.

Anyway, I suspect al-Ghazali is getting into a little bit almost of a muddle over his definition of brotherhood, and part of the muddle is due to the fact that he is now comparing brotherhood with kinship, blood relationship. So would someone like to read the rest of that?

"A wise man was asked:
- Which is dearer to you, your brother or your fellow?
- I only love my brother if he is a fellow to me."

S: Here 'brother' seems to mean blood brother, not brother with whom you have entered into a contract of brotherhood. So the answer is 'I love my brother if he is a fellow to me.' It's not enough that he should be born as my brother; I actually love him only if he is also, so to speak, a friend.

"Al-Hasan used to say:
- How many a brother was not born of your mother!"

S: Hm! Well, that's a bit of a paradox. In other words, you've got lots of friends who are as dear to you as brothers, even though they are not actually your blood brothers.

"Therefore is it said that kinship needs affection, but affection has no need of kinship."

S: This is true if the affection really is affection. It is not enough that someone should be related to you by blood; you've also got to develop a friendship with him. But if you've got a friendship going with someone, it doesn't really matter whether he is related to you or not. So 'kinship needs affection, but affection has no need of kinship.'

"Ja'far al-Sadiq (may God be pleased with him!) said:
- The affection of a day is a link. That of a month is kinship. That of a year is a blood-tie. If anyone cuts it, God will cut him off."

S: So here the friendship, so to speak, which is longer-lasting - it has lasted a longer time - is compared with a blood relationship. But how literally one should take that is another matter. He is veering about a bit: on the one hand, the quotation says, in a way, the relationship of friendship is stronger than a kinship, but here the strength of the friendship itself is compared to the strength of kinship. Do you see this? It's as though he can't really make up his mind which is primary, which is really the stronger. Sometimes he is taking kinship in a literal sense, sometimes in a metaphorical sense. **[TEA BREAK]**

The next paragraph isn't completely clear to me, but anyway perhaps someone could read it.

"Thus fulfilment of the contract of brotherhood is obligatory, once it has been concluded. This is our response to the question about initiating brotherhood with the immoral, for he has no prior right. If he does have a prior connexion through kinship it is certainly not proper to break with him; one should rather try and improve him."

S: So 'Thus fulfilment of the contract of brotherhood is obligatory, once it has been concluded' - which seems to contradict the idea of brotherhood as a contract analogous to the marriage contract, because in the case of marriage divorce is permitted; but apparently now in the case of the contract of brotherhood divorce, so to speak, is not permitted.

'This is our response to the question about initiating brotherhood with the immoral, for he has no prior right.' An immoral person, especially one who is not related to you by blood, has no prior right. You are under no obligation to enter into a contract of brotherhood with him, but presumably once you have entered into a contract of brotherhood with him, even if he is perhaps an immoral person, you have a continued obligation. That seems to be the suggestion.

'If he does have a prior connexion through kinship, it is certainly not proper to break with him. One should rather try and improve him.' If the person with whom - I assume this is the meaning - one does not enter into a contract of brotherhood because of his immoral character is nonetheless a kinsman, you shouldn't break with him as a kinsman, even though you don't enter into the contract of brotherhood with him, because you should rather try to improve him.

The gist of this seems to be: be careful with whom you enter into a contract of brotherhood, but once you've entered into it, it is in fact obligatory to continue it. But, on the other hand, in view of our previous discussion, one can say that there can be breaches in the relation of brotherhood; they can be due to someone not fulfilling the duties of brotherhood towards you. In that case, you are simply patient and forbearing. But if the other person is guilty of a breach of his religious duties, though that doesn't absolve you of all obligations towards him whatever, but certainly - as I've pointed out - it will bring about a breach in your mutual performance of your contract of brotherhood, inasmuch as that is based on certain religious values. But you don't, from your side, cut off contact altogether because you hope that your brother can be brought back to a performance of his religious duties, and therefore you hope for a restoration of a fuller brotherhood, based on a common performance of religious duties, in due course.

Kuladeva: Is that not like the Buddhist attitude to people who have, say, entered the Order, for instance?

S: Yes, one could say that, except that I did mention the case of the extreme penalty; but it does seem from the result of that that that was employed as a skilful means to bring the person to a consciousness of what he had lost, almost.

Kuladeva: But even Devadatta was predicted to Buddhahood.

S: But that was in a future life. In the present life, he was excommunicated, you could say. One could even go so far as to say that Devadatta is not predicted to Enlightenment in the Theravada; the context within which he is predicted to Enlightenment is the completely different one of the Mahayana.

Kuladeva: But inasmuch as there isn't any eternal damnation in the Theravada -

S: But there also isn't any inevitable salvation. If you say he is predicted to Buddhahood, in the sense that he will and must gain Buddhahood eventually - actually, no Buddhist school makes that statement. No one will ever be damned eternally, but someone may, if he wishes, go on wandering in the *samsara* indefinitely. It is not that he is bound eventually to gain liberation: that is the heretical view of Makkhali Gosali - that after passing through a certain number of births, usually stated as 84,000, all beings will eventually end up in Enlightenment or Nirvana.

Abhaya: But you could say that if someone could wander through the *samsara* eternally one could stay in a hell realm indefinitely.

S: Ah, but what is a hell realm? A hell realm is a realm in which we are born as a result of ..... unskilful actions. Those unskilful actions are a

limited quantity, as it were. So sooner or later the retribution, so to speak, for those unskilful actions, will come to an end and you will emerge from hell into some other state.

Abhaya: Couldn't you, for the sake of the argument, when that karma, so to speak, is almost run out, start performing other evil deeds which - so that you never actually -

S: Well, yes, but actually, in Buddhist teaching, hell is a state purely of retribution; you do not initiate any actions there, whether positive or negative.

Kulananda: ..... in Hell

S: You can agree with that assumption of Buddhism or not, but that is what Buddhism usually says.

Nagabodhi: Shantideva seems to suggest that in the hell realm you're going to be pulled down into such states of torment that you are going to perpetrate your evil actions. I got the impression that in hell you do actually carry on. Have I read that wrong?

S: Well, there may be involuntary reactions, for which you are not as it were karmically responsible, to intense pain and suffering. The general Buddhist view would be that the hell state is a state of pure *vipaka*. Otherwise you wouldn't ever get out. Well, some may even take that view; but then the Mahayana, at least, does hold the possibility - well, does believe that there are some Bodhisattvas who make contact with people in those states; just as in the human realm there are people who take the trouble to make contact with people who <u>are</u> in states analogous to those of the hell realm, in this life itself - people who are in catatonic states and paranoid states, and so on - who do establish a connection and manage to bring them out of it.

I think one has to be very careful of some of these more as it were optimistic Mahayana-type statements connected, say, with 'all beings are essentially good', or 'everybody will gain Enlightenment'. It is not that everybody is bound to gain Enlightenment, but that everybody <u>may</u> gain Enlightenment. It is up to them if they pursue the proper path. But there is nothing to as it were oblige them to do so. So therefore the *samsara*, so far as they are concerned, may continue indefinitely; not eternally, but indefinitely. But the possibility of release is always there. The possibility of release is never precluded in Buddhism. But not that Enlightenment is inevitable. Writers like Ken Wilber seem to suggest this. And again there is this metaphysical problem that I alluded to - but anyway, we won't go into that now; it is a complex matter.

Kulananda: Perhaps the clearest translation of the idea that everybody is already as it were a Buddha would be that everybody is potentially Enlightened.

S: I distrust the language of potentiality completely. I have discussed this on previous seminars. I would prefer to say that anybody who follows the appropriate path will gain Enlightenment as a result of following that path. I don't think we need to use this very ambiguous expression 'potentiality', as though potentiality is a sort of entity already present; which, in fact, by very definition, it is not. The concept of

potentiality should not be reified; this is what usually happens.

Kuladeva: Yes, because you can't predicate ....., can you?

S: For instance, if I say, 'You are potentially an artist', it doesn't mean that actually you are an artist; it is all hidden, but actually deep down you know how to do everything pertaining to a particular art. It merely means that you possess the human capacity to take certain steps, to engage in certain training and practice, which would result in your becoming an artist. Not that you are really an artist as though, right inside you in a quite literal sense, is an artist struggling to get out. So I think the language of potentiality is very misleading and therefore very mischievous. I think the Theravada-type language on the whole is not only much safer but actually more accurate. I am not saying that the Mahayana-type language is wrong, but it's much more easy to use it wrongly, or use it so loosely that it produces misunderstanding and confusion.

Kuladeva: But presumably the language of the Mahayana does take into account the language of the Hinayana?

S: Sometimes it appears not to - though not very often in the case of the Sutras, but quite often in the case of some of the Zen - well, Masters, even.

Nagabodhi: In the *White Lotus Sutra* it seems to come very close to - not saying that everyone is going to gain Enlightenment after so many births, but even if you've just heard two stanzas from the Sutra, the qualifications for guaranteed Enlightenment seem incredibly light.

S: Well, I think that is when - after all, the context of the *White Lotus Sutra* is a cosmic one; infinite time, almost, is involved. So, assuming that you've infinite time at your disposal, the important thing with regard to the Dharma is to make that initial contact; and this is what is represented by just hearing a verse of the Sutra. You've made the initial contact. So that, since you have infinite time at your disposal, in a sense you've done the main thing that needed to be done. You've got to follow up that initial contact. You have infinite time in which to do it. So therefore you can expect to gain Enlightenment eventually.

So the purpose is not to stress how easy it is to gain Enlightenment or to exaggerate the importance of the initial contact, but just to point out that an initial contact, inasmuch as it is an initial contact, can be fraught with immeasurable consequences. I say can be because you can lose that initial contact if you're not careful, at least for the time being.

So, for one reason or another, the *White Lotus Sutra*, and maybe some other Mahayana Sutras, do place tremendous importance on that initial contact, and the cherishing of that initial contact. Anyway let's go on.

"The evidence for our view is that it is neither blameworthy nor reprehensible to avoid initiating brotherhood and fellowship; indeed some authorities hold that it is preferable to go one's own way. But as for interrupting the continuance of brotherhood, this is forbidden and intrinsically blameworthy. It stands in relation to initial avoidance like divorce to the avoidance of marriage, divorce being more hateful to God (Exalted is He!) than avoidance of marriage."

S: Yes, let's discuss that. 'The evidence for our view is that it is neither blameworthy nor reprehensible to avoid initiating brotherhood and fellowship; indeed some authorities hold that it is better to go one's own way.' Could one agree with this from a Buddhist point of view - that it's 'neither blameworthy nor reprehensible to avoid initiating brotherhood and fellowship'?

Abhaya: Yes, I think that's probably true. Because it says 'to avoid initiating brotherhood and fellowship', not just having contact. You have contact and you see where the other person .....

S: But then translate that, say, into terms of *kalyana mitrata* - is it not blameworthy that you don't ever seek to have a relationship of *kalyana mitrata* with somebody - inasmuch as that type of relationship would carry you further, presumably, along the spiritual path? Maybe the difference is accountable for by the fact that in Islam there is God, and your duties towards God are so important, but in Buddhism there is nothing of that. A very great deal depends on spiritual fellowship, *kalyana mitrata* on various levels. So I would say, in the context of Buddhism, if you fail to enter upon a relationship of *kalyana mitrata*, or if you are not willing to enter upon a relationship of *kalyana mitrata* with somebody or other eventually, you are guilty to some extent of a shortcoming, because you are guilty of not making as much effort along the spiritual path as perhaps you could.

So I don't think a Buddhist would altogether agree with this - that it is neither blameworthy nor reprehensible to avoid initiating brotherhood and fellowship. If you can't find a suitable person with whom to develop *kalyana mitrata*, that is another matter; but if there are people around with whom you could develop *kalyana mitrata*, and if *kalyana mitrata* is essential to your spiritual development, as Buddhism in fact says it is, then it would be reprehensible and blameworthy on your part to shrink from initiating a relationship of *kalyana mitrata* with someone with whom you could initiate it.

Tejamitra: It is nevertheless something that must be taken as a very significant step; you must be very careful of that. Perhaps that's what .....

S: Well, the more significant the step, the more reprehensible if you don't take it when it is possible to take it.

Tejamitra: Yes. I don't fully agree with you that it is necessarily assuming that the person has no brother - that he has no other brother already formed.

Subhuti: Isn't it referring back to initiating brotherhood with the immoral? Just the mere act of refusing, not initiating brotherhood, isn't in itself reprehensible.

S: No, because it is speaking of initiating brotherhood, whereas before it was talking about not necessarily initiating brotherhood with someone who was kin to you, if that person was immoral. It would be enough in that case just to maintain as it were friendly relations with him in the ordinary sense. But it is a point that obviously, yes, multiplicity of relationships of brotherhood are possible; but nonetheless one could say that

it's probably better to have more than one *kalyana mitra*, if that is possible, so that even if you already have one *kalyana mitra* and you have a possibility of another one, and if that would enhance your spiritual life, then you would be remiss in not taking advantage of that opportunity. But, yes, admittedly this particular paragraph doesn't say anything about whether you already have a contract of brotherhood with somebody else or not.

But if entering into a contract of brotherhood with someone like a relationship of *kalyana mitrata* did result in some spiritual advantage to you, to the extent that it did that it would be reprehensible on your part not to enter into it, whether you had other brothers or other *kalyana mitras* or not.

'But as for interrupting the continuance of brotherhood, this is forbidden and intrinsically blameworthy.' This seems to be the conclusion to which al-Ghazali comes: you should not sever the contract of brotherhood, whatever the other person might do - though at the same time, as I've been pointing out, it must be remembered, I think, that brotherhood is something mutual. It's engagement in a common spiritual enterprise. So if someone is no longer interested in that spiritual enterprise, there cannot be brotherhood in the full sense between you. There cannot be effective brotherhood. But you don't altogether lose your feeling for that person; you continue to watch over them in the hope that they come back to an acceptance of those spiritual values and you can again be brothers in the full sense. I think al-Ghazali is not altogether clear about that.

'It stands in relation to initial avoidance like divorce to the avoidance of marriage, divorce being more hateful to God ... than avoidance of marriage.' Even so, the analogy is not correct, because divorce, though hateful to God, is permitted as a last resort in Islam, whereas the giving up of the contract of brotherhood apparently is not permitted at all, whatever the limitations due to the other person's action - according to al-Ghazali. Carry on with that quotation.

"The Prophet (God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
- The worst of God's creatures are those who spread slander, separating dear ones."

S: This is a general statement applied to this particular instance. But yes, also there is some agreement with Buddhism, because slander, as one of the four kinds of wrong speech, is defined or described as hearing something unpleasant about somebody and then repeating it to that person in order to create dissension. It's backbiting as much as slander.

So al-Ghazali, quoting him, is as it were saying that the separation of those who are dear is in any case a bad thing. So even if your brother has gone astray you shouldn't separate from him any more than his action itself necessarily imposes upon you.

Abhaya: I just question your definition of slander. You said it is hearing something unpleasant about a person and repeating it to that person in order to create dissension.

S: Yes, so that he develops ill will towards the person who originally made that unpleasant statement about him.

Abhaya: Isn't it repeating it to another person? If you hear something unpleasant about a person, and you repeat it to as many other people as possible, isn't that slander?

S: I'm not concerned so much with the definition of the English word 'slander' - it may be the correct term in English or not for what is described in the Pali texts - but the Pali texts describe a situation in which someone speaks ill of somebody, say A speaks ill of B, then C, having heard what A said, goes and repeats it to B not simply for his information but so as to create trouble between A and B. This sort of situation is described, rightly or wrongly, translating such passages, as slander or as backbiting. It is the creating of disharmony and dissension between people through repeating what, say, one person has said about another. Obviously this can spread to a number of people.

So that breaks up friendship, companionship, unity, harmony and so on, so it is regarded as a very grave offence in Buddhism. And similarly here: 'The worst of God's creatures are those who spread slander, separating dear ones.' Whether one calls it slander or not, this is the sort of thing that clearly is meant.

"One of the early believers said, of hiding the mistakes of brothers:
- Satan likes to cast this kind of thing upon your brother, so that you will shun him and break with him. How careful you must be of what is dear to your Enemy!"

S: So this is a slight development of al-Ghazali's position. He is saying that when there is, say, a breach of the contract of brotherhood from, say, your brother's side, especially when, say, he becomes immoral or he gives up the duties of religion, you must be very careful about breaking with him completely, even though his action makes full brotherhood between you impossible, because disunity and disharmony are pleasing to the Enemy, pleasing to Satan. You should preserve whatever harmony and -

[End of Tape 14 (1) Tape 14 (2)]

- and degree of brotherhood it is still possible to preserve, even though it may be quite limited. In other words, don't retaliate: your brother has broken with you, and that renders full brotherhood between you impossible, but don't break with him; keep up whatever remnant of brotherhood, so to speak, is left.

And then he goes on to explain that.

"This is because causing separation between loved ones is one of the things dear to Satan, just as the commission of sin is dear to him. If Satan gains one of his objects, the second should not be added unto him! The Prophet (God bless him and give him Peace!) alluded to this when a man maligned another, who had committed an abomination, for he checked him, saying:
- Whoa! Do not be Satan's aide against your brother!"

S: So in this case if someone has committed a breach of the contract of brotherhood by maybe leaving the religious path, don't you make matters worse by enlarging the breach. You keep up your side of the contract, so to speak, as much as you possibly can notwithstanding the changed circumstances.

It's as though there are two extremes to be avoided here: assuming that the contract of brotherhood implies or involves a common pursuit, say, of certain spiritual ideals, and then suppose that one of the brothers resiles from those ideals, one extreme would be to withdraw from the contract of brotherhood altogether on the part of the other person, that is to say one who does not resile from the spiritual ideals. The other extreme would be for the brother who has not resiled from the spiritual ideals to think or to believe that, even though his brother had resiled from them, the contract of brotherhood remained intact exactly as before one of the brothers resiled from those spiritual ideals. Do you see the difference.

So in the case of the brother who doesn't resile from the spiritual ideals, he adheres to the contract of brotherhood by maintaining his friendly attitude, as well as his loyalty to the spiritual ideals, in trying to bring - remaining in sufficient contact with the erring brother - to bring him back to the spiritual path, and thus to restore their contract of brotherhood to its original plenitude.

So, on the one hand, because your brother resiles from the spiritual ideals which are the foundation of your brotherhood, in a way, you mustn't cut off contact with him entirely; on the other hand, you mustn't think that the contract of brotherhood, or your relationship with him, has remained entirely unchanged, because it depends upon his actions as much as upon yours. In other words, it seems one should follow a middle way.

Kulananda: A small side-track - that word 'resile'? How is it spelt? *(Bhante spells it.)* And it means?

S: To draw back from, having entered into or having entered upon. All right next paragraph.

"All this makes clear the distinction between continuation and initiation, for mixing with the immoral is to be avoided, and so is separation from dear ones and brethren to be avoided. One who is free from having to keep in step with another is not like one who is not free; and initially he is free. We have seen that to avoid contact and to keep one's distance is preferable. About continuing what has been entered into there is some disagreement, so to fulfil the duty of brotherhood is the better course."

S: In the case of an immoral person with whom you have not yet entered into a contract of brotherhood, presumably it's better not to enter into a contract of brotherhood with him at all. Once you have entered into a contract of brotherhood with someone, even though he becomes immoral, let us say, you should not withdraw from the contract of brotherhood, even though admittedly there are disagreements among the authorities about this. It says, 'To fulfil the duty of brotherhood is the better course' - though, as I have been emphasising, the brotherhood itself, inasmuch as it's a mutual thing and based upon common spiritual values, is no longer quite the same as it was, but you keep it up from your side to the extent that you possibly can.

"All that has been said above relates to errors in the brother's religion. As for his error in brotherly duty, by which he causes alienation, there is

no disagreement on the proper course being forgiveness and patience. Indeed, whenever a good interpretation is possible, or an excuse - whether obvious or far-fetched - can be advanced, this is obligatory in the duty of brotherhood."

S: This is quite clear. There is a distinction between errors in religion and errors in carrying the duties of brotherhood themselves. Though you can't, of course, altogether separate the two. I think maybe the ambiguity arises when al-Ghazali separates the two completely, because they do overlap inasmuch as, according to Buddhism at least, brotherhood is one of the duties of religion. In Islam perhaps you can separate them more, because your religious duty is your duty to God, whereas your duty as a brother is your duty to man. Anyway, this is clear enough; no need to discuss it. And the succeeding quotations enlarge upon the point.

"It has been said that you should seek seventy excuses for your brother's misdeed, and if your heart will accept none of them you should turn the blame upon yourself, saying to your heart:
- How hard you are! Your brother pleads seventy excuses, yet you will not accept him. You are the one at fault, not your brother!"

S: Hm. Your brother might have committed a very slight offence, and here he is - maybe he himself provides you with all sorts of excuses, but you won't accept even one of them, so you end up by being in a worse position than your brother, more at fault, because you are so hard, so unforgiving.

Sometimes you find people like this. They won't overlook even a little slip on your part. They really want their pound of flesh sometimes.

[End of Tape 14 (2) Tape 15]

"Even if it appears impossible to see things in a good light you ought not to get angry, if you can help it, though this may be asking too much. Al-Shafi (may God have mercy on him!) said:
- If a man is provoked and does not get angry, he is an ass. If a man has cause for pleasure and is not pleased, he is a devil."

S: Is there any truth in this, do you think, that 'If a man is provoked and does not get angry, he is an ass'? Why is this said? Because in Buddhism it is not supposed to be good to get angry at all. So of what sort of man is this said, perhaps - that if he is provoked and does not get angry, he is an ass?

Kulananda: Could be out of weakness.

S: It suggests insensitivity. He is not even aware of the provocation. Anyway, we have to be very careful of that sort of statement. And 'If a man has cause for pleasure and is not pleased, he is a devil.' One who refuses to be pleased is in fact in a very negative state of mind. If he has cause - suppose it's a beautiful, bright day and he's got something pleasant to do but he refuses to be pleased all the same - well, he's no better than a devil. There is a sort of deep-seated negativity in him, quite independent of circumstances. He's got every reason to be happy, to be pleased, but he isn't.

But al-Ghazali says:

"So don't be an ass or a devil! Give your heart cause to be pleased with yourself as your brother's deputy, and beware of being a devil if you fail to accept!"

S: Presumably accept your brother's excuse. That seems pretty straightforward.

"Al-Ahnaf said:
- The duty of one's fellow is to bear three things: the wrong of anger, the wrong of over-familiarity, and the wrong of failings."

S: So it's the duty of a fellow or a brother to put up with three things from his brother: 'the wrong of anger, the wrong of over-familiarity, and the wrong of failings.' Sometimes it does happen: people get a bit angry. So if your brother is a bit angry with you, it's your duty just to put up with that. People naturally will get angry from time to time. And also if he's a bit over-familiar, well, that's inevitable in the course of friendship. Maybe he does go a bit beyond the limits, but never mind; put up with that too. And 'the wrong of failings' - maybe he has various little weaknesses and faults and blemishes; put up with those too. This is the duty of a friend, this is the duty of a fellow or a brother. If you are closely associated with someone they are bound to get a bit angry with you sometimes. They are bound to be a bit over- familiar, and they are bound to be conscious of your faults; you are bound to have faults which they become aware of. So one's duty is forgiveness, just putting up with those things. All right, more quotations.

"Another said:
- I never malign anyone; for if he who maligns me is noble I am duty-bound to forgive him, while if he is base I do not let my honour be his target."

S: 'I never malign anyone' - that is, in return for them maligning me - 'for if he who maligns me is noble I am duty-bound to forgive him, while if he is base I do not let my honour be his target.' Because if, when he maligns you, you malign him, then he's got you; he's made you worse, you've lost your honour if his honour has been your target, so you don't allow that to happen.

"Then he coined this verse:
- The nobleman's fault I forgive, from humility.
The abuse of the vile I ignore, from nobility."

S: That's pretty clear too, isn't it?

"Another poet said:
- Take from your friend what is pure, and let alone the dross.

This life's too short for quarrelling, and arguing the toss." [Laughter]

S: There's a similar verse in the *Dhammapada*, isn't there? Do you remember that?

Pare ca na vijananti, 'mayam ettha yamamase'. (6)

I think it comes in the first or second chapter. That is to say: 'Being mindful that death is approaching, one should not quarrel.' That's roughly the translation. No, the full quotation goes: 'Not knowing that death is approaching, people quarrel. In the case of those who realise that death is approaching, their quarrels will cease.' In other words, life is 'too short for quarrelling and arguing the toss.' This is quite a point; there has been some discussion on this recently, especially in connection with relations, particularly parents - that it would be a pity if they were to die with some differences between you persisting; it would be a pity if you had not made up those differences before they passed away. One should recollect that life is short; people may pass away any time, not only the old but the young. So how sorry would you be if someone passed away before you had had the opportunity of making things up with him? So better make them up straight away, even if you are both young. Or, as the Bible says, *'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath'* (Eph. 4:26) - don't let your anger last out the day; don't remain unreconciled, even for a single night. Because you don't know whether both parties are going to be alive tomorrow; you don't know that. There is no point in persisting in grudges and all that sort of thing.

"Whenever your brother apologises to you, accept his excuse - be he lying or telling the truth. The Prophet (may God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
- If a man's brother apologises to him and he does not accept his excuse, he incurs a sin like that of the tax-collector."

S: The note here says: *'One who collects duties'* (that is to say, financial duties) *'not authorised in Sacred Law'*. So this is in a way a quite extraordinary statement: you should accept your brother's apologies even if he is lying. It is important not to sever the connection. Maybe later on you can bring up that matter with him: perhaps he told a lie, perhaps he wasn't sincere; but at least for the time being accept his apologies, even though you know that they are not completely sincere or he is telling a lie - human nature being what it is.

Tejamitra: Don't you think there's a danger of people kidding themselves on too much?

S: There is this point, too: that someone apologises, even if you apologise insincerely or telling a lie at least you have apologised. So it's as though the fact that you actually do apologise, you say that you're sorry, is in a way sufficient. So the other person should accept that, regardless of what the content of the apology is, whether true or false. An apology is an apology. That seems to be the view taken here.

Tejamitra: What it seems to me is to suggest a sort of turnaround in your whole conception of your relations with people, and put right at the centre of importance your relationship, rather than being over-concerned with truthfulness -

S: Well, you should be concerned with truthfulness; but if someone tells an untruth and you would like to correct him, you will not be able to do

that unless you have some connection with him, so the important thing is to maintain the connection, even in the interests of bringing him round again to truthfulness. If you simply say, 'You're a liar', and walk away, what good will that do? And in any case, as I've just said, in this particular case he has apologised, and that has a weight of its own, irrespective of the actual content of the apology. He has said that he's sorry, so that's all that is needed, all that is necessary for the time being. You can revert to other matters, perhaps, and talk about it when confidence between you is more fully restored.

Tejamitra: So the relationship takes priority over an abstract notion of truth, would you say?

S: Well, there's no abstract notion of truth, because, yes, a lie is a lie and no one is condoning a lie. In fact, one is far from condoning it. But you will not be able to do anything about the matter, so far as that particular person is concerned, unless you keep up some connection with him. You won't be able to influence him or to help him. You are not condoning the lie, but you are keeping open the channels of communication so that ultimately, perhaps - though this isn't actually stated - the lie can be corrected, or he can correct his own lie himself.

Devaraja: It's just you are not concerned with being in the right, really?

S: Yes. Very often people are over-concerned with being in the right. For instance, suppose there is an argument between two friends: they get rather heated and things are said which they are sorry for afterwards. All right, the important thing is that someone should say, 'Look I'm sorry; I'm sorry I said that.' The rights and wrongs can be sorted out, perhaps, afterwards, if that was necessary. But sometimes people absolutely insist that they are in the right; they've got to be in the right, they won't accept an apology, they've got to make the other person accept that what they said was right and what he said was wrong; and in that way things just get worse and worse, and there may be a serious breach, even a permanent breach, between them, because one of them has felt it to be more important to be in the right than to maintain the other person's friendship.

Devaraja: It's quite brutal, that sort of thing, because they are prepared to sacrifice everything that has been good or positive, just over one little issue.

S: Yes, sometimes something very very trivial. That is one of the good things about the Indians: they don't generally commit this sort of mistake. They are not principle-ridden, so to speak. They give a lot of weight to friendship, if you know what I mean - friendship in the more ordinary sense, admittedly. All right, let's carry on.

"He also said (God bless him and give him Peace!):
- The believer is quick to anger, quick to be content."

S: Islam doesn't seem to attach the same significance to becoming angry as we usually do in Buddhism. Anger seems to be regarded as a more natural thing - or maybe we should distinguish between anger and hatred. Though even in the case of hatred they don't seem to have quite the same attitude as we have in Buddhism.

I remember in this connection - this is a bit by the way, but a bit illustrative - I did mention that when I was in India on my last visit I visited a few Islamic institutions, I visited a few mosques and a few tombs of Sufi saints. One tomb I visited was of a very famous medieval Sufi saint at - oh dear, I think I wrote about it in *Shabda* or mentioned it somewhere; I think it was near Ahmedabad - not Sauka but some such name, I will think of it in a minute. Anyway, these tombs were built in the 15th century; they are very very beautiful. Several Sultans of Ahmedabad and several leading Sufis are buried there. And one shrine in particular, one tomb in particular, is a centre of pilgrimage for Muslims. So I went there with a few friends, and there was a very definite atmosphere there, almost emanating from the tomb. The tomb was in a sort of hall or chamber, surrounded by a latticed marble screen, and pilgrims would come and crawl through a tiny door, a very low door not more than a couple of feet high, in that latticed screen to make their offerings inside - usually offerings of trays of roses - and then they circumambulate. But I felt a very definite atmosphere emanating from the tomb: something quite unusual, something quite intense, and as it were angry. Yes, quite different from any atmosphere I've felt emanating from a Hindu tomb or a Buddhist place, or even from a Christian church: quite intense - I won't say it was bad, I won't say it was necessarily negative, but definitely sort of angry. That's the only way I can describe it. I almost felt the blast of it; I don't think this was fanciful, I think I actually did perceive something emanating from the tomb and coming through the doorway. I did go inside, and there was this quite intense atmosphere. Maybe that is quite interesting.

There is in Islam a sort of angry energy - which is not altogether negative, I must say that too, but it can become very negative indeed. And I think sometimes one feels that sort of angry energy, which is not necessarily negative, even from time to time in this text itself; just little touches here and there.

'The believer is quick to anger, quick to be content.' The next saying is significant, too.

"He did not describe him as not getting angry."

S: According to Islam, apparently, anger is on occasion quite justified - anger with unbelievers, for instance, perhaps. And likewise -

"Likewise God (Exalted is He!) said:
*- ...and who **contain** their wrath. (Qur'an 3.134)"*
*He did not say, 'who **lose** their wrath.'"*

S: Ah! In other words, God in the Koran holds up as an ideal the containing of wrath, the containing of anger, not its abolition. I think Buddhists would tend to uphold the abolition of anger or wrath rather than merely containing it; or at least they would regard it as a higher stage - a stage of total sublimation of wrath or anger. Though again that should not be understood in a purely negative or weak sense.

Devaraja: I was just thinking that seems - I personally got very much going through Iran, the desert. And I think that's where it was quite negative. Everything felt a bit fraught and quite tense, the whole atmosphere throughout the country, as if things were seething a bit .....

S: Yes, I felt a little of that going in all these Muslim mosques. It was quite markedly different from, say, a Hindu temple or a Buddhist shrine, or very different from a Christian church. Usually a Christian church has a quite - one might say for want of a better term - peaceful atmosphere. Mosques do not seem to have that atmosphere. Not that I have a very vast experience of mosques; maybe I shouldn't generalise prematurely.

"It does not normally happen that a man is wounded physically without feeling pain, though he may endure it patiently. But just as the pain from a wound is of the nature of the physical body, so pain from the cause of anger belongs to the nature of the heart. It cannot be rooted out, though it can be controlled and repressed, and its effects can be countered by seeking remedy, revenge and retaliation. Moreover, it is possible to refrain from acting under its influence."

S: Buddhism, of course, would disagree here. It would say that anger can be rooted out; though admittedly it is a very difficult business, and it's rooted out entirely only in the case of those who are highly advanced on the spiritual path. But nonetheless, Buddhism does admit of that possibility; though what this text says with regard to the ordinary person, the non-enlightened person, is quite true. They will inevitably experience anger when in contact with something unpleasant.

Kulananda: 'Its effects can be countered by seeking remedy, revenge and retaliation.'

S: Hm, because the burden of the heart, so to speak, is lightened. But Buddhism wouldn't regard that as a solution, not in a spiritual sense.

Kulananda: I'd say that it prevents anger, in the long run.

S: So one might say that Islam here is quite close to the facts of human nature, but doesn't really look very far beyond them; doesn't regard them as being modifiable beyond a certain point. No doubt that is true with the majority of people as they at present are, but Buddhism seems to envisage the possibility of a higher type of humanity altogether. That does not seem - that higher type of humanity - to be really envisaged in the Koran, at least.

Kulananda: Islam seems to seek to contain man rather than to transform him.

S: Well, don't forget the Islamic context or background, the theistic background to Islam: that God is there transcending man. Man cannot possibly be like God, man has been created by God. And he has been created by God with all these passions. So the Muslim might well say well just as sexuality is not evil, it is just to be kept within certain limits, anger is not evil, it is just to be kept within certain limits; it is part of human nature as created by God. The Buddhist would not take that view.

_____: It's even part of God's nature.

S: It's even part of God's nature, in a sense; though, of course, again, to do them justice, the Muslims would say - at least the philosophers - that anger is not a characteristic of God in the way that it is characteristic of man. Some would even argue that God has no attributes at all.

Kulananda: You would have to question them about evil - about Satan, if they took that line of reasoning, and say, 'Is that also part of God's creation, and therefore to be accepted in the same light?'

S: Oh yes, Muslims do believe that Satan was created by God, though not as Satan; I believe, in Islam, a fallen angel, as in the case of Christianity. He was created free to obey or disobey, and he chose to disobey.

Kulananda: Man is not created free to obey or disobey?

S: Man is created also free to obey and to disobey. Some may obey, some disobey. And Muhammad was sent, as all the prophets were sent, to warn human beings not to disobey, to warn them to obey, to point out the consequences of obedience and disobedience and so on. Anyway let's finish the chapter. There are a few more sayings.

"The poet said:
- You cannot run with a brother and fail to catch him in some disarray. What man is immaculate"

S: Broadly speaking, this does hold true, but Buddhism would maintain that there are at least a few beings who are immaculate, who are *visuddhi*....., arahants and so on. But none the less it's true with regard to most people: 'You cannot run with a brother', you cannot live with him, work with him, 'and fail to catch him in some disarray.' After all, you are around him all the time. You will notice some little weakness: he may get angry or he may get impatient or he may get sad sometimes. So you are to expect this, you shouldn't hold it against him. It shouldn't affect your sense of brotherhood.

'What man is immaculate?' A Buddhist would say that all you can expect is that he is at least working on it and he's trying to improve. That is really the foundation of brotherhood, the foundation of *kalyana mitrata*: that you are trying to improve, trying to grow, trying to develop spiritually, together. So you shouldn't get upset by these little weaknesses and blemishes, but you should try to help your brother overcome them; not just accept them as inalienable parts of human nature.

"Abu Sulayman al-Darani said to Ahmad ibn Abi'l-Hawari:
- If you take anyone as a brother in these times, do not remonstrate with him over what you disapprove of, for there is no guarantee that what you get in reply will not be worse than what you first complained of."

S: It's as it were saying 'Brothers aren't what they used to be.' 'If you take anyone as a brother in **these** times, do not remonstrate with him over what you disapprove of, for there is no guarantee that what you get in reply will not be worse than what you first complained of.' In other words, the 'good old days'; even the concept of brotherhood has declined, the practice has declined. It also is a matter of how you remonstrate, surely. Choose the right time, the right place, etc.

"Said Ahmad:
- I tested this out and found it to be so.
Someone said that patience with the pain caused by a brother is better than rebuking him in return, though rebuke is better than breaking off and breaking off is better than back-biting. If it should come to back-biting there should not be too much malice."

S: There should not be too much malice! A sliding scale. [Laughter]

"God (Exalted is He!) said:
- Perhaps God will create affection between you and those you have had as enemies. (Qur'an 60.7)"

S: You never know; no need to bring God into it, but sometimes it does come [about] that even those who have been enemies do become friends.

"The Prophet (God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
- Go steady in loving your friend, for he may one day become your foe. Go steady in hating your foe, for he may become your friend one day."

S: At least half of that doesn't seem to represent a very high ideal of friendship; it's more of the nature of worldly wisdom. 'Go steady in hating your foe', by all means, but 'Go steady in loving your friend'? That would seem to contradict a great deal of what has gone before. Maybe 'friend' not in the sense of a real brother, but someone who is just a more or less casual companion; you should be careful not to entrust your secrets to such a person. But a brother should really be a brother, even if you do perhaps suffer for it afterwards. Perhaps this saying is not a completely authentic saying of the Prophet. There are sayings and sayings; there's a whole mass of them. There is a whole branch of Islamic scholarship dealing with the sorting of them out.

"Umar (may God be pleased with him!) said:
- Let not your love become attachment, nor your hate become destruction.
That is, by wishing your fellow's destruction at the cost of perishing yourself."

S: Hm. It's a pity about al-Ghazali's addition. I think the saying is better without it: 'Let not your love become attachment' - well, that's very clear; we know all about that, at least in theory - 'nor your hate become destruction'. Even if you hate someone, don't carry it to such an extreme that you want to destroy them utterly. Al-Ghazali adds: 'That is, by wishing your fellow's destruction at the cost of perishing yourself.' No; that is a rather selfish or self-centred interpretation. But for the sake of your common humanity, you might say. Even if you do hate someone, even if you are against them, don't carry it to the extreme of totally destroying that person, as sometimes people would like to do. The most dreadful example of that is ..... during the Christian middle ages and even the Renaissance period, when you tried to kill someone when he was in a state of mortal sin, so that he should go to hell. That seems a really terrible attitude, one that is only possible perhaps to a certain type of Christian and a certain type of Christian civilisation.

_____: But you were advised to do that?

S: No; in those days people believed that if you died in a state of mortal sin you went to hell. Catholics still believe that. So if you wanted to do your enemy real harm, the best thing to do was not only to kill him but to kill him when he was in a state of mortal sin; because not only would he be dead, he would also be in hell. And what greater satisfaction could you have than that? What better revenge than to send him to hell for ever and for ever? So what a horrible state of mind - it's hardly possible to contemplate it. But nonetheless, such things were known, such things were done. Some people did behave like this, believing that they were sending their enemies to hell.

Nagabodhi: It's a key feature of Hamlet, that he forbears from killing Claudius while Claudius is at prayer, for that very reason.

S: Yes, indeed. Whereas Claudius has not refrained from killing his father when his father was in - it says *'He took my father grossly, full of bread'*. So it's really extraordinary that Christian love should have ended up with that.

There is a little poem, a little epigram of mine, I don't know whether you remember it. I don't remember all of it. I've referred to Christ, at least the Christ of orthodox Christianity, and saying of him, *'Whose festering love fills half the world with hate'*; and that is really very true. You might say better to have the open anger of the Muslim than this sort of festering love of the Christian, sometimes at least. Their belief in religion can lead them to contemplate the possibility of killing someone in a state of mortal sin so that he will go to hell. What could be more awful than that? What sort of state of mind could be worse than that one? It's enough to make one have doubts about theism altogether! [Laughter]

Anyway, the fifth duty, that's what we've dealt with this morning: forgiveness of mistakes and failings. So that's been quite clear? Any failing that your friend or brother is guilty of in relation to yourself you should unreservedly forgive and put up with. If it is a failure with regard to religious duties, opinions differ. Some say you should cut off contact with your brother under those circumstances, but on the whole the authorities tend to agree that you couldn't; though I've been concerned to make the point that if your brotherhood itself is based on a common observance of religious duties, then if your friend, your brother, resiles from those duties brotherhood cannot be what it was. Nonetheless you should not withdraw from your brother and try to bring him back both to his religious duties and to brotherhood in the fuller sense. That seems about to sum it up.

One gets the impression, little by little, of a very definite Islamic ideal of humanity or of manhood. In some ways it's quite noble, but it's also quite limited in certain directions.

Kulananda: Good material to start off with.

S: Mm, yes, yes. One might even argue that Islam is Muhammad himself writ large. The Muslim would regard that as blasphemy, because Islam comes not from Muhammad; it comes through Muhammad, it comes from God, it's a revealed religion. But nonetheless, one can't help seeing Islam as being very much in the image of Muhammad himself, who seems to have been a character of his time. Just as one might say Buddhism is very much in the image of the Buddha.

Kulananda: There seems to be a maniacal tendency in Muhammad which doesn't come through so far. He seems to have been quite crazy. [I've an] impression of him killing people all over the place, setting fire to towns; things like that.

S: Well, he was concerned to establish a religious community, a religious society, in accordance with the revelation that he believed that he had received. He wasn't concerned with the preaching of a religion in a personal and private sense. Islam does not recognise the distinction between private or personal religion and institutional religion; so there was no question of people personally and privately believing in Muhammad but not bringing about a state of affairs in society in accordance with his aims or his beliefs. There were terms in Islam for this: there was *dar-ul-Islam*, isn't it? - the area which is under the dominance of Islam, even under an Islamic government. It is said to be a disgrace for a Muslim to live under a non-Islamic government.

So Islam believes in violence under certain circumstances; Buddhists don't. A Buddhist also believes in the application of its principles to social life, but it believes in persuading people to follow those principles in their individual lives and therefore believes in persuading them to set up a society in accordance with those principles, and in which it will be more easy to practise those principles. But Islam does not rule out the imposition of Islamic society by force. And this is what Muhammad himself did: he actually went to war. And he won.

Kulananda: One might question his revelation, therefore. It raises all sorts of questions about the quality of his revelation. If the revelation led him to that sort of behaviour, what was revealed?

S: Well, that is a criticism, of course, only from our point of view, because we would question the revelation on account of the content of the revelation - i.e. what seems to us to be violence. But that is, say, based on our, let us say, revelation to the effect that violence is wrong or is unskilful. A Muslim would say that our revelation is wrong, and that the Buddha was not such a great prophet as Muhammad, though they might recognise him to a certain extent. They would say that the Buddha's revelation was an inadequate revelation because it did not make provision for the use of violence; and that the kingdom of God on earth, to use another expression, could not be established except by violence, human beings being what they were. A Muslim might argue in that way.

Certainly, in the case of Buddhism, our way or the way that Buddhism has chosen is not an easy way; it's a much more difficult way. Perhaps it's a much longer way, but we believe it is a more genuine way, and that the kingdom of heaven (for want of a better term) cannot be established on earth except by peaceful means.

Kulananda: Surely we're not saying that our way is longer or more difficult? We're actually saying their way is wrong: that they <u>cannot</u> establish the kingdom which -

S: Well, they can establish - in fact, they did establish - what <u>they</u> want to establish by that means. And there was much good in it, once established. It made possible all sorts of Sufi confraternities. But I don't think you could establish what Buddhists want to establish by Islamic methods, because you can't altogether separate means from ends.

Kulananda: But wouldn't we go further? Wouldn't we even say that in dependence on their violent action, the paradise in which they claim to be reborn after death is not likely to happen? That in dependence on their violent actions they will suffer -

S: Yes, I would say that it was highly unlikely to happen. At best they would be reborn in the *asuraloka*. This would be my personal view. Not that all Muslims have personally participated in violence, by any means, but the general view among Muslims has been - well, I hope I don't misrepresent them - that violence in the interests of Islam itself is justified; and this view would seem to go straight back to the Koran itself, and Muhammad's own example.

Some modern Muslim apologists try to explain all this away; but it is very, very difficult for them to do so. They at most get as far as saying that violence was justified, or that he was the weaker party, or he was attacked, he was persecuted, therefore he retaliated, etc. This is the very most that they can say; but even that is pretty weak. I think very modern apologists no longer say that, and are quite defiantly Islamic and say that Muhammad's violence and the violence - if it is to be called violence - of Islam was in fact a good thing.

Kulananda: They demand their own value system.

S: Yes. Well, in a sense they are right: why should Islam be judged by Christian values - or by Buddhist values, come to that? But on the other hand, there must be one ultimate value system embracing all and by which all are judged. We would say that that is the Buddhist value system, according to which the Islamic value system is limited or even wrong in certain respects.

Kulananda: ..... say it's not the value system by which you're judging them; you're simply saying that mechanically they've got it wrong. It just won't work.

S: Well, it's a question of what will or will not work. Because one can say that Islam did establish a great empire and a great civilisation, and great cultural achievements; produced, if that is the word, many great mystics, philosophers, thinkers, who were not themselves violent people even though they may not have been able to repudiate the traditionally violent ideology of Islam.

Kulananda: I was thinking -

[End of Side one side two]

S: There is also the point that Islam overran regions of the Middle East which were highly civilised and highly cultured, that after a while that civilisation, that culture, started percolating through and expressing itself in Islamic garb, in Islamic terms. Because one mustn't forget that that part of the world is probably one of the most anciently civilised in the world: say, Mesopotamia, which is part of Iraq; Iran; Egypt. These are all very highly civilised parts of the world, almost like India in some respects. So even though overrun by Islam, that substratum of culture and civilisation was there, and eventually found an Islamic expression and produced very civilised people, very intelligent people, very cultured

people, even very spiritual people, but they all had to use the language of Islam.

Kuladeva: Is there not a danger, then, in attributing to the cultural achievements Islam in the same way that people in the West have apparently attributed the achievements of, say, the Renaissance to Christianity, whereas - ?

S: Yes, that's true, yes, yes. You can't really put the art of the Renaissance to the credit of Christianity as such. For instance, you can see what many artists were capable of when they got away from Christianity altogether. For instance, let's say for the sake of argument, their pagan mythological paintings are not noticeably worse than their Christian paintings. So how can you put all their vast artistic achievement to the credit of Christianity as though Christianity was directly responsible for producing that?

Kulananda: You could say it's the classical Greek culture expressing itself despite Christianity.

S: Well, there would be some truth in that, certainly, at least as regards the art of the Renaissance; though one is rather dealing in abstractions, because it would be individuals, perhaps influenced by etc. etc., or growing up under certain political conditions, economic conditions even. But this very glib putting down of cultural achievements to the credit of a particular religion is very much to be questioned, I think - especially, probably, in the case of Christianity. For instance, where it is claimed that Christianity abolished slavery, whereas actually the truth is that most Christian bodies, most churches, were not in favour of the abolition of slavery. It was more, was it not, secular humanists who worked for these sort of things?

Devaraja: So relating it to the impact of Buddhism on Indian culture, can we say that Buddhism is a crucial factor in the development of Indian culture?

S: There's certainly a big difference between Indian culture after Buddhism and Indian culture before. So one can say that Buddhism at least contributed something to Indian culture. But at the same time a lot that we think of as Buddhist is merely Indian. I think the situation becomes clearer when Buddhism goes to those countries of Asia which had very little civilisation or culture before Buddhism; then you can see the impact of Buddhism did produce a tremendous cultural upheaval, a tremendous cultural expression, which very likely would not have taken place without the influence of Buddhism.

Kulananda: It seems the effect Christianity is having on ..... (?)

S: So I think there is quite a difference between what happens when a highly developed religion, say a universal religion, goes to an area where there is not much in the way of culture, and when it goes to an area where culture was already highly developed.

Perhaps Christianity can claim something in Western Europe, especially in the dark ages and the early middle ages, but I don't think it can claim very much in those areas where culture was already highly developed, for instance in Asia Minor. Nor, it would seem, can really Islam claim

very much in, say, countries like Iraq or Egypt and Persia [Iran], as they now are, which had great cultures even before Islam.

Kuladeva: Doesn't Joseph McCabe argue that Christians did actually contribute towards the dark ages - they were partly responsible for them.

S: I think it depends what one means by the dark ages. Usually one means by the dark ages the centuries following the collapse of the Roman Empire and before the rise of the Carolingian empire; that is usually referred to as the dark ages - a period of 500 or 600 years. To what extent Christianity undermined the imperial authority and to what extent it propped it up or replaced it, these are quite debatable questions. My view is - not based on a detailed study, admittedly - that it would probably be an exaggeration to blame Christianity for the downfall of the Roman Empire; I think there were many other factors at work. Christianity certainly saved some of the bits and pieces: at least one could say that. It has some things to its credit.

Anyway, perhaps on that more kindly note we can end.

[End of Tape 15 Tape 16]

S: I can't help wondering why people have to think in advance what they are going to say for such a tiny thing as this. [The voiceprints for the transcriber's and the reader's benefit] Sometimes it can be quite interesting just to wait and see what ideas come at that very instant. I often find this when I am chairing one of the symposia: I don't think in advance what I'm going to say, but it's quite interesting just to stand there at the lectern and just pause a minute, look at people, and see what ideas come into your head. This can be in itself quite an interesting exercise.

Anyway, that's nothing to do with prayer, and it's with prayer that we are concerned, as Abhaya reminded us. This is the sixth of the Duties of Brotherhood: to pray for your brother.

"6

*"**The sixth duty** is to pray for your brother, during his life and after his death, that he may have all he might wish for himself, his family and his dependants."*

S: What kind of prayer seems to be envisaged here, where it is said: 'The sixth duty is to pray for your brother, during his life and after his death, that he may have all he might wish for himself, his family and his dependants'? What kind of prayer is this usually?

Abhaya: Intercession.

S: Prayer of intercession; there's another term also, isn't there? Petitionary prayer, prayer which is asking for something, as distinct from what I believe is sometimes called contemplative prayer or prayer of contemplation.

As it's a very short section I'm thinking that maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea to read it all the way through, and then just take it as a whole, taking out general points. I've an idea that we may need to discuss the subject matter of this chapter in a more general way than we've discussed the subject matter of previous chapters.

"You should pray for him as you pray for yourself, making no distinction at all between you and him. For in reality your prayer for him is a prayer for yourself. The Prophet (God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
- Whenever a man prays for his brother in secret, the angel says, 'And to you the same!'

In another version the words are:
- ... God (Exalted is He!) will say, 'I begin with you, My slave!'
According to the tradition:
- A man's prayer on his brother's behalf will be answered, where that on his own account would go unanswered.
Also:
- A man's prayer for his brother, in secret, is not rejected.
Abu'l-Darda used to say:
- I pray for seventy of my brothers during my prostration, naming them by their names.
Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Isfahani used to say:
- Where is the like of a virtuous brother? Your family divide up your inheritance and enjoy what you leave behind, while he is alone in missing you, interested in what you have achieved and what has become of you, praying for you in the darkness of the night while you lie under layers of earth.
It seems that this virtuous brother follows in the steps of the angels, for according to the tradition:
- When a man dies people ask, 'What did he leave behind?' But the angels say, 'What has he achieved?' They rejoice in his achievement, ask after him, and show compassion for him.
It is said that when a man, on hearing of his brother's death, asks for mercy on him and begs forgiveness for him, this is written in his favour as if he had attended his funeral and prayed over him.
It is related of God's Messenger (God bless him and give him Peace!) that he said:
- The dead man in his grave is like one shipwrecked, completely dependent for everything. He waits for a prayer from a son or brother or relative.
Truly, lights like mountains enter the tombs of the dead from the prayer of the living. One of the early believers said:
- Prayers for the dead are on the same footing as gifts for the living. The angel goes in to the dead with a tray of light, bearing a cloth of light, and says, 'This is a gift for you from your brother so-and-so, from your relative so-and-so.' And he delights in it just as a living man rejoices in a gift."

S: There are really, I think, three main points arising out of this chapter. First of all there is the point that prayer is an expression of brotherhood; that you should pray for your brother as you pray for yourself; you should make no distinction between the two. A prayer for your

brother is a prayer for yourself, and vice versa. Here the nature or the necessity of prayer is not questioned, is not under discussion; but inasmuch as you should regard your brother as yourself anyway, so if the question of prayer does arise at all you should naturally pray for your brother as yourself.

The second point that arises is helping the dead: whether it is possible to help the dead. And, thirdly, if it is possible to help the dead, can they be helped by prayer, in the sense of this chapter? These are really the main questions that arise, I think.

So I think, with regard to the first point, if there is anything in prayer at all, if one does believe in prayer - prayer in the Islamic sense, prayer even in the Christian sense - and also if one regards one's brother as oneself, it is only right and natural that you should pray for your brother. It logically follows. Of course Buddhists don't necessarily grant the premises here.

Is there any analogy in Buddhism to praying for your brother - any parallel practice?

_____: The *mettā bhāvanā.*

S: Yes, one could say the *mettā bhāvanā.*

Prakasha: Sort of adopting an attitude of well-wishing.

S: Adopting an attitude of well-wishing. But how does the *mettā bhāvanā*, would you say, differ from praying for your brother?

Kulananda: There's no third party involved.

S: There's no third party involved. Do you think prayer is efficacious? - despite the theistic framework of petitionary prayer, do you think the element of good will that is in it has the same sort of effect on the object of that prayer as the *mettā bhāvanā* has on its object - assuming that there is an objective effect in either case? Or would you think that the theistic framework, being from a Buddhist point of view a framework of *micchaditthi*, would cancel out the positive effect of the prayer on your brother's behalf?

Kulananda: It would depend, surely, on the mental states involved. If praying brought forth feelings of awe and fear in the sight of God, then probably not. If it brought forth feelings of mettā towards the person involved, then it would.

Subhuti: If what had incited the prayer was strong well-wishing towards the other person, that is mettā, expressed through that.

S: So, under certain circumstances at least, praying for someone could have the same objective effect or result as developing *mettā bhāvanā* towards them; it being assumed that there is an objective effect or result in either case.

Kulananda: Yes, can we go into that assumption a bit - the mechanics of the effect of developing mettā towards somebody who is not present? How tangibly efficacious do you think that is?

S: Well, I think that the basic point here is whether one mind can affect another, independent of any physical medium. I think it is generally accepted nowadays that that is possible: that telepathy, for want of a better term, is a possibility. There have been some interesting experiments recently in the field of biology, and I think it has been established, though I speak with some caution here, that among animals, especially rats - because rats have been subject to experiments in this respect - there is a sort of intercommunication network which does not depend upon physical factors. It has apparently been shown that if rats in one part of the world learn something, rats in another part of the world, having no physical contact with the first rats, learn the thing too; which would seem to posit a non-physical means of communication - going to support the general hypothesis, if you like, of in a sense almost the universality of telepathy: that we are in fact all of us affecting one another on the mental level.

Kuladeva: It sometimes seems to happen that in various part of the FWBO different people in different circumstances develop an interest in similar things. It was quite interesting talking to Ratnaprabha the other day about some of the things that have come up in our study. It seems that they have been talking about some of the same things in their study. There was no apparent connection.

S: Sometimes people dream about one another at the same time, don't they? - the same night, two different people not in physical contact have dreams about each other. So it doesn't seem impossible, in fact it seems highly likely, that you can in fact affect or influence other people through your thoughts: that if your thoughts are positive you can affect them positively, and if your thoughts are negative you can affect them negatively.

But do you think, for instance, that in the same way that you pray, say, o God to give your brother riches you could do *mettā bhāvanā* towards him in such a way that he does actually become richer? Does it work that way, or is it simply a question of affecting his mental state, in terms of positivity or negativity and so on? Christians, or Muslims, do believe that you can pray for some material blessing, but is that possible, and does *mettā bhāvanā* in any case work like that?

Kulananda: One could construct a case. If mind is that manipulable, as it were, you could set up conditions in other people such that your brother was benefiting - .....

S: It does seem that certain people, especially certain yogis and holy men and Sufis and so on, have possessed quite remarkable mental powers, even apparently to the extent of being able to invoke material blessings on people. In other words, it's as though their mental power is such that they can exercise it over a whole field of conditions and circumstances, not just in respect of one individual person.

Nagabodhi: Could you say something that corresponds with your own personal experience of people ....., or just people that - ?

S: I can't say that I've any personal experience of this. Certainly no one has ever blessed me that I may attain riches! Or at least if they have the

blessing has not been very efficacious. But I have read many accounts of such things, which in some cases seem plausible, if not actually credible. I wouldn't be prepared to press the point, though as someone said a case could be made.

I think also in any case, perhaps, the emphasis needs to be on the inculcation by direct mental means of a positive mental state in the other person. That is the most important of all. And in the *mettā bhāvanā* it does seem that we do concentrate on that. When we say 'May they be well, may they be happy', what we really mean is 'May they enjoy a dhyanic or semi-dhyanic mental state. May they progress spiritually, may they develop Insight.' Those are our wishes for them, rather than that they may have many children or be successful in their business affairs. Unless, of course, they are raising money for the FWBO!

Prasannasiddhi: We could do with a few of those sort of prayers.

S: So it does seem that one mind can act directly upon another, and that therefore *mettā bhāvanā*, for instance, is not simply for your own subjective good or subjective benefit but actually for the objective good and benefit of the person or persons to whom it is directed.

Kulananda: Would you say there was any particular key or approach to developing that mental capacity?

S: I think it depends on two things: first of all, unification of one's own energies so that you can send so to speak a concentrated stream of mettā in the direction of the other person - which you can't do if your energies are scattered and fragmented or if they are weak to begin with; and weak usually means ununified. And secondly, you must have the genuine good will towards that person which caused you to wish to direct your unified energies towards him in that way.

Abhaya: That's rather interesting, because I think I have a tendency to think of the *mettā bhāvanā* as being a less concentrated meditation technique than the mindfulness of breathing.

S: In a sense, it is; but only in a sense. Perhaps one thinks of it as less concentrated because it is, by the very nature of the practice, more outward-going.

Kulananda: I suppose the big difficulty in considering this area is the lack of a principle of verification for these sorts of mental event.

S: I think that sometimes there can be a verification, because for instance one can perhaps experiment with someone with whom you've not been getting on very well, and you can direct your mettā towards them in particular; and sometimes one does find that, without one having said or done anything, there is a change of attitude towards you on the part of that person, which would seem to be due - perhaps one cannot prove it conclusively - to your changed attitude towards them, or your special efforts with regard to them. This is perhaps the underlying philosophy, in a way, of for instance the brother praying to God to change his brother's mind or heart; it is not that God actually does it, or that there is in fact a God to do it, but that you yourself, by thinking of your brother in this positive way, do succeed - I won't say in changing his heart, because his

heart isn't yours to change, but you bring a certain influence to bear upon him, perhaps without his realising it, to which in fact he does respond; and that results in a change of attitude on his part towards you.

Kulananda: The interesting question is - how do the mechanics work? Somebody is, say, living 100 miles away. You somehow contact that person by envisaging him present; you conjure up a mental image, perhaps, or get a feeling for that person. It's not like dialling on the telephone, but -

S: Physical distance doesn't make any difference, does it, because mind is mind? So it would seem that if you think about someone, if you form a mental image of them, you are in fact in contact with them.

Kulananda: But there's surely a difference between being in contact with them and being in contact with your idea of them.

S: No, because your idea of them, if you know them or have any knowledge of them at all, corresponds to them.

Kulananda: So in fact being in their physical presence you are only in contact with a strong idea of them.

S: One could even say that. You are only in contact with them through the medium of your own perception, one could say. Perhaps it's only an assumption on our part that we are closer to someone when we are physically in contact with them than when we are not physically in contact with them; perhaps it is possible to be equally close, if not even closer, when we are merely, as we would say, in non-physical contact with them.

Kulananda: Then we wouldn't be distracted by certain -

S: For instance, in an earlier chapter we saw that you should speak about your brother as though he was actually present, that is to say physically present; because usually we are not able to realise the actual presence, let us say, apart from the physical presence, but we should be able to do that. Because the body is not the person himself, or at the very least it is not the <u>whole</u> of the person himself. So someone is not truly present to you unless he is present to you even in his as it were physical absence. Hence, to come back to something I was talking about a little while ago, the importance of fidelity, or rather the significance of fidelity; because you are able to behave as though the other person was present - that is to say, the other person is for you mentally present in the absence of the physical body. They are present even though the physical body is not there. So you continue to behave as though they were present; not even <u>as though</u> they were present - they <u>are</u> present, you realise their presence; but you have a more subtle realisation than you usually have. So you continue to behave as before; you don't change your behaviour, because they are still present, though the mode of presence, one might say, has changed.

This is why the capacity for fidelity is a sign of one's capacity to live on the mental plane, for want of a better term, as well as on the physical plane.

Kulananda: How do you distinguish between what is subjective and what is objective on the mental plane? Or is there no distinction to be

drawn?

S: Well, everything that is subjective is objective to some extent; because even a so-called subjective thought is objective in the sense that you do actually have a subjective thought. That subjective thought is objectively part of your mental furniture, part of your thinking. So is there anything ever completely subjective? Or is there anything ever completely objective? The minute we start thinking about it, it ceases to be completely objective; so in a way it begins to suggest that the distinction between subject and object isn't quite so hard and fast as we had perhaps supposed.

But all this is bringing us on - you might have noticed, or you might not have done - to the question of the dead. Can we help the dead? Who are the dead? What do we mean by the dead? Well, if you do not believe that the death of the physical body ends it all, well you believe in something if not persisting unchanged but something still going on, some process still going on, which can still be meaningfully spoken of as that particular person, at least as meaningfully as you spoke of that particular person during their so-called lifetime.

So if you can be actually in telepathic communication with someone in the absence of their physical body, can you not be telepathically, so to speak, in contact with them after death - which means the permanent absence of the physical body, whereas parting or separation was only the temporary absence of the physical body? And can you not therefore as it were help them? Can you not induce positive mental states in them, which seems to be logically possible, would seem to follow logically?

So if you have a duty to pray for your brother, to go back to the terms of the text, during his lifetime, you have equally a duty to pray for him after his death. In the same way, if you have a duty, to use that term, to direct your *mettā bhāvanā* towards the living, surely you have a duty also to direct your *mettā bhāvanā* towards the dead. The dead, too, can be included in your *mettā bhāvanā*; and perhaps you will want to include them.

Kulananda: Except that one's idea of them will grow weaker over time; because -

S: Ah, but will it, or why is that? Ah. Isn't there something here about that? 'Where is the like of a virtuous brother? Your family divide up your inheritance and enjoy what you leave behind, while he is alone in missing you, interested in what you have achieved and what has become of you, praying for you in the darkness of the night while you lie under layers of earth.' Well, clearly there is some identification of you here with the physical body; it is only the physical body that is lying under layers of earth.

Kulananda: I was thinking that the person who has died is going to be undergoing changes, and you will have no way of keeping up - unless you are very receptive - with the changes that are taking place.

S: During lifetime people undergo changes; sometimes you just don't know what the other person is going through, only in the most general way. Well, sometimes you don't know at all. Sometimes even someone in the same community can be going through all sorts of things of which you are unaware. So there isn't really all that difference between the two states. But nonetheless, even if you have a general attitude of good will

towards someone, that will help; you don't need to go into all the details of their particular problems and difficulties. Perhaps sometimes it's better if you don't, in some instances anyway. So you may not know what the deceased person is experiencing, what they are undergoing, but if you can genuinely bear them in mind with powerful thoughts of mettā that must have some beneficial effect.

Kuladeva: Do you mean just immediately after death or do you mean a long time afterwards, when they might possibly already be reborn?

S: Well, all the time, one might say, just as in the case of a person who is living. Your thoughts of mettā in either case will be particularly helpful, let's say, in any crucial situation and for the person who is just dead - well, the few days, from our point of view, after death are especially crucial. But no doubt your thoughts of mettā will still be helpful to them afterwards. What usually happens is, of course, that people forget after a while. The vividness of the original impression fades. But it need not do that. Just as in the case of physical absence - the great classical example, within the marital context, let us say, is Penelope in respect of Ulysses, who waited faithfully for 20 years and didn't forget her husband. And there are other examples of this kind of thing.

Kulananda: We talk about the practice of recollection, and I wonder if we couldn't make more of a practice of recollection, to as it were develop our memory. Not in the sense of trying to remember facts, but in the sense of imaginatively allowing ourselves to move backwards in time and hold intact and piece together impressions into a -

S: This is an exercise which is known in some schools of Buddhism. I haven't encountered any reference to it in literature, but I have heard from somebody - I forget who it was - in Kalimpong; it might have been Mr. Chen, it might have been somebody else - that some Tibetans have a practice of going back. I think I have mentioned it once or twice. For instance, you start as it were meditating, you sit and meditate, and you try to remember everything that happened yesterday, then the day before, then the day before that, and you work your way back right to the time of birth - not at one session; next time you sit and meditate, you carry on from where you left off - yes, day by day - and you work your way back to the moment of birth and before that. This is a particular practice. Probably it could be regarded as virtually a full-time practice. [Laughter]

Kuladeva: I tried doing that. When I first became interested in Buddhism, I tried doing Mindfulness of Breathing and that practice, till I made contact with the FWBO.

S: So was that before you got back to the moment of birth or conception?

Kuladeva: I didn't get back to the moment of birth.

S: But what is important is not remembering, in the sense of remembering bits and pieces of information, but increasing and intensifying the experience of what I might call self-continuity.

Kulananda: Certainly in my own case, and I imagine in most people's cases, an extremely fragmented view of one's own past; huge gaps and

dislocations.

S: That often is the case when a lot of things are happening to you at one and the same time, but not with any sort of pattern, as it were, not with any great leading thread. There are just lots of trivial little things happening. It's very difficult then to maintain a sense of continuity, or as I have called it self-continuity.

Kuladeva: I've often thought about that in relation to Vangisa, and possibly other - obviously, Order members who will eventually die; if it is possible to help him at all still - to make -

S: Because, after all, even if someone does go through the *bardo*, let us say, in the orthodox way, and is reborn: maybe Vangisa is reborn. Well, someone exists in human form somewhere. Well, no doubt our mettā can benefit that person in just the same way as our mettā can benefit someone with whom we are actually in contact in this life itself. No one as it were goes beyond the sphere of your mettā, because physical distance in any case, if that is involved, is of no significance whatever. Someone might have been reborn on a distant planet or in a different solar system, even a different galaxy, a different galactic system altogether; well, that wouldn't make the slightest difference.

Kuladeva: Do you think, in the context of the Order Mettā, for instance, that we should remember deceased Order members, or do you think it should just be left to personal - ?

S: I think we could. I think that there's absolutely no reason why we shouldn't. There's certainly no objection. So if anybody feels like remembering someone who is deceased when doing the Order *mettā bhāvanā*, that is certainly in order. If, when doing *mettā bhāvanā* in a different context or in a different way, they chose to remember deceased friends and relations, that too would be in order. Perhaps if any relation or friend does die, and there is something between you still unresolved, it would be a good thing to think of that person with thoughts of mettā.

Subhuti: Buddhaghosa recommends that one doesn't do metta towards somebody who is dead.

S: Well, that is true, within the context of the five-stage *mettā bhāvanā*, because if you are a beginner in the practice there is the danger that the thought of your loss in respect of that person will induce feelings of sadness; but when your mettā is sufficiently strong, and maybe when the person has been dead a sufficiently long time - and also if you have a sufficiently vivid sense of their still in some sense being present or being around - then it will be possible for you to develop mettā towards someone who is dead without it occasioning or giving rise to any feelings of sadness or loss.

Subhuti: He seems to give different grounds. He seems to say it's almost not possible to have mettā towards somebody who is dead. He gives the example of a bhikkhu who is doing mettā and couldn't get it to work, so he went to his teacher, and his teacher said: 'Seek out the object of your mettā.' And he discovered that the person towards whom he had been directing mettā was dead; and then he started doing it towards somebody else, and it was all right. As if Buddhaghosa seemed to assume that it was the physical presence that made the mettā possible.

S: Well, if you are in the same physical world with somebody else, perhaps that is a bond which is not there in the case of someone who is no longer in the same physical world with you. But nonetheless, surely, it should be possible for your mettā, which is after all a mental state, to transcend physical boundaries, at least in the long run and when it was sufficiently strong.

There is a connection between physical bodies, especially those that are related by blood. You know those rather terrible experiments performed on rabbits - I have mentioned them before - whereby they took a female rabbit that had just given birth to young and took the young away from the doe rabbit, took them several hundred miles away, then wired up the mother, and then they killed the young at certain intervals; and of course the mother being wired up they could monitor any change in her physical and as it were mental condition. And there were as it were reactions corresponding to the deaths of the young ones. So this is quite interesting, to show a sort of interconnection between physical organisms, especially those that are connected in this way, through blood so to speak.

Kulananda: Is one necessarily to deduce a connection physically or just a very strong mental connection, as she had been carrying them for a long time?

S: But what it perhaps suggests more than anything else is again that we mustn't make this hard and fast distinction, perhaps, between the physical and the mental, that we usually do. I am just suggesting here, in connection with the incident that Subhuti mentioned from Buddhaghosa, that there are degrees or levels of interconnection, some more gross and some more subtle. And if you are unable to operate, so to speak, on the more subtle level you must come down perhaps to the grosser level and operate there. Just as to begin with you need some degree of physical contact with someone over a certain length of time for it to be possible for you to launch, so to speak, from that to an experience of them mentally when they are no longer physically present.

But it is quite interesting that, as I said in that talk on Fidelity, absence or separation is a test: it is not just a test of fidelity in the legalistic or romantic or sentimental sense, it's a test of the strength of your sense of the continuity of your relationship with that other person. Did that point come out sufficiently in the lecture? Did this come across sufficiently clear? Because it is all very relevant to the subject matter of this chapter.

Prasannasiddhi: I always find it difficult, when one presents this idea of an individual being reborn, it almost sounds too solid to me, that this person here is going to disappear and then another person is going to come up again, which will be the re-embodiment of that person with different mental states, based on conditionality. It almost sounds too personalised, too -

S: Well, in a sense, on the mental level, nothing has happened, no change has taken place. Except -

[End of Side 1, Side 2]

.....cloud of mist or cloud of vapour. Every now and then it sort of condenses, a few drops of water fall. Those drops of water are the physical bodies. But the cloud of mist or cloud of vapour corresponds to the mental side of things, so to speak, which goes on - I won't say unchanged, but in a sense unchanged; unchanged in certain respects. So that, from the mental point of view, to die and to be reborn isn't such a big deal

really after all. It is just from our very limited perspective, of course, we identify so much with the physical. The whole purpose of this talk about fidelity is to encourage one to identify less with the physical and more with the mental, less with the grosser and more with the refined, or more refined.

Prasannasiddhi: Would each individual body have an individual mental cloud, or is there like a mass cloud which - ?

S: Well, the traditional Buddhist view is that each so-called individual human being has an individual mental cloud, so to speak. But there are possibilities of further speculation; because, according to some traditions, those clouds, let us say, are separate now, but those clouds themselves have divided - separated - from other and bigger clouds. Buddhism doesn't usually go into speculation of that sort, but some traditions do.

Kulananda: Yes, I was going to say - this must have an effect on your notion of the individual.

S: Yes. But, in any case, the great point that Buddhism makes is that it is all changing, that it is all in flux; there isn't any sort of little solid billiard-ball-like self that goes pinging from one existence to another, assuming different physical bodies.

Vajrananda: I heard that there'd been a suggestion that you could possibly have somebody reborn or whatever, who was not just a rebirth of one other person, but maybe a sort of mixture or whatever.

S: Well, sometimes - I don't know how seriously they do this, but sometimes some Tibetans speak of certain incarnate lamas as being simultaneously the incarnation of more than one personality, let us say.

Kulananda: Or even an incarnation splitting into several.

S: Yes, indeed, yes.

Vajrananda: Do you think that's at all likely in terms of ..... ?

S: Well, what about the phenomenon of multiple personality? That is well known, isn't it?

Prasannasiddhi: Multiple personality?

S: Well, there are certain abnormal mental conditions known to medical science in which a person in turn behaves and functions as a different personality: it's the same physical body, but at one time it's as though the soul, so to speak, is that of a young girl, another time it's that of an old man; at one time it's that of a very sweet-natured, easy-going person, another time a very violent, bad-tempered person. It is <u>as though</u> - this is not the explanation given by medical science - to use very crude popular language, different souls are inhabiting the same physical body and taking it in turns to use that body or to function through that body. So this could be an instance of that kind of thing.

Vajrananda: Do you feel that you could have an amalgamation of different aspects -

S: Well, this is what we are trying to achieve all the time, isn't it? Because we are as it were half way between the two. We don't suffer from multiple personality, but neither are we completely unified personalities. It is as though there are different bits and pieces, and almost, sometimes, fragments of personalities: hence so much internal mental conflict, and failure to evolve as rapidly as we would like. It's as though there is more than one self - sometimes at least. But it doesn't become actually abnormal, in the strictly medical sense; it doesn't usually become as severe or as pronounced as that.

Vajrananda: Could you possibly have a situation where somebody would die in severe conflict and then just split up ..... ?

S: That possibility is envisaged, but I don't know to what extent it is a popular supposition, and to what extent it has been worked out systematically in strictly psychological terms, in such a way as to explain how it is possible and how it happens.

Abhaya: I suppose that's what happens in schizophrenia, or in cases of severe mental conflict during life - that there actually is a split-off to such an extent that the two bits never come together again.

S: Or one is repressed, and one doesn't even know that it is there. It reveals its presence indirectly, possibly in the form of symptoms.

Abhaya: Jekyll and Hyde.

S: Yes. So where does all that leave us, so to speak?

Prasannasiddhi: Where does all what leave us?

S: All our discussion so far, on the content of the chapter. In some ways it warns us that we must be careful what we think about; because if you think about something you put yourself in contact with that particular thing, especially if it's a person. Do you not ever feel this or experience this? Sometimes you can feel it or experience it very powerfully reading a biography of someone. It does seem to put you actually in touch with the person. You're not just reading a good work of literature, not just reading a biography; it's as though you are actually in touch with that person in more than just a literary sense. It is not just a plausible and effective literary reconstruction; if that person has been in touch with the subject of the biography, he puts you in touch. This is why it is sometimes said, and I feel this too, that you are much better off reading a biography written by someone who had personal contact with the subject of the biography, whatever limitations that biography may have.

For instance, I was reading quite recently about various biographies of Dickens, and the author, whoever it was, made the point that the best biography of Dickens is still that written by his friend Forster, even though he is silent about certain aspects of Dickens's life. But it is still the best, because it puts you in touch with Dickens himself, reveals Dickens himself in a way that none of the later biographies do. And this is not

just because of the style of writing or the information conveyed or purveyed: it is as though he is in touch with the actual person, the essential Dickens, and it is as though he can put you in touch too. Whereas if you are reading a biography written by someone writing hundreds of years after the subject of the biography, and if it's a painstaking historical reconstruction based on second, third, fourth, even ninth, tenth, eleventh-hand sources, your impression of that actual person will be correspondingly less vivid. You may have a vivid picture in your mind after reading that biography, but it will be a literary reconstruction rather than a putting of you in touch with, so to speak, the person himself or herself.

Kulananda: You know them more than you know the hero of the book.

Ratnavira: Do you think the same can happen if you involve yourself deeply in, say, the poetry of Keats; it's almost as though you tune in to the mind of Keats?

S: Yes, I think so, yes.

Prasannasiddhi: It is quite interesting how you can read two biographies of the same person that are totally different - well, in many points dissimilar.

S: In a way, it is not at all surprising, because you can get different accounts of the same living person from different people who know that person.

Kuladeva: A good example is the accounts of Socrates by Plato and by Xenophon. They present different -

S: Not to speak of Aristophanes, who presented <u>his</u> account when Socrates was still living and apparently in the audience sitting there and enjoying the caricature of himself. So it is said.

Prasannasiddhi: Enjoying?

S: Well, Socrates had a sense of humour.

Kuladeva: Except he did feel that that sort of influenced the way people thought about him and partly led to his trial and execution.

S: Socrates, in a sense, seems to have enjoyed even his trial and death.

But again, to go back to my original point: you've got to be careful about, or at least selective of, what you read, what you put yourself in contact with. I had an aunt - this is a personal recollection - who used to spend her evenings sitting by the fire, just reading by the light of the fire all by herself, and she'd be reading about Jack the Ripper. And she developed melancholia; that's not surprising, etc. etc. I mean, should one really read at all about people like Jack the Ripper? Do you need to do that? Do you need to tune in, as it were, to that sort of person? And suppose

again you read the *Life of Milarepa* - well, you tune in to something quite different, or you tune in to the extent that you can, obviously. But you're in contact with something completely different. So should you not do that? So we have to be quite careful what we read, especially what we read about people, personalities; because we do, in a way, tune in to them in varying degrees. So let our reading also be a form of *kalyana mitrata*. Through your reading, especially reading biographies, you can enjoy *kalyana mitrata*, or you can enjoy *kalyana mitrata* to some extent, with so many great figures of the past, perhaps very heroic and inspiring figures.

So why should you read about Jack the Ripper, say, when you can read about Milarepa? Or why should you read about some wretched pop star, when you can read about a Bodhisattva - going from the dead to the living? Who wants to read about these sort of people - you open the Sunday paper and what do you find? All sorts of details about all sorts of wretched people that were best forgotten, perhaps. All sorts of not only insignificant, essentially insignificant, but pretentious and overbearing and over-valued people, with far too much money and very little not only of common sense but often, it would seem, of ordinary human decency. And these are the people that one is invited to read about on one's day off. It really is quite disgusting, one might say.

I remember a series in particular - I think it was a series - about Mrs. Jackie ex-Kennedy; it was really quite disgusting, just to read about this sort of thing on a Sunday morning, how this good lady lived her life. It wasn't in the least uplifting. Anyway, that's by the by. Even to think of some people is - what shall I say? - a misfortune. Let's not think about them any more.

Some of the imagery here is very vivid, isn't it? I don't know whether this is a coincidence or not. Also Abu'l Darda says: 'I pray for seventy of my brothers during my prostration, naming them by their names.' This is interesting. First of all, he prays for 70 of his brothers: this is a bit like our Order mettā, isn't it, surely? - 'naming them by their names', because the name is the person, so to speak; the name stands for the person, at least. You mention the name, you bring yourself into contact with them. This is why you repeat the name or the mantra of a Bodhisattva, you gradually bring yourself into contact with the Bodhisattva himself, so to speak.

And then this picture of 'When a man dies, people ask: - What did he leave behind? But the **angels** say: - What has he achieved? **They** rejoice in his achievement, ask after him and show compassion for him.' So the friend who is concerned about his brother's achievement, and is still concerned after his death, is like an angel, whereas the kinsfolk, the relations - they're not like angels at all, they are only wondering how much money he has left. They're not concerned about his good deeds.

And then 'A dead man in his grave is like one shipwrecked, completely dependent for everything.' Well, we don't quite agree with that, but that's another point. And then: 'Prayers for the dead are on the same footing as gifts for the living. The angel goes in to the dead with a tray of light, bearing a cloth of light, and says, "This is a gift for you from your brother so-and-so."' Again, there is something like this in Buddhism, isn't there? The dedication of merits. You offer something, say, to the Sangha, and you wish, so to speak, that whatever merit may accrue from this offering may be - what's the word? - put down to the account, so to speak, of the departed person.

Tejamitra: Could we just go back to the dead man being shipwrecked? Are you saying that, from the Buddhist point of view, someone, say, in

the *bardo* isn't completely helpless?

S: Well, yes, because according to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* he is still able to exercise initiative and choice, even though he may be helped in that, not so much by the prayers in this particular context of those he has left behind but through their reminders, or through the lama's reminder, to him of what he should do or try to do. On the other hand, it is emphasised that if you haven't put in some practice at least during your lifetime you are very unlikely to be able to heed the reminders of the lama, even if you do hear them after death. But they could make a difference. Because sometimes, even during one's life on earth, you get into a rather negative state; you might be angry and you might be about to do something in that state of anger; but a friend reminds you, a friend warns you, and that checks you, it does have an effect on you. So the lama's voice heard after death can have the same sort of effect.

But the general purport of all this seems to be - as again, of that talk I gave - that we must learn to live more on what I call the mental plane and less on the physical plane; more on the plane of, let's say, at least the *rupaloka*, and less on the plane of the *kamaloka*. We can't help living on the *kamaloka* plane to some extent, because we've got *kamaloka* bodies, physical bodies; but our thoughts need not always be preoccupied with matters pertaining to the physical body and the *kamaloka* plane generally. If you think about it, our minds are usually preoccupied about our bodies the greater part of the day. You have to feed them, you have to clothe them, you have to do all sorts of things. So it's as though the physical body is the centre of one's attention for the greater part of the day. You are only really liberated at night, when you sleep, or when you meditate, or when you are perhaps absorbed in reading or discussion. There is a constant pull from the physical body: 'Don't forget me! Don't forget about me!' - every half an hour, at least. Even if you're sitting and reading, after half an hour body gets stiff; you have to change your position, as though the body's saying 'Don't forget me. I can't just sit in one position for very long while you're just reading.' And after an hour or two, body feels hungry or thirsty, or you have to go to the toilet, or something of that sort; it's body constantly reminding you, 'Don't forget me, don't forget me.' You're not likely to. It's like having a baby to look after; the baby is constantly yowling, wants feeding every half an hour, wants its nappy changed. So talk about men not being able to look after babies; they have to look after a baby all the time, that is to say their own body with its constant demands.

So it's very difficult to live on the mental plane. You can only succeed in living on the mental plane if you aren't very much bothered about food, can remain in one posture comfortably for long periods of time, don't bother too much about clothing; that's not to mention other physical calls, like the call of sex, for instance, which is a physical call to some extent at least. That also interrupts you in your mental preoccupations and reflections, not to say meditations.

Not to mention illness - oh dear, I'd forgotten illness; not to mention coughs and colds and 'flus, that are constantly befalling you, preventing you from thinking about the Dharma or from meditating.

Prasannasiddhi: Sometimes when I think of - like going down to breakfast and there are about four different breakfast cereals you've got a choice of, and you've got peanut butter and jam and *Marmite*, and - you just need something to get yourself going during the day, and you've got this great big choice, and then you've got to lay it all out and wash it all up, and things like that.

S: I had quite an interesting experience when I came from India to England for the first time, when I was staying, of course, as you know, at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara: I came from my little Triyana Vardhana Vihara in the hills of Kalimpong, and talking about breakfast, what did we have for breakfast? We had a sort of porridge made from our own Indian corn, our own maize. This was sometimes followed by bread and butter - the bread was usually toasted, that is to say scorched - my Tibetan and Nepalese boys weren't very good at making toast. And in any case it was a charcoal fire; so there was sort of scorched bread with a little butter, a very little butter. We never had jam. We never thought of it; jam was regarded as a luxury. So we never had anything of that sort. That was our breakfast, with tea. Sometimes we had just plain chapattis for breakfast, nothing else; just chapattis, followed by tea.

So from that I came to Hampstead, I came to the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, I came to this strict, ascetic Theravadin environment; so I went down to breakfast, and there were several kinds of jam, marmalade, treacle, *Marmite*; not only bread, several different kinds of bread, biscuits; and drinks - oh, there were drinks I'd never heard of. There probably was *Barleycup*, I'm not sure - if there was I'd certainly never heard of it before; there were several kinds of tea; there was coffee, there were herbal drinks. And what amused me, even at the time, was this was the Theravada! [Laughter] This was the strict Theravada. So I hardly knew what to do, I was so unused to this sort of breakfast. So I did as I could, and either that morning or a few mornings later, as I went upstairs after breakfast, I overheard one of the *samaneras* phoning to the local delicatessen store, and I heard him say - and I remember these words so clearly - 'You've only two kinds of tinned salmon? Oh, send the best.' [Laughter] This was again the strict ascetic Theravada vihara! (This must have been, I think, for lunch he was ordering.) [Laughter]

So I just retail these little impressions; this is all part of my life when I came from India back to this country; but again it underlines this point of how much time, how much trouble, you have to expend on the physical body. So we get almost identified with it; it isn't surprising, we have very little experience of ourselves as, so to speak, emancipated from or even as distinct from the physical body. So it's not surprising that, when other physical bodies are not within our actual field of vision, we lose sight of, so to speak, or lose contact with, the personalities attached to those physical bodies. Anyway, that's all by the by.

Anything more about that chapter? Any further point? Otherwise there's going to be yet another tug from the physical body in at least 15 minutes' time clamouring for drink, clamouring for tea and coffee and *Barleycup*; so we might as well satisfy the wretched creature now before we go on to the next chapter, and then maybe it'll keep quiet for a couple of hours until lunchtime. [BREAK]

"7

***The seventh duty** is loyalty and sincerity.*

The meaning of loyalty is steadfastness in love and maintaining it to the death with your brother, and after his death with his children and his fellows. For love is for the sake of the Other Life. If it is severed before death the work is in vain and

the effort wasted."

S: 'The meaning of loyalty is steadfastness in love and maintaining it to the death with your brother.' The suggestion seems to be that, with the death of your brother, that loyalty ends or that steadfastness in love ends; but surely that can't be the case, in view of what was said in the previous chapter. Anyway: 'and after his death with his children and his fellows. For love is for the sake of the Other Life.' This seems to be the crucial sentence. 'If it is severed before death the work is in vain and the effort wasted.'

'For love is for the sake of the Other Life.' What do you think this means, or could mean?

Kulananda: It pertains to the realm of Paradise.

Tejamitra: Presumably it means that one of your main aims in life is for your brother to get to heaven.

S: 'Love is for the sake of the Other Life'.

Kuladeva: It's a spiritual rather than a worldly love.

S: Yes. It suggests that love, or brotherhood, has its ultimate significance on the non-physical plane; so the death of the physical body, physical separation, shouldn't make all that difference. Through love or through brotherhood you become accustomed, as it were, to living on the non-physical plane.

But what do you think is meant by 'If it is severed before death the work is in vain and the effort wasted'?

Kulananda: It does seem to suggest that the purpose of love is so that something can continue afterwards.

S: Yes, so perhaps its purpose hasn't been served if, during your lifetime, your love hasn't reached such a point of development that it can in fact survive physical death, or the physical death of one of the parties. It's clear from the quotations that follow that al-Ghazali does not in fact think of loyalty or steadfastness in love being maintained only up to the death of the brother, so far as he is concerned.

"The Prophet (God bless him and give him Peace!) said:
- Among the seven whom God keeps in His shadow are also two men who love each other for God's sake, constant whether together or apart."

S: Presumably the apartness also includes the apartness of death. That's confirmed by what follows.

"Someone said:
- A little loyalty after death is better than much during a lifetime."

S: Even so, it isn't clear whether the loyalty after death is directed to the man himself or directed to him directly or indirectly through your

loyalty to the dependants he leaves behind. But even so, one might say that if you are loyal to his dependants after his death, if you look after them, that is a continuing loyalty to him. You are not looking after them, so to speak, just for the sake of his memory or in memory of him.

Kulananda: Yes, there is something quite morbid about trying to keep a memory alive. Our association with feelings of morbidity is a very important aspect of Judaism.

S: Which is?

Kulananda: This keeping in memory those who have died. It always strikes me when I have seen the practice at work that it's accompanied by feelings of loss and sadness, and it is quite maudlin. It's not as if they are actually concerned for the person as it were in the present so much as concerned for their own loss of the person who has gone.

S: Well, the question is: who are you mourning? Even should you mourn? Is even mourning appropriate? Suppose someone dies in the fullness of their days, so to speak, and they die peacefully: they've done whatever they had to do. There's nothing to mourn. You will remember them quite happily. Even if someone dies when they are still young, it may not be a blessing for you that they should die, but it would not seem perhaps that any evil had necessarily befallen them. Why should you be sad? Why should you mourn? It would seem that you are mourning for your own loss rather than for anything unpleasant or disastrous that has befallen them.

Devaraja: Sometimes I've felt sad that someone has been quite young. Even someone I have never known, someone I've read about, who has died or been killed in an accident or something like that; it seems quite tragic.....

S: That is sad, but it is not so much that they have died in an accident, but that the accident has befallen them at all, and that is a cause of pain and suffering and shock and so on. That is sad. Not so much, I think, the fact of their actual death.

Nagabodhi: Isn't it that you think of the wasted opportunity?

S: There is that too. But then again, look at all the living people who waste their opportunities. That's even sadder, you could say. They deliberately waste them.

Kulananda: And who knows what opportunities they will be moving towards, anyway?

S: Or what disasters they might have avoided by dying - we don't know. I think the main point is that we remember; if we do remember those who are in a manner of speaking dead, that we bear in mind with positive thoughts, with thoughts of mettā or thoughts of friendliness. We have in a sense an ongoing contact or even ongoing relationship with them.

Some people do experience this - it's said to be usually an entirely subjective experience, but that can be questioned - they do experience this after someone's death quite vividly, as though the person is still around and talking to them, and as though the relationship is in fact continuing; not in a spooklike way, but there's a strong impression of their actual presence.

Prasannasiddhi: When a person dies, you remember them how they were before they died, you remember their physical appearance; but presumably that's going to change, maybe even quite a bit. So there seems something a bit negative about keeping hold of this static image of the person.

S: Or even, in some ways, keeping the dead body and burying it in a hole in the ground and actually going to where that dead body is, and sitting there. That means you have identified the departed person very much with that body. That's why I think it's much better to cremate and not have the physical remains there in the ground.

Kulananda: It seems the dead body also retains some connection with - the mental aspect retains a connection with the body, because when you go to cemeteries sometimes there can be a very powerful atmosphere.

S: That's true.

Kulananda: It's not always unhappy. I get the impression a lot of people are quite glad to be dead, especially older people.

S: I think I mentioned in one of my letters to *Shabda* a quite odd experience I had - odd in a minor way - when I attended the funeral of one of my uncles a few years ago. I don't know if anyone remembers reading about this? I think it was the Wandsworth cemetery we went to bury him. We had to wait a bit for the sextons to come along and do their bit; they were off for their lunch and they were back late. Anyway, I was just looking out of the window of the car, and there were a whole lot of graves just nearby. These were apparently all Polish graves; it was the Polish Catholic part of the cemetery. And the Poles have the custom, it seems, nowadays at least, of putting on the headstone a sometimes almost life-size photograph of the head and shoulders of the deceased person. So it looks for all the world as though their head and shoulders are poking up through the earth. Anyway, there were scores and even hundreds of photographs on these headstones; it looked as though all these people were poking their heads up out of the earth, they were looking round them, as it were. It really produced a very odd effect. I couldn't help feeling the experience as a bit funny, but if you passed by on a dark night it might have a different effect; very strange. It was almost as though whoever was responsible for the interment of those dead people almost believed that there they were, and their photographs showed above ground what was below ground; so it was as though they were actually poking up and there they were tucked up in their graves, just like being tucked up in bed; with the head and shoulders just poking out, looking round at the world. Very strange. Some of the photographs were, of course, coloured, not just black and white; some were black and white, and had an ordinary cadaverous effect. Others were in glorious technicolour.

So one should avoid thinking of the dead body as the person himself: 'he is under there in the ground' - no, that's not the case at all. One hopes not. In fact, in Buddhism the let's say discarnate consciousness is encouraged not to hang around the former body. So you should not continue to think of that person as the body. In fact, even in this life itself you shouldn't think that a friend <u>is</u> the physical body; so that when you're not in

contact with the physical body you're not in contact with that person.

Vajrananda: Do you think the possibility of encouraging that idea of associating the physical body would make it worse for the dead people to get away from their bodies and leave?

S: It could have an effect; yes, it could. The chances are that if you think that that person is the body, now dead, the other person, having been brought up in the same atmosphere, the same culture, the same environment, will think likewise and will try to gravitate back to the dead body; so that you, physically and mentally, and they also mentally, all forgather around the corpse, which doesn't seem a very healthy or positive situation.

Kulananda: If you make a lot of fuss over visiting graves and things like that, it would encourage that tendency a bit longer.

Devaraja: Are ghosts like the consciousness identifying with a particular space? I am thinking in terms of the Six Element Practice, it's a thought that occurred to me .....

S: Ghosts I think that is a quite different topic. Perhaps we ought not to go into that now, but it's a quite different sort of thing. There are quite a number of theories. A ghost is not, one might say just to summarise, exactly the person; it's more as though the ghost is more like the subtle counterpart of the physical body, but not the person himself so to speak. The ghost is the subtle counterpart of the material body; according to many traditions, also disintegrates after a while, or after a much longer period, and that is not to be identified with the mind or consciousness, so to speak.

Devaraja: What happens if one encourages a deceased consciousness to gravitate back towards, say, a grave or whatever ..... ?

S: Well, the deceased consciousness has first of all to dissociate itself from the physical body, then it is said to dissociate itself from the subtle physical body. So after death it is still for some time in, so to speak, the subtle physical body, and that subtle physical body, before it disintegrates, can be the medium of communication for it with the physical body and the physical world.

[End of tape 16 Tape 17]

Devaraja: .....perpetuating the subtle physical body, if it's in the form of a ghost, is it in association with the consciousness of the dead person?

S: Well, what perpetuates the gross physical body?

Prasannasiddhi: After it's dead? Certain -

S: No, I mean during life. It is, of course, yes, its association with, one might say, the mental self, to use that term. The physical body is the

vehicle of that mental self for a comparatively short period; the subtle physical body for a rather longer period.

Devaraja: Of the mental self?

S: Yes.

Devaraja: So - I'm sorry to labour this point, but I just want to clarify it - you seem to be implying a difference between the 'ghost' or subtle physical body, and a consciousness?

S: Yes.

Devaraja: - gravitating towards a particular ..... Ah!

S: The whole idea can be clarified by saying that the individual human being, so to speak, exists on a number of different levels, of varying degrees of subtlety or grossness, the physical body being at the lower end of the scale, and a little bit higher -

Devaraja; the subtle physical -

S: Yes.

Devaraja: I remember once you saying something about whether you wondered whether it was possible for a consciousness to exist separately from a mind-made body.

S: I don't think I said 'a mind-made body'; consciousness exists separately from form. Yes, or using 'body' in the broadest sense, to cover not only physical body but subtle physical body, even so-called mental body. It's as though mind, or consciousness, to use that term, on that level, is neither subject nor object but in a way both; and we express that by saying that it is not just as it were a subjective consciousness but also has, so to speak, a body. It would be, perhaps, again, in a manner of speaking, a body of consciousness or even a body of light.

Kulananda: Some limiting factor ....

S: I wouldn't say <u>limiting</u> factor.

Kulananda: Well, it must determine the difference between that individual consciousness and as it were consciousness of .....

S: Yes, but on that level, or the level of which I am speaking, all the so-called individual consciousnesses or individual body consciousnesses are as it were open to one another. There is a state, in *Gandavyuha* terms, of mutual interpenetration; on that level there is not as it were mutual

exclusiveness due to finitude or limitation.

Kulananda: Then what are the identifying properties?

S: There is no question of an identifying factor.

Kulananda: To be able to identify something as being not another thing.

S: One identifies one thing as not another thing when there is a descent, so to speak, into gross or relatively gross materiality, where space, so to speak, exists; where time exists, and where things therefore can be differentiated as being not in this place but in this place or space, or not at that time but at that time.

Kulananda: One would at other levels talk about perhaps history or predilection, in terms of identifying one consciousness from another consciousness?

S: To me the form of words doesn't convey any meaning.

Kulananda: Well, that a consciousness might have a history, so it is reborn or -

S: Well, time presupposes history, or rather history presupposes time. No time, no history; no history, no time. Hence mutual interpenetration in terms of, from our point of view, time; or space, for that matter.

Kulananda: Then what can be predicated about it at all? What could you say of it - if there's nothing that you can ..... ?

S: *(chuckles)* Well, that's the point. Perhaps one can't and shouldn't try to say anything. The *Gandhavyuha* tries; it probably carries the matter as far as language can carry it.

Kuladeva: So this thing about the subtle body, or the ghost - are you suggesting that it lasts for just over one lifetime, that it disintegrates not long after death of the physical body?

S: Traditions vary. Some traditions maintain that it may last for several hundred years. But just as, for instance, after the death of the physical body it disintegrates, but bits and pieces of it can be around - for instance, the bones can be around for several hundred years - so it is said by some traditions that the subtle physical body can be as it were around, at least in a fragmented state, for some hundreds of years; and bits and pieces of that disintegrated subtle physical body may, under certain conditions, become manifest or visible and may be perceived as ghosts. But it has been pointed out, for instance, that there is no known example or record of a ghost more than 200 to 300 years old. There are many records of ghosts, but we don't have as far as I know any record of a ghost, say, surviving from the Roman period, or even from the medieval

period. Ghosts seem, as far as the records go, either to be ghosts of people who died in the last century or the century before that, or in a very few cases the century before that, if you see what I mean. So this is sometimes cited as a sort of evidence.

On the other hand, some traditions maintain that the subtle body only survives a few, say, of our earthly years after bodily death.

Kuladeva: So it's not associated with the consciousness after the consciousness, let's say, has been reborn in another form?

S: No, it is apparently - all traditions make this completely clear - another subtle physical body, as though the gross physical body and the subtle physical body go more or less together. So that when you are reborn you are reborn into so to speak not only a new physical body but a new subtle body too. It's only the mental body which remains as it were constant - using those terms for the sake of convenience.

_____: The mental body being just the consciousness?

S: So to speak, yes.

Kuladeva: Not being a more subtle body than -

S: But I am using the word body rather ambiguously, because one can even speak of a mental body. For instance, you can speak of gross body, subtle body, mental body or consciousness body, even.

Nagabodhi: A ghost which is some residual subtle body would have as little to do with the consciousness that used to inhabit it as the bones found in one - ?

S: Yes, one could argue from analogy in that way. That is in fact said by some traditions.

Vajrananda: It wouldn't have any consciousness attaching?

S: Well, in a manner of speaking a bit of consciousness might have rubbed off on to it or it might have been impressed by the consciousness so as to give the appearance - just as, for instance, a dead body might still for some years have the appearance of the departed person. It doesn't disintegrate completely all at once, or evenly, as it were.

Devaraja: So this subtle physical body - what is it composed of if it's not - ?

S: Well, what is matter composed of? Whatever matter is composed of, that is composed of the same thing only it's subtler.

Kulananda: Less well stuck together.

Devaraja: It's non-material; or is it just another form of matter ....?

S: Well, if you say it is non-material it assumes one knows what matter is. One might say it is whatever matter is, but it's subtler. Perhaps one can think in terms of frequencies: lower and higher frequencies. From what I've picked up from my study of recent advances in science, even scientists no longer believe in matter. They freely admit now there is no such thing, at least in the old-fashioned sense.

Prasannasiddhi: So a ghost - there isn't such a thing as the consciousness hanging around in the subtle body? The consciousness will definitely move on after a short period?

S: Yes. Some traditions, again, do maintain that consciousnesses - whether incarnate or discarnate - can as it were make use of the partially disintegrated subtle material body and, so to speak, appear in that. But that is quite another subject, and perhaps a bit speculative, anyway. But some traditions do maintain that.

Nagabodhi: I got the impression - at one point when I was talking to Dhardo Rimpoche about death. He expressed what seemed to me quite strong surprise that you had not taught us, or some of us, the technique for dissociating consciousness from the physical body at death. He said this was -

S: Ha, ha, well, I can answer that quite easily. Maybe it is surprising and he is right to be surprised. But it does seem that people in the West identify with the physical body very strongly, so one might say that my talk on Fidelity was a first little step in that direction. Do you see what I mean? (Pause; laughter.) If you can't maintain your sense of continuity in respect of, say, friendship in the other person's absence, you haven't got much hope of being able to maintain the continuity of consciousness when your own physical body disappears - or consciousness in the sense of awareness.

Devaraja: But you have to some degree been introducing that possibility through the Six Element Practice.

S: That's true, yes, indeed, in a very general way. But perhaps he was surprised I hadn't said anything about it in more specific terms. Perhaps that's the sort of thought that might naturally occur to an incarnate lama, for whom these matters are comparatively easy. [Laughter]

Kulananda: Matters of survival!

S: But one must surely be able to maintain continuity of consciousness, in a real sense, in this life itself first, before one can think in terms of prolonging that continuity across or over the event of bodily death.

I do remember Dhardo Rimpoche talking to me about this, though I don't think, as far as I remember, we ever went into it in very great detail, at least - well, we didn't have many sessions about it; but I do remember him talking about the .....

Anyway, we'd better pass on, otherwise we won't get through the chapter. We've only got two more days after today.

We read that, didn't we? 'Someone said: - A little loyalty after death is better than much during a lifetime.' So why is a little loyalty after death better than much during a lifetime?

Subhuti: It's a greater test, isn't it?

S: It's a greater test, yes.

"Thus it is related that the Prophet (God bless him and give him Peace!) once gave a hearty welcome to an old woman who called upon him. When asked about it he said:
- She used to come to us in the days of Khadija, and honouring true friendship is part of religion."

S: Do you know who Khadija was?

Subhuti: It was his first wife.

S: Yes, Muhammad's first wife, who is said to have been the first person to believe in his prophetic mission. So 'Thus it is related that the Prophet once gave a hearty welcome to an old woman who called upon him. When asked about it he said: - She used to come to us in the days of Khadija, and honouring true friendship is part of religion.' It is not clear whether he honours her in memory of Khadija or just because she is an old friend, but in any case he hasn't forgotten her despite the intervening years.

Kulananda: Or might it not be that in fact the old woman is honouring Khadija's friendship in coming ..... ?

S: Yes, it could be that, too: that she continues to come to Muhammad in memory of Khadija. Anyway, let's go on.

"Loyalty to the brother includes consideration towards all his fellows, relatives and dependants. To consider these is a greater duty in the heart of a fellow than to consider the brother himself, for his joy in care for those dependent on him is greater. Nothing proves the strength of compassion and love so much as when these carry over from the loved one to all his dependants. Even the dog at his gate should be distinguished in your heart from all other dogs! Whenever loyalty in sustaining love is broken Satan takes a malicious delight therein, for he does not envy two people who assist each other in good works as much as he envies two brothers, joined in brotherhood and love for God's sake. He exerts himself to spoil what is between them."

S: Didn't Dr. Johnson once say: 'I should love a dog if you called it Hervey' - Hervey being a very dear friend of his in his early life? Anyone remember this? Yes, he did say 'I should love a dog if you called it Hervey.' Apparently Dr. Johnson preferred cats to dogs.

But do you think this is true, or is this sound - that 'Nothing proves the strength of compassion and love so much as when these carry over from the loved one to all his dependants' - even, apparently, including animals? In some way, showing your care for someone by caring for what he cares for.

Nagabodhi: I suppose just as you might like somebody's looks, their actions and so on, you would like their likes; their friendships, their connections, are a part of them.

S: In a sense, I think if you are placing yourself in their position and doing what they would wish to do.

Ratnavira: Inasmuch as they are part of your brother's life, they should be quite naturally part of your life.

S: In a manner of speaking, though that would suggest that you look after, say, your deceased brother's dependants, almost for your sake; but it isn't really like that. You really put yourself in his place. He would have continued to look after them had he continued to live; so you do what he had done, and which therefore you assume he would wish you, as his friend and brother, to do if he wasn't able to do it himself. So your wishes are not consulted. It is not that you feel anything personally for his wife or his children, but thinking that he would have looked after them had he been alive, you as it were automatically take that responsibility upon yourself because you regard yourself as being in his place and doing what he would have done or what he would have wished to be done. You don't as it were get anything out of it personally; you don't get a personal kick out of doing it. You do it just for his sake, so to speak.

So it isn't that you like the things that he likes; no, it's not that, it's a question of responsibility. That you like something because he likes it - that's much too subjective. You may dislike his wife; his wife might have tried to come between you and her husband, but it doesn't make any difference. If he had been alive, he would have continued to support his wife, so you, regardless of what she might have done - though you might dislike her personally - support her after his death because that is what he would have done. It's not 'love me, love my dog' sort of thing in that way; not that you like something just because your friend likes it. It's more than that. As I said, it's more a question of responsibility.

Tejamitra: Isn't it likely that, if it is a true friendship and brotherhood, that would come naturally?

S: What would?

Tejamitra: That you are caring for his dependants after his death.

S: What do you mean by 'naturally'? It would only come naturally to the extent that you really put yourself in his place as a brother and so on. For instance, in the case of his wife, say, within the Muslim context, you might never have seen her. You might never see her, because she'd always remain veiled. But none the less you would support her after his death, for instance.

'Whenever loyalty in sustaining love is broken Satan takes a malicious delight therein, for he does not envy two people who assist each other in good works as much as he envies two brothers, joined in brotherhood and love for God's sake.' Do you think this is intended to be taken literally - that 'he doesn't envy two people who assist each other in good works as much as he envies two brothers, joined in brotherhood and love for God's sake'?

Abhaya: Well, it's a higher bond, isn't it? It's a stronger bond.

S: Not that the friends or brothers are not engaged in good works; they will be. But it is as though good works that friends engage in together are even better, so to speak, than good works which, though admittedly good, are engaged in together by people who are not actually friends.

Anyway, there are quotes now which just illustrate what has been said.

"God (Exalted is He!) said:
- Tell my servants to say what is kindlier. Surely, Satan sets them at variance. (Qur'an 17.53)"

S: The emphasis is on Satan: 'Surely, **Satan** sets them at variance' - nobody else would set them at variance - suggesting that to be at variance is, as we would say, a very unskilful state of affairs.

"And He said, in the story of Joseph:
- ...after Satan had sown discord between me and my brothers. (Qur'an 12.100)"

S: So this is the strongest possible as it were mythological way of giving expression to the fact that discord between brothers is an evil thing, or as we would say an unskilful thing. The author of discord is Satan, so one couldn't label it as evil more unmistakably than that.

"It is said that if a rupture falls between two who have become brothers in God, this can only be through a sin committed by one of them. Bishr used to say:
- When the creature is remiss in obedience to God, God deprives him of someone intimate."

S: So how is one to take that? Can one take it out of its theistic framework and put it in more general, as it were psychological terms?

Subhuti: Isn't it again this question we've gone into of there only being brotherhood between the virtuous?

S: Yes; if you become less capable of virtue, you become less capable of brotherhood. So it is as though God punishes you for your lack of virtue by taking away, so to speak, the portion of brotherhood from you. But actually it's not a punishment, it's a natural consequence; it's the

other side of the same coin, if one does in fact believe that brotherhood is based upon virtue or upon some spiritual principle or common spiritual aim.

"This is because brothers are a distraction from cares, and a help in religion."

S: Yes! 'Brothers are a distraction from cares, and a help in religion.' A negative aspect and a positive aspect. If you are full of cares, if you're very worried, brothers can be a very positive distraction from that. They can restore you to a happier frame of mind, just by their company and conversation and so on. And, at the same time, 'brothers are a help in religion' - because they supply, as we would say, *kalyana mitrata*. They encourage you in the practice of what is good. They help you to practise religion by their example, precept, advice and just companionship in the spiritual life.

"Ibn al-Mubarak said:
- The sweetest thing of all is the company of brothers and reverting to sufficiency."

S: What is this 'reverting to sufficiency'?

_____: Contentment?

S: Well, what's the connection? 'The sweetest thing of all is the company of brothers and reverting to sufficiency.' Well, sufficiency in what?

Abhaya: In the brotherhood.

Devaraja: Just feeling happy, not feeling a lack.

S: Yes, it could be that, yes. Not feeling anything being lacking. But what about the next paragraph?

"Lasting affection is that which is for the sake of God. That which has some other object passes away with the passing of that object."

S: There is a well-known Koranic verse which says of God: 'Everything shall perish save His face.' It is very frequently quoted by theologians as establishing the eternity of God. So 'Lasting affection is that which is for the sake of God', because God lasts. 'That which has some **other** object passes away with the passing of that object.' But how would one relate that to Buddhism or express that in Buddhistic terms?

Prasannasiddhi: Even God passes on.

S: But is there anything in Buddhism that doesn't pass on, and which therefore can be permanently an object of your affection?

Abhaya: The Unconditioned, the Three Jewels.

S: The Unconditioned, one could say. But one could also say the evolutionary or Higher Evolutionary process itself. When your mettā is directed towards someone, you envisage his spiritual progress continuing, so to speak, indefinitely; therefore your good wishes for him continue indefinitely. You could say you have, if not an eternal, at least an indefinitely continuing object. I won't go now into the question of the relationship between time and eternity and all that. But even if the object of your affection is finite in one particular form, it is not absolutely finite, because in the case of, say, - for the sake of using the expression - the reincarnating consciousness, it goes on reincarnating. Death doesn't bring it to an end, physical death. So it remains the object of your mettā, the object of your good will. You might say, 'What happens when it gains nirvana?', but that depends upon a particular conception of nirvana.

So one might say that you don't love someone for the sake just of what he is now, but also for the sake of what he can become; and that development can continue, so to speak, infinitely, so your love therefore has an infinite object. One could argue in this way. I don't say that that's the whole question or the whole point, but perhaps one could at least say that.

"One fruit of affection for God's sake is that envy cannot co-exist with it, whether in religion or in worldly affairs. How can one envy one's brother when all the benefit of what is his accrues to oneself? This is how God (Exalted is He!) describes those who love for His exalted sake:
- They find no need in their breasts for what the others have been given, preferring them above themselves. (Qur'an 59.9)
Finding need there would be envy."

S: Yes, this is important, isn't it? The assumption seems to be that you can only really place your brother in your own place and yourself in his if there is some as it were spiritual element in your relationship with your brother. So if you can place your brother in the same position as yourself there is no room for envy. You can't envy anything that your brother has, anything that may accrue to him, because by virtue of the fact that it accrues to him it accrues to you too; so how can there be any need on your part? So in true brotherhood - that is to say 'One fruit of affection for God's sake is that envy cannot co-exist with it' - do you see that point? 'They find no need in their breasts for what the others have been given,' because the reason is they are 'preferring them above themselves' - what to speak of even equally to themselves. If you value somebody else as much as you value yourself, and he receives a wonderful present, you feel no envy because it's as though it's been given to you; in fact, you would rather it was given to him than to you. So there is no room for envy. You don't feel any need, because you identify with him and identify his receiving a present with your receiving a present.

Do you think this actually does happen, or is it very difficult not to feel envy? Maybe this is a sign of brotherhood: if you can feel envy of your brother, there is some need and therefore some lack in your sense of brotherhood. You should feel as happy at any good that befalls him as if it had befallen you. So this is where *muditā* comes in, sympathetic joy; and this is why *muditā* is based on metta - no mettā, no brotherhood, no sympathetic joy. In other words, if there is no sympathetic joy there is envy. If there is no mettā, there is envy. So that is the test: if you feel envy there is not really - completely, at least - mettā.

Nagabodhi: Something that I don't think I've ever really had a glimpse of until I found the Dharma. And even now, when I feel that *muditā*, it's

such a shock and pleasure, it's quite extraordinary to find yourself responding to someone else's good fortune in a wholly positive way. It's ..... it still seems to go completely against the grain.

S: Well, in a way it does: against the worldly grain, as it were. Perhaps that is a quite simple criterion, as to whether true brotherhood, or feelings of mettā, have really been established: that you feel no envy if any good fortune befalls the person who is allegedly the object of your mettā or who is your brother or your good friend. You feel just as happy as though whatever it was had been given to or achieved by yourself.

"Part of loyalty is not to let the relationship with the brother degenerate into humiliation. If one acquires importance, sees his authority expand and his dignity increase, and under these new conditions lords it over his brother, he is unworthy."

S: It reminds me of a saying in the *Sutra of 42 Sections* about authority. Can you remember it? 'It is hard to possess authority and not to pay regard to it' - one of the hard things. Hard to possess authority and not to pay regard to it; or, as we would say more colloquially, not to be conscious of it. So you shouldn't carry your newly-acquired authority into your relationship with your brother; it is quite inappropriate there. But sometimes this does happen, unfortunately. So if one does this then one is unworthy. If 'under these new conditions [he] lords it over his brother'. This is one of the ways in which old friends get forgotten, isn't it? You as it were rise into a higher sphere of life; you enjoy greater riches or greater success or greater authority, and then maybe somebody comes along from your old life, and perhaps you don't like to recognise them. You find it actually embarrassing, or find it difficult, to renew relations with them or keep up relations with them. This is a well-known theme in literature, even, isn't it?

Even the other person may find it difficult. The difficulty may not be just on the part of the person with the new authority; even the person who has not achieved the authority may find it difficult to adjust to the situation when his brother achieves the authority. Can you think of any example of this kind of thing within one's own experience?

Nagabodhi: Something quite immediate is that woman you met at the Centre recently, the actress, who in the time I've known her, since she first came to the Centre, has become immensely rich, immensely famous for what that's worth, with immense problems but all the attributes of worldly success. And she needs still, when she sees me, to just have the friend that she had before. And, to her credit, she doesn't put on airs. But from my point of view, because she is very rich, I'm very aware of responses in me that I have to be very cautious of that are going to stop me from just being able to be quite natural and friendly with her, as if she was just anyone. And it's pure conditioning on my side but I have to be very cautious about.

S: I can remember that sort of thing happening, or seeing that sort of thing happen, in the army, every time somebody got an extra stripe; because - I don't know whether you know; you probably don't, because most of you haven't been in the army - if you get a stripe, that makes a difference in several ways, because you have a degree of authority which you didn't possess before, even certain amenities. For instance, there's an NCOs' mess, and there is sometimes just a sergeants' mess, and there's a separate mess for the quartermasters, and so on and so forth. So you go a step up, and the fact that you are even messing separately separates you from your old friends; and it isn't easy for you to keep up your friendship with your old friends under those conditions, with your enhanced authority and the very definite recognition which is given to that by

the whole system, so to speak, within the army. It is very difficult for someone who has become a sergeant to keep up his friendship with someone who is perhaps not even a lance-corporal; in fact, it is almost as though the army makes it difficult for that to happen.

I think the same thing happens in public schools: friendships across - what are they called? - forms, or whatever - are not allowed, or not encouraged.

Subhuti: Across 'years'.

S: Across years; well, it amounts to that. Even in the case of your own brother, I believe: if he is in a different form, he wouldn't like to - or if he is in a different form in the sense of being higher up in the school - he wouldn't like to perhaps recognise you or have anything to do with you, his miserable little brother. I believe this does sometimes happen, or used to happen, in the bad old days.

Subhuti: I had to refer to him by his surname - Kennedy J. [Laughter]

S: I wonder what happened to brothers who were Muslims who were put into a public school, with brothers of different ages? It would be quite interesting to see. Anyway, let's carry on.

"The poet said:
- When the noble enjoy success they remember those who befriended them in their humble station."

S: Yes, far from forgetting them they remember them - that is, those who are noble. 'When the **noble** enjoy success they remember those who befriended them in their humble station.' Not just remember them, but continue to treat them as brothers - if they were in fact brothers before.

"One of the early believers counselled his son with these words:
- My son, take no man for your fellow unless he draws near you when you need him and is not jealous of you when you can manage without him. When his station is exalted he should not lord it over you."

S: This is interesting, this not being 'jealous of you when you can manage without him.' Some people like to think that others are dependent upon them; they don't like you to be too independent of them. But this is not a sign of friendship - being displeased when someone can't manage without you. Anyway, this is all enlarging on what has gone before. Similarly with the next saying.

"A wise man said:
- If your brother acquires a position of authority, yet remains constant in one half of his affection, that is a great deal."

S: Ah, so what does this saying recognise? This saying recognises that it's very difficult, once one has acquired a position of authority, to

remain constant in one's affection. If 'one remains constant in **one half** of his affection, that is a great deal.' Position changes people; authority changes people; promotion changes people. It's a sad fact. I've known - going back to the army - men refuse promotion on those grounds, because they didn't want to be separated from their friends. Usually, though, men don't refuse promotion.

[End of side 1, side 2]

"Al-Rabi' tells that al-Shafi'i (may God have mercy on him!) took for a brother a man of Baghdad. This brother became the governor of al-Saybayn, and changed towards him. So al-Shafi'i wrote to him with these stanzas:
- Begone! For your affection from my heart is ever free,
Though not yet by divorce irrevocable:
Should you convert, there's been but one repudiation,
And your affection still has two to go with me.
Should you refuse, I'll match it with its like -
Repudiations two, in menses two.
When comes my third to you it will be absolute:
Useless to you then the governorship of al-Saybayn!"

S: There's a note on this, probably about this analogy of divorce. Yes, *'Al-Shafi'i's metaphor in this poem is the procedure of divorce by triple repudiation. Only after the third step is immediate reconciliation impossible.'* Apparently, under Muslim law, a husband may say to a wife: 'I divorce you, I divorce you, I divorce you.' Only the third time is it irrevocable. So this is the basis of the imagery - simile - in fact. 'Begone! For your affection from my heart is ever free, Though not yet by divorce irrevocable: Should you convert, there's been but one repudiation,' - I've said 'I divorce you', so to speak, only once - 'And your affection still has two to go with me.' Well, it's clear, isn't it? I have still two left, if you have enough affection left. 'Should you refuse, I'll match it with its like - Repudiations two, in menses two. When comes my **third** to you it will be absolute: Useless to you then the governorship of al-Saybayn!' 'Useless to you' because it has cost you my friendship.

Prasannasiddhi: What's 'menses'?

S: I'm not sure; I think it means commensality, eating together, but I'm not sure of that. In other words, we'll eat separately; you'll make two tables instead of having one as before.

"Know that loyalty does not extent to concurring with a brother in what is contrary to the Truth in a matter of religion. Indeed loyalty then calls for opposition to him."

S: In other words, fierce friendship. This reminds me of one of the sayings of Confucius, from the *Analects*. Confucius was asked 'How should a loyal minister behave towards his prince?' And Confucius said, 'He should oppose him.' I remember this, because I quoted this little saying once when I was giving a talk in Gangtok on Confucius and his teaching, in front of, among others, the Maharaja of Sikkim and his court. And

the court included the then Maharaja's son, the Maharaj Kumar the Crown Prince, who afterwards became Maharaja and was deposed eventually by the Government of India - that's another story; and there was also present a prominent member of the court, a great friend of mine, called the Birnyak Kasi (?), and he had been private secretary in the old days and he was at present head of the secretariat and so on; and he was known as a very loyal courtier, but one who was always opposing the Maharaj Kumar, out of loyalty, so to speak. So I quoted this saying, and a great laugh went up from everybody, and everybody looked at this particular minister, this loyal minister who was well known for always opposing the Maharaj Kumar, who was then in charge of the administration effectively on behalf of his father, and always disagreeing with him, but absolutely out of sheer loyalty and determination to do his best by the royal family despite whatever they might be doing. So this was quite an amusing situation and therefore I remember this little story.

Subhuti: Could you just give that quote again?

S: Confucius was once asked how should the loyal minister behave towards his prince, and everyone on that occasion was expecting 'Obedience' and so on; but then I said: 'Confucius said, "He should oppose him."' That is exactly what that particular minister almost always did. He was a man of the old school. Whenever he came into the presence of the Maharaja or the Maharaj Kumar, he'd always make his traditional prostration and, on withdrawing from their presence; but in between he opposed them in whatever they wanted to do [Laughter], and just because he was very experienced and quite wise, and sometimes they were headstrong and foolish, he would in their interests absolutely oppose them, whatever they said or tried to do. They knew his loyalty, they appreciated it, even though they often found him a very awkward person to have around, but if they got into real difficulties they always called him in for advice. So that seems a very interesting situation. The whole situation was well known to everybody in Gangtok, certainly in the current circles. He died not so long ago. I have quite a few stories about him, but we will keep them for some other time. He was a very great anti-democrat. I pleased him once by quoting the saying that 'Democracy is the system under which the feet are expected to do all the thinking.' [Laughter] He really loved that.

Subhuti: Who said that?

S: I don't remember who said it. I don't think it was Rousseau, anyway.

Anyway, 'Know that loyalty does not extend to concurring with a brother in what is contrary to the Truth in a matter of religion. Indeed loyalty then calls for opposition to him.' So opposition in this sense is quite compatible with brotherhood, in fact it's an essential part of it. So, as I mentioned, this is in a way where fierce friendship comes in. You don't let your brother get away with sloppy thinking; you don't let your brother get away with *micchaditthis*; you argue the matter out with him, obviously in a friendly manner, a positive manner, but you argue nonetheless, and discuss at least, or try to clarify. There is an interesting little incident afterwards.

"Al-Shafi'i (may God be pleased with him!) took as his brother Muhammad ibn Abd al-Hakam. He was his close and constant companion, and used to say:
- It is only he who keeps me in Egypt!"

S: Meaning, it is only because of my desire to enjoy his company that I stay in Egypt at all.

"When Muhammad fell ill al-Shafi'i (may God have mercy on him!) visited him and said:
- The dear one fell sick, so I paid him a call. Then I too fell sick from concern over him. The dear one came to visit me, And I was cured by seeing him."

S: So this is a sort of anecdotal poem illustrating the intensity of their affection for each other, the intensity of their brotherhood. So what follows from that?

"People expected, in view of the sincerity of their mutual affection, that al-Shafi'i would entrust to him the leadership of his circle after his death. Al-Shafi'i was asked during his death-sickness (may God have mercy on him!):
- At whose feet shall we sit when you are gone, O Abu Abdullah?
Then Muhammad ibn Abd al-Hakam, who was by his head, stood forward so that he could indicate him. But al-Shafi'i said:
- Glory be to God! Can there be any doubt? Abu Ya'qub al-Buwayti is the man!"

S: He was his friend, but not his favourite.

"Thus Muhammad's estimation was shattered, and al-Shafi'i's followers turned to al-Buwayti. Although Muhammad had learned the whole of his master's teaching, nevertheless al-Buwayti was worthier and closer to continence and piety. So al-Shafi'i was sincere towards God and the Muslims. He forsook hypocrisy, not preferring the pleasure of people to the pleasure of God (Exalted is He!). On his death, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Hakam turned away from his school and went back to the school of his father and to the study of the books of Malik (may God have mercy on him!), becoming one of the greatest of the followers of Malik (may God have mercy on him!)."

S: So, in other words, his great affection for his friend didn't blind his judgement, and he saw that his friend, or his disciple as he also was, wasn't the most suitable person, or not the best person, to lead his circle of followers after his death. He chose somebody else, for whom he didn't have, it would seem, the same degree of affection, because he was in fact the more suitable person. So one sees not only his great capacity for affection, as shown by that previous story, but also his great capacity for judgement and wisdom. One also sees that in his affection there was no trace of attachment.

The story in a way continues.

*"Al-Buwayti preferred abstinence and solitude. He was not fond of company and sitting in the circle. He occupied himself with worship and compiled **Kitab al-Umm**, which is now attributed to al-Rabi' ibn Sulayman and goes under his name. Though it was actually al-Buwayti who compiled it, he did not mention himself in it, and did not ascribe it to himself. Al-Rabi' added to it, edited it and published it."*

S: So there is a little bit of information about this al-Buwayti, who was preferred by al-Shafi'i to even his friend Muhammad. So 'al-Buwayti preferred abstinence and solitude. He was not fond of company and sitting in the circle' - that is to say the circle of devotees or disciples. 'He occupied himself with worship and compiled **Kitab al-Umm**, which is now attributed to al-Rabi' ibn Sulayman and goes under his name. Though it was actually al-Buwayti who compiled it, he did not mention himself in it, and did not ascribe it to himself' - this being an example apparently of his modesty and self-effacement. 'Al- Rabi' added to it, edited it and published it', and so it goes by his name even though he didn't actually write it.

"The point is that part of the fullness of loyalty and love is sincerity towards God."

S: This as it were says that religion, so to speak, is an essential element of brotherhood itself; that spiritual friendship is spiritual friendship.

"Al-Ahnaf said:
- Brotherhood is a subtle essence. If you do not guard it, it is exposed to misfortunes. So guard it by self-control, even to the point of apologising to one who has wronged you, and by contentment, so that you do not overrate your own virtues or your brother's failings."

S: So 'Brotherhood is a subtle essence'. This is quite well put, in a way. It is not an easy or an obvious sort of thing. 'If you do not guard it, it is exposed to misfortunes.' Well, brotherhood is like any other virtue: you need to work on it. 'So guard it by self-control, even to the point of apologising to one who has wronged you, and by contentment, so that you do not overrate your own virtues or your brother's failings.' These things will all help to preserve brotherhood. Even if your brother, so to speak, wrongs you, it is better that you apologise to him rather than break brotherhood. And you should also practise contentment, so that you don't overrate your own virtues or the failings of your brother.

"One of the marks of truthfulness, sincerity and perfect loyalty is to be extremely wary of separation and instinctively shy of its causes."

S: This is quite interesting, because it is not attachment that is being spoken about here, it is actually genuine affection, genuine mettā or brotherhood. 'One of the marks of truthfulness, sincerity and perfect loyalty is to be extremely wary of separation and instinctively shy of its causes.' If you accept a need for separation too easily or too readily, you should look into that. It could be that there is some little flaw in your brotherhood. Inasmuch as brotherhood is important, you should allow yourself to be separated only for very weighty, very serious reasons. So if you are genuinely loyal you are very wary of separation, and instinctively shy of the causes of separation. You instinctively avoid those things, those conditions, which might tend to separate you from your brothers, from your real friends. Sometimes people allow themselves to be separated too easily, just by very little trivial things, by small difficulties, or just by distractions.

I think I mentioned that last year a male Order member had occasion to go along to a women's community and he was quite shocked, he told me afterwards, to hear them talking about splitting up the community, and he said they seemed to feel no concern about parting from one another at all. That was his impression. And, as I say, this shocked him, and the fact that it did shock him was quite significant; made it quite positive that he felt that people could take so lightly the fact that they were parting; they weren't even talking, apparently, in terms of how they could stay together in another place, perhaps. All right, let's carry on.

"As it has been said:
- I found the blows of fate but trivial matters, except for the parting of friends."

S: So one can put up with loss of wealth, one can put up with punishment by the authorities, one can put up with loss of reputation, but it's the parting of friends that is really difficult to put up with.

"Ibn Uyayna recited this stanza, and said:
- I have met up with folk from whom I had been apart for thirty years, never imagining that regret for them had left my heart."

S: In other words, I had regretted being separated from them all that whole time. I never even thought of that regret ceasing or passing away.

"Loyalty includes not listening to gossip about your friend, especially from one who first pretends to be dear to the friend so as to escape suspicion, but then speaks at random and conveys things about the friend which disturb the heart. This is one of the subtlest devices for stirring up strife. The affection of one unable to guard against it cannot be lasting at all."

S: Your affection should be proof against any sort of disquietude aroused by what some third party says about your friend. It's very easy to think of examples of this sort of thing; unfortunately, it's constantly happening.

"The affection of one unable to guard against it cannot be lasting at all."

S: In other words, the person who hears this gossip is unable to guard against its effects, unable to prevent it having an influence on him in respect of his friend, about whom the other person has been gossiping. His affection cannot be lasting. It will be undermined by the gossip of third parties.

"Someone said to a wise man:
- I have come as suitor for your affection.
- I have set its dower at three things you must do.
- What are they?
- Do not listen to gossip about me. Do not oppose me in anything. Do not make me act rashly."

S: There again, you see the simile based on the analogy between brotherhood and marriage. 'I have come as suitor for your affection' - I have come as it were to woo you. 'I have set its dower as three things you must do' - I have laid down certain conditions; this is the dowry, so to speak, that I want from you, if you are going to as it were enter into the contract of brotherhood with me. 'What are they? - Do not listen to gossip about me' - because if you do that will undermine our friendship. 'Do not oppose me in anything.' I think it is to be understood here that this doesn't include religious matters, because that has already been covered. And 'Do not make me act rashly' - do not spur me on in doing

anything that might be rash; in such circumstances you should restrain me.

Prasannasiddhi: That's an interesting expression: coming as a suitor for his affection.

S: You are definitely asking for it, just as you go and ask for someone in marriage.

Devaraja: I had occasion with somebody from another community who was saying that they hadn't got many friends and I was quite interested at the language that seemed most appropriate to encourage him to make friends, expressed in terms of courting the person and wooing them and maybe presenting them with presents and flowers and things like that.

S: Yes, otherwise people usually think of standing around on a corner somewhere and waiting till someone comes up to them and makes friends with them. It doesn't seem to occur to them that they've got to take initiative; that friendship is a mutual affair, a mutual concern. They seem to expect to be entirely the passive partner, very often. 'Oh, I don't have any friends,' as if to say they can't do anything about it; it's up to other people to do something about it, and make friends with them. It doesn't seem to occur to them that they have some responsibility for at least trying to make friends with other people. I have argued in this way with several people in the past, and I would say, 'Why don't you try to make friends with people?' and they say, 'Oh no, they don't want to be friends with me; oh no, no one will want to be friends with me.' Sort of self-confirming. Or they say, 'I've tried, I've tried many a time to make friends with people; they don't want to make friends with me. No point in my trying.' That's the language one hears.

"Loyalty includes not befriending your friend's enemy. Al-Shafi'i (may God have mercy on him!) said:
- If your friend obeys your enemy, they share in enmity towards you."

S: It says 'If your friend **obeys** your enemy' - it is not that your friend is bound to attack your enemy, but at least he shouldn't obey him, because that would involve him in a conflict with you. But sometimes a difficult situation arises, in which you are friends with two people, two people are your brothers, and they fall out with each other; and that is a very difficult position for you to be in, because you find it difficult to break off contact, or even friendship, with either of them. In fact, you don't wish to do that. But they become even enemies, perhaps, and that places you in an extremely difficult position.

Something like this happens when your friends are a couple, say husband and wife, and they fall out, and the husband and the wife each separately appeal to you and try to get you on their side, as it were; and you may want to remain friends with both parties. You may have equal goodwill towards husband and wife. You are then in a very difficult position; especially if you are called upon to adjudicate the rights and wrongs of the business, whatever it is, or the rights and wrongs of the difference. Perhaps you should refuse to do so. Just direct your mettā towards both.

Subhuti: Can one really agree with this statement - 'Loyalty includes not befriending your friend's enemy'? I agree it's difficult.

S: It depends what one means by 'befriending'. It doesn't mean that you should actually do him harm, I think. But if you were helping and supporting him, and he is for instance devoting all his energies to harming your friend, indirectly you are giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

Prasannasiddhi: Maybe the enemies in Islam are real enemies!

Subhuti: I think sometimes people can almost blackmail you - well, I think you mentioned it really when you talked about husbands and wives. They can sort of blackmail you into not developing friendly relations with somebody because -

S: Yes, just because they don't like them.

Subhuti: Yes, and I think that's not to be recommended. Obviously, you shouldn't -

S: But here it is a question of an enemy - that is to say, presumably, someone who is attacking some other person who is your friend, so you shouldn't as it were side with the attacker, or do anything that enables him to continue his campaign against your friend. That would not be a friendly action or a friendly gesture.

Ratnavira: Could you say that you wouldn't befriend your friend's enemy as your friend's enemy, but you might actually be befriending them just as a person .....

S: Could you make that distinction? For instance, supposing he needs health and strength to attack your friend, and you feed him. You say, 'I'm not feeding you as his enemy, I'm feeding you just as a human being.' But the food you gave him would give him health and strength, and that same health and strength would be devoted to the destruction of your friend. So you couldn't get out of it by saying, 'I didn't feed him as your enemy; I only fed him as a human being.' Well, you can't really make that distinction.

Abhaya: I would have thought you could.

S: Well, maybe you can in thought, but not in actual fact. You cannot limit your help to the human being, because that human being is identical with the person who is the enemy of your friend.

Abhaya: But could you dissociate from their common humanity? Isn't that the point?

S: But you can't get at the common humanity separately from the individual manhood, can you?

Abhaya: I realise that, but can you sort of forget it altogether? In the case where he's -

S: No, that's why I said you need not attack that person, because he is attacking your friend. Well, you might .....

Abhaya: Suppose he is in great pain, in great suffering, and you alleviate that person's suffering; you are alleviating -

S: Supposing, for the sake of argument, that as soon as he recovers from his suffering he is going to attack your friend.

Abhaya: But one shouldn't assume that, should one?

S: Well, perhaps he declares it definitely, so it's beyond reasonable doubt - that as soon as -

Abhaya: Well, he might not. Shouldn't you give him the benefit of the doubt.

S: Well, you should always give your friend the benefit of the doubt - because the doubt is that he will be attacked if that person gets well, so you shouldn't take any chances in the case of your friend; if there is any doubt to be given, it should benefit your friend. Otherwise, you are responsible indirectly for harming your friend, and that is the last thing you want to do. And sometimes you can't help two people at the same time, or can't help one without harming the other. If you <u>are</u> in that position, according to this text at least, you should choose to harm the non-brother rather than the brother.

Kuladeva: Surely from a Buddhist point of view it's best not to harm either.

S: Well, yes, but sometimes you do find yourself in a position where you cannot do anything else except make a choice between two evils. You have to try to decide which is the lesser of the two. You are not often in the position, in fact, where it's a straightforward choice between right and wrong. That would make life much easier, but it isn't.

Devaraja: I noticed this quite a lot in that ..... I felt that was a good example; a lot of people were sitting there and making very worthy, laudable moral statements but which didn't somehow seem to - They seemed to be in a comfortable position to put themselves in rather than being - One was presented with circumstances which were definitely aggressors and -

S: It's like, for instance, an instance in which a woman is giving birth to a child and perhaps the husband and father is told 'We're very sorry, but we can only save one of them.' So it's a choice between two evils. You might say, 'No, please save both', and the doctor says, 'That's absolutely impossible. Take our word for it, it's impossible. You just have to tell us which one we should save.' All right, suppose you say, 'OK, save the mother'; you can't be then accused of lack of feeling for the child or of complicity in the death of the child. You have had regretfully to make a choice between the lesser of two evils. So we are quite often in that sort of situation.

In the same way when it comes to a choice between doing harm to an enemy and doing harm to a friend; according to this text at least, it's pretty clear: you should choose to do harm to the enemy of your friend, let us say - it may not be <u>your</u> enemy - rather than to the friend himself.

Kuladeva: Yes, but that's looking at it from an Islamic point of view; it's not really looking at it -

S: All right, supposing the case of choosing between the child's death and the mother's. Supposing you are in a situation where you cannot but choose an alternative which will not be completely skilful. Supposing you are not choosing between two goods or between good and bad but between two evils. All right, then how do you escape from that situation? Perhaps it's good if you don't get yourself into it to begin with, but sometimes you can't avoid that. So how is a Buddhist to behave in a situation where he is called upon to act - and let us say he must act; even non-action would be action. For instance, if the father in this case didn't make up his mind quickly, both might die; maybe that would be some consolation to him then, that he hadn't actually made the choice. But supposing he doesn't do that, he has to make the choice; well, he cannot avoid committing some harm or some evil in order to avoid a greater one. So even a Buddhist may sometimes find himself in this situation. Apart from some miraculous intervention, it seems he cannot do anything else but try to estimate sincerely what is the lesser of the two evils and then follow the opposite course.

There are other versions of this - suppose the house is on fire: who do you rescue first? The cat, like the ancient Egyptians? - or your wife, or your friend? - or your manuscript? Or your filing system? Or your Buddha images? You can't rescue them all. So it's not so easy.

We might say that in some respects the Muslims are good - they don't fudge the issue. If we are not careful we tend to fudge issues and not really confront issues which are issues. We try to resolve the problem by fudging the issue, very often.

Kuladeva: It wasn't so much perhaps not confronting a particular problem like that, it's more just the whole thing that there is violence implicit in Islam which isn't implicit in Buddhism, so that if for instance you have two friends who are at such enmity with each other, then surely what one would try to do would be to try and resolve that as far as possible, not -

S: Yes indeed, of course. I think a Muslim would do that - would accept that. But supposing the terms of the situation are such that an action on behalf of one person is automatically an action against another person; or you must harm, whatever you do, one person or the other. It's good if you can evade the situation, but supposing you can't? That's the question. What then do you do? What is your criterion of action?

Kuladeva: I suppose if one has to make a decision on the spur of the moment without having advice from anybody, and you just have to do what you think is best at the time, act according to conscience.

S: Yes: do what is best in the circumstances, which may not necessarily be an absolute best. Many of one's choices and decisions are of this kind: we have to weigh up which is the least, as far as you can see, of a number of evils. It is not a straightforward choice between good and evil or between one thing which is good and a number which are evil. Sometimes it is not at all clear what might be the best course, because you can't judge the consequences. You just don't know. For instance, in the case I mentioned, you might decide to save the life of the child - a son, say - at the expense of the life of the mother. But supposing the son grows up to be a criminal, then you might very much regret your decision. You might feel that you had made the wrong choice; because you don't know how the son is going to grow up. You don't even know that he is going to grow up at all. Nonetheless you have to make that choice, make that decision.

So we are constantly having to make up our minds about very important things on the basis of totally insufficient evidence. You could say, if you wanted to be a bit sententious: 'Well, that's life.' One proceeds more often than not by inspired guesswork; or, very often, by uninspired guesswork. You don't know how things are going to turn out. You can't be sure, you can't predict. You can only either hope or try to estimate or judge going on past experience and perhaps on reading and logic to some extent.

Someone said to me recently - a Mitra: 'Ah, but if I go to such-and-such community, can you guarantee that - ?' I said, 'No, [Laughter] I can't guarantee anything.' 'Can you guarantee that I will get what I need?' 'No, I can't, not in the least. You might. I think you stand a good chance. But a community consists of human beings, and human beings are imponderable and unpredictable, not to speak of the person who is going; he is also a human being, also imponderable and unpredictable. Who knows how he is going to behave in that sort of situation? Who knows how they are going to behave towards him? Who knows how those particular human elements are going to mix, what sort of explosion there might not be? Who knows? Very difficult to say. You can be reasonably certain, but must not even so be too surprised when your reasonable certainties turn out to have been unjustified.

Think of the story of the Buddha, who taught the meditation on death to the monks. I think, I might say, I have derived in a way more consolation from that story than from any story [Laughter] ..... A very interesting, and very important, and highly relevant story. It reminds one that one isn't infallible, not even the Buddha was infallible where human beings are concerned. In a way it's comforting because it shows that human beings are free; even a Buddha can't predict what they will do. They can falsify the expectations even of a Buddha.

Anyway, today we have finished exactly on time. We have only one more chapter to do, and we might be able to go through that Postscript. We have covered quite a bit of ground in one way or another. I have pushed on sometimes a bit more rapidly than some of you might have liked, but we need to get through the whole text. An interesting little dip into the world of Islam.

Subhuti: Something I'm finding quite interesting is our translation of Islamic terms into Buddhist terms, and what exactly the significance of that is. Because obviously a lot of al-Ghazali's insights into brotherhood are relevant and useful, even quite penetrating. So what does this say about Islam as a spiritual path and Buddhism as a spiritual path, and the fact that we can interpret some of the sayings -

S: I think you can say that if there has been a spiritual tradition continuing for so many hundreds of years and so many people have benefited from it - that there must be something, at least, in it of permanent value, though that element has to be discriminated out quite carefully. It's much the same as with Christianity. It's like a poor diet: you manage to nourish yourself somehow, even on a poor diet. You extract from it the elements that you need for your growth and development. It would have been better had you had a better diet, but even that poor diet is not entirely valueless. You extract some nourishment from it.

[End of tape 17 tape 18]

Kulananda: One must bear in mind that a diet isn't simply neutral, with neutral elements and good elements; there are also poisons in it, so it's

good to be very careful.

Prasannasiddhi: I think that is an important point when we are dealing with Christianity, that we don't just totally blanket it, particularly because other people often have strong sympathies, and maybe some of them have actually felt some good has come from it. So I think one has to balance -

S: I would say it's not even that some good comes from Christianity, but they have made, sometimes despite the very unpromising nature of the material itself, something good of it; because humanity itself, human nature itself, possesses those sort of resources. To use biblical phraseology, maybe you've asked for a fish and been given a stone; but human nature is such that it can perhaps transform even a stone into perhaps a very poor fish.

One can see, for instance, Renaissance artists - well, medieval artists - making great things of Christian myth, even of Christian doctrine. For instance, Raphael has a very famous fresco of - what is that? 'The Miracle of the Sacrament'. Well, you can't say that Raphael's painting is a product of Christianity, but it has taken Christian belief in that particular doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament as the subject matter of his painting, which is a great painting. So it's not that he has taken his painting from Christianity, but he has taken something from Christianity and made something of it himself, from his own human qualities and imagination and genius.

Abhaya: So what you seem to be saying in that case, related to the first question, is that Islam and Christianity are stones, but if you try you can actually make fish out of them.

S: I did say rather poor fish; because it would be better if you, so to speak, started off with fish.

Abhaya: Yes, but isn't that going a bit too far? Couldn't we say that Christianity, Islam - some fish, some stone? You seem to be saying about Islam and Christianity: definitely stones.

S: No, I didn't mean to say that, but I would say that Christianity, broadly speaking - again, it depends what you mean by Christianity; because sometimes people include in Christianity what individuals born within that system have made of it. So there is that question of definition. But I would say that on the whole perhaps, from a Buddhist point of view, Christianity is more stone than fish; but nonetheless, human beings born within that system with certain human resources, and having no alternative religion to follow, have made the best that they could of that, and in some cases to some extent so to speak improved it.

Because if you take, for instance, the Koran as the basis of Islam, as in fact it is - if you just read through the Koran you think 'What unpromising material! Really, how unpromising, how uninspiring.' But then you take up later, say, Sufi works, but you can appreciate those: they are so inspiring, such beautiful poetry; but allegedly it all goes back to the Koran. I feel as though something has been as it were added on the way: something from the resources of human genius itself, human character itself, human life itself. I think this is the nature of a tradition, that the original factor might have been quite crude and unpromising, but it has been gradually refined over the ages. But sometimes, of course, the

difference between the end product and the unpromising beginning is so obvious that a sort of breakaway occurs; then you get, so to speak, a new religion - as you get Buddhism, so to speak, breaking away from Hinduism. Or you might even say Islam itself breaking away from Arab paganism. Or Protestantism - you might argue, but perhaps I wouldn't - breaking away from Catholicism.

Prasannasiddhi: Or Sufism breaking away from Islam?

S: They profess not to; no, most Sufis would profess that they are orthodox Muslims.

Prasannasiddhi: That might just be so that they don't get the chop.

S: One does get the impression, reading their writings, at least, that the majority of them are sincere in that.

Subhuti: Sometimes we have translated our Islamic terminology into Buddhist terminology: for instance, there would be a saying which says something about the relationship to God, and we will then translate that into Buddhist terminology. Is that just that we are using the text as a way of making a Buddhist point? Or is it that the Islamic text is trying to say something, using imperfect and distorted terminology -

S: One could take that view. I think that could sometimes be the case. But generally speaking, I tend to hold that one should be very careful translating terms of one tradition into terms of another tradition; because you are not concerned with the terms themselves but with the whole tradition in which those terms are embedded and whose total meaning those terms in a way reflect to some extent. I don't think, therefore, that you can just regard, say, *kalyana mitrata* as even a rough and ready equivalent of brotherhood in the Islamic sense. You would have to discriminate much more carefully what was meant by brotherhood, and the effect to which belief in Allah entered into that, before you made your final definitive comparison.

Subhuti: I do feel a bit that we've - maybe necessarily - steered between making a study of Islam and its views of brotherhood and our own discussion about brotherhood for our own spiritual purposes. We have necessarily had to do a bit of both.

S: As I mentioned, I think one has got to understand what the text is getting at, and that means as it were soaking oneself in the text, immersing oneself in the text, in a way forgetting about Buddhism for the time being, otherwise you won't understand really what the text is getting at. You won't be sympathetic enough. But having <u>immersed</u> yourself in the text and understood, at least to some extent, what it's about, you have to withdraw yourself from the text and then perhaps, if you want to do that, start comparing with Buddhism.

I think here what Keats calls an negative capability comes in. For instance, when you read, say, *Paradise Lost*, you just forget all about your Buddhistic views about non-theism, because otherwise you can't enjoy the poem if you are constantly objecting to the theology of it. So you forget all about that, you just suspend your disbelief in God. I think this is what Coleridge called willing suspension of disbelief: you willingly suspend your disbelief in God for the time being to enjoy the poem, in this case *Paradise Lost*. Otherwise you couldn't enjoy it at all.

Abhaya: What immediately came to my mind when you said that was something you said a couple of years ago about listening to Handel. You said that you can't help feeling that your appreciation on listening to the oratorio or whatever it is is slightly blemished by the fact that the subject matter is theistic or Christian.

S: That is true.

Abhaya: But that doesn't seem to apply to your appreciation of *Paradise Lost*.

S: I think the reason for that is that, in the case of Handel, it's music, and music appeals I think much more powerfully to the emotions than does the written word. For instance, if Handel is setting to music words about Christ, he is trying to communicate to you, so to speak, in a very powerful manner, those feelings about Christ which you cannot share; whereas when you are reading a poem you are not, I think, involved to the same extent, or in the same way, even.

Kulananda: Occasionally you come across emotions which are just alien to you, the sort of emotions which you don't admit.

S: It's as though, when you read a poem - say you read a description of how God or Christ behaves in *Paradise Lost* - you are seeing it 'out there'; you are seeing it as it were objectively, even though you enter into the poet's feelings about it to some extent. But when there is a Handel aria singing, say, the praises of Christ, this is something which you are invited so to speak to experience personally, which you as a Buddhist perhaps cannot do. Do you see the difference?

Kulananda: You can feel it sometimes in the 'Passions', when there is a bit of guilt involved in the emotions; they just don't feel appropriate to you.

S: It's as though in the case of the poem you are invited to participate in the depiction of something, but in the music you are invited to participate in the thing itself. So therefore, in the case of the work of literature, you experience it at one remove; which is not the case in the case of music. This is how I would explain it - though you've as it were caught me on the hop, so I am giving an off-the-cuff explanation. But at the moment, at least, this is how I would explain it, not having been asked the question before. But I do feel there is a difference between the musical experience and the poetic experience.

Prasannasiddhi: One remove - you experience it in one remove?

S: Yes, inasmuch as I said that, in the work of literature, something is depicted, an experience is depicted. But in the case of the work of music, you are invited to participate in the experience of the thing itself. For instance, when you read *Paradise Lost*, what you are experiencing is not God, Christ and so on; you are experiencing Milton. But when you listen to the music, Handel in this case is trying to induce you to experience directly that emotion towards Christ, or whoever. I don't think it's possible for you in the same way simply to experience Handel's feelings about Christ. Music is too powerful an instrument, or rather - what shall I say? - music is unmediated emotion, whereas in poetry, you might say, the

emotion is mediated. That is what I mean by saying that it's indirect, or the experience is indirect.

Kuladeva: I found with religious music, it varies from one piece to another. I've noticed for instance with Bach's *Mass in B minor*, because I do find that quite uplifting, whereas I went to a performance of Bach's *St. John Passion* earlier in the year, and I found that - because it was all about the passion of Christ - it had an almost - there seemed to be a negative emotional response to a lot of it.

S: For instance, there are parts of, say, Handel's *Messiah* which you can thoroughly appreciate as a Buddhist; for instance, the Interlude ['Pastoral Symphony'] , which is supposed the represent the shepherds watching by night in the fields. And this is just very calm, peaceful music, and you can experience that, because in a way there's nothing particularly Christian about it; you can divorce from it the idea of all their waiting before the angels come and announce the birth of Christ; it is just pastoral music, a pastoral interlude, and you can experience it as such. But when the aria appeals to you and tries to communicate to you the emotion of all Christ was suffering on the cross and all that, you can't participate in that.

Abhaya: But suppose you're reading the first book of *Paradise Lost* and you're reading the passage where Milton is describing Lucifer and the fallen angels lying on that flood and their suffering - aren't you being invited to participate in that - ?

S: Yes, but I would say it's indirect, because inasmuch as literature and language are less direct communication than music. Your experience is of Milton experiencing those things; but it's as though with the music it's so direct you are invited, at least, to experience the thing itself.

Abhaya: So would you make a distinction between something like *Paradise Lost* and a lyrical poem where it's a more immediate apprehension of - ?

S: Yes, I think so - though again I haven't thought about this, but I have found myself rather out of sympathy with certain lyrics expressing rather maudlin sentiment; and I find myself disapproving to such an extent I can't enjoy them - in fact, I think I shouldn't enjoy them because I think the emotion that they express is negative.

Kuladeva: But do you think it is always the case, though, in a piece of religious music, the music does actually reflect the mood of the script that is being sung?

S: In certain musical forms and musical composition it purports to; and you are aware of that - maybe the words are actually sung, so they cannot be ignored. The music is as it were signposted; in case there is any doubt you are told that this emotion refers to Christ. So you can't even be left just with the music by itself, especially if words are being sung by singers who are as it were part of the music and making a contribution that is part of the music.

Kulananda: But there are also interesting cases where you just know, you can just tell that the composer is not referring to the words at all. The music is so much more exalted that what it is purporting to communicate.

S: This would be an example of what I was talking about - that the composer has made something of the material. It is not that Christianity produces that music. The musician, if your supposition is correct, makes something even greater out of the material with which he is provided. He goes beyond his material. He may not even accept that with his conscious mind; he might even explicitly deny it; but it might nonetheless be the case. But I must say my thought here is a bit provisional.

But nonetheless I feel, despite all that, there is a very great difference between the sort of impact made by music and the sort of impact made by literature; and I think that is not irrelevant to what we have been talking about, though it may possibly not develop in quite the way that I have suggested. There may be other possibilities.

Anyway, let's leave it there.

[End of Side 1, Side 2]

S: No. 8: *'The eighth duty is relief from discomfort and inconvenience'*, also spoken of as the duty of informality.

"8

*"**The eighth duty** is relief from discomfort and inconvenience.*

You should not discomfort your brother with things that are awkward for him. Rather should you ease his heart of its cares and needs, and spare him having to assume any of your burdens. You should not ask him for help with money or influence. You should not discomfort him with having to be polite, to go into your situation and attend to your rights. No, the sole object of your love should be God (Exalted is He!), being blessed by your brother's prayer, enjoying his company, receiving assistance from him in your religion, drawing nigh to God (Exalted is He!) through attending to his rights and bearing his provision."

S: So what is the general gist or drift of that? - that 'You should not discomfort your brother with things that are awkward for him'?

Devaraja: Don't make any unnecessary demands or place any burdens on him which you know he will find very hard to fulfil.

S: Yes, don't make your friendship or your brotherhood with him a source of annoyance or trouble or difficulty for him. Otherwise that will get in the way of the experience of brotherhood itself; he will gradually start dissociating feelings of delight and pleasure from his brotherhood with you because you are always troubling him, always asking him to do this and that and attend to this and that. If you have any real need, yes, you must make that known, but other than that you should try to trouble him as little as you possibly can.

'Rather should you ease his heart of its cares and needs, and spare him having to assume any of your burdens. You should not ask him for help

with money or influence' - unless you really are in need, presumably.

'You should not discomfort him with having to be polite, to go into your situation and attend to your rights.' What do you think is meant by that? What are the implications of that? What sort of situation is envisaged?

Tejamitra: Helping you out in matters of pure business.

S: It could include that, yes.

Nagabodhi: I was just thinking more generally that you might become dependent on him, so that you give up your individuality to him rather than being two individuals enjoying friendship; if he is very good in certain areas, you would become quite informally dependent.

S: But that would be for your sake; but here it says 'You should not discomfort him'; you are not thinking of the effect upon yourself of that dependence, you are thinking of the effect upon him. For instance, supposing, just for the sake of argument, you really have to borrow some money from him, you just needed some money. You say, 'Please let me have so-and-so,' which is quite all right between friends in case of real need; you don't want to bother him with all the details of how it came about and why you are in the situation that you are. That will all be just a waste of his time and a bother to him, perhaps. Perhaps it's that sort of thing that the author has in mind. 'You should not discomfort him with having to be polite, to go into your situation and attend to your rights.'

But then he goes on to say: 'No, the sole object of your love should be God (Exalted is He!), being blessed by your brother's prayer, enjoying his company, receiving assistance from him in your religion, drawing nigh to God.... through attending to **his** rights and bearing **his** provision.' So al-Ghazali begins by reminding the reader that the sole object of his love should be God - or, if one wants to translate that into Buddhist terms, the primary object of your concern and commitment is the Three Jewels; and you are blessed in that by 'your brother's prayer' - we would say, helped by his mettā - and you enjoy his company. You don't bother him and trouble him. 'Receiving assistance from him in your religion': you think in terms of spiritual help rather than material help. And you draw 'nigh to God' - you fulfil your religious duties to by 'attending to his' - that is to say your friend's 'rights and bearing his provision', rather than expecting him to do that to you.

Of course, on the other hand it works the other way round too, because the whole thing is mutual. Al-Ghazali is approaching the subject from the direction of duties, not from the direction of rights. If both parties do their duty, each will get his rights, but the emphasis should be on you performing your duties, not insisting that your friend gives you your rights.

Subhuti: What about this 'having to be polite'? What's that?

S: I think politeness in the sense of formal politeness. I believe that transpires from what follows later in the chapter. You shouldn't ever need to be formally polite with your friend; not that you should be impolite with him, of course, but you shouldn't trouble him with unnecessary formality. You shouldn't behave in such a way yourself that he feels obliged to behave towards you with formal politeness. Can you think of

any example of this sort of thing? [Pause] Or have we lost our sense of formal politeness to such an extent that it is difficult to think of any example?

Subhuti: I suppose when you meet somebody you go through certain formulae -

S: A certain social ritual.

Subhuti: Yes. When you are with your friends you don't do that.

S: I think later in the chapter, as far as I remember, it gives the instance of standing up to receive somebody. Well, when your friend pays you a visit you shouldn't feel obliged, or he shouldn't make you feel obliged to stand up and receive him. That would be formal behaviour appropriate to someone you didn't know very well or who was only an acquaintance.

Prasannasiddhi: It's having to be polite to you that -

S: Yes, you shouldn't oblige him to be polite to you. You shouldn't behave in such a constrained or formal way yourself that he feels obliged to be formally polite to you. On the other hand, certainly impoliteness is not condoned; it's very definitely a middle way, if one can use that term. Friendliness has just gone beyond politeness and impoliteness; it cannot be described in terms of the one or in terms of the other. You shouldn't make a great point of, say, opening the door for your friend and bowing him out of the room before you; that would be inappropriate behaviour between friends, it would oblige him in return to act in an excessively polite way which was inappropriate to friendship. If two friends were standing in the door and one was saying 'After you, please', and the other said, 'No, no, after you', you would think that they probably weren't friends if they were behaving in that formal way. Between friends it doesn't matter who goes out first, you don't even think about it.

Prasannasiddhi: Presumably, the more people you are dealing with the more formal you had better be.

S: Yes, because you can't have a huge number of intimate friends. If it was someone whom you knew only slightly or whom you hadn't met before, you might feel it was the polite thing to do to open the door for him and see him out properly; you wouldn't do that sort of thing with a close friend.

The point is, you shouldn't by your behaviour oblige your brother to behave in that formal way; you shouldn't expect that sort of formal politeness from your brother. That would be putting a constraint upon him; that would be causing him discomfort and inconvenience. He wouldn't be able to relax in your company as a friend should be able to relax in the company of his friend.

The general drift of this is: don't take advantage of your friend, don't take advantage of the friendship. Though again I take it that matters of a real need are excluded.

"Someone said:
- He who demands of his brothers what they do not demand, wrongs them. He who demands of them the same as they demand, wearies them. He who makes no demands is their benefactor."

S: This makes clear the same kind of point, doesn't it? 'He who demands of his brothers what they do not demand' - that is, of him - 'wrongs them. He who demands of them the same as they demand, wearies them. He who makes no demands is their benefactor.' This is not, of course, to be taken literally. The real meaning, presumably, is that you just should be very careful not to give in the name of friendship trouble in fact to your friend. So far as you are concerned, his associations should all be associations of delight rather than having to do yet another thing for you, which though he may be very willing is nonetheless difficult and troublesome, perhaps, for him to do, or time-consuming. If you are always running to your friend and asking him to do this for you and do that for you and listen to this and listen to that, he will soon start finding your company a source of annoyance and displeasure rather than the opposite. That won't conduce to good relations between you.

"One of the wise said:
- He who sets himself with his brothers above his capacity sins, and they sin. He who sets himself at his capacity wearies, and wearies them. He who sets himself below his capacity is safe, and they are safe."

S: Capacity in what respect? I assume it's capacity in making demands.

Kulananda: Maybe it's that a man ought to be treated according to his capacity in terms of the politeness required of one towards him. A man of high capacity would require great formality. So this perhaps refers to some sort of condescension, in a positive sense.

S: There seems to be a sort of parallel with the previous saying. In the first saying it [refers to] wronging them, in the second of sinning. In the first it's demanding the same, and in the second it's wearying in the same way; in the third it's making no demands and being safe. I must say the saying is a little obscure.

Kulananda: I find it's quite interesting to think about what's happened to the word 'condescension' in the last 200 years. It used to be regarded as complimentary to say of someone that they had condescended, now it's regarded as quite insulting.

S: Well, formerly the concept of social hierarchy was accepted. It was appropriate, say, that a duke or an earl should be condescending to you if you were a commoner; that was appropriate gracious behaviour on their part.

Kulananda: It was a great quality to be able to condescend.

S: Some theologians or theological writers speak of God's condescension in sending his son for the salvation of the world. I think Milton uses the word 'condescension' with regard to God in this way.

"Complete relief means rolling up the carpet of discomfort until he feels no more embarrassment from you than from himself."

S: This sums up the matter. You shouldn't make your friend feel uneasy in your company or uncomfortable in any way. When you are with him, he should be no less comfortable, no less at ease, than he is when he is by himself. That is quite difficult, isn't it? It's not that you are unconscious of the other person's presence, but the other person's presence has no inhibiting effect upon you at all. Usually there are some things you feel you can't do, really, if there is somebody else around, or other people around. But it shouldn't be like that in the case of friends. Some people can't think if somebody else is around; they can't write a letter if there is somebody else in the same room. Or they are not free to hum to themselves if there's somebody else around, ... all sorts of things.

So the extent to which you feel you can be yourself in somebody's company - that is to say, be yourself in the sense of acting in an unselfconscious and uninhibited way - is the measure of the friendship you feel for that person, or that you feel that person feels towards you.

Prasannasiddhi: It does say 'no more embarrassment from you than from himself'. That's not to say that you can do absolutely anything in someone else's company that even you wouldn't be embarrassed by.

S: Well, simply that you would not refrain from doing something in somebody else's company simply because he was there, whereas had you been by yourself you would have done it. That's the meaning.

"Al-Junayd said:
- If two become brothers for God's sake, and one of them is uncomfortable or embarrassed with his fellow, there must be a fault in one of them."

S: There is something wrong somewhere, at least in one of them. Perhaps that requires no comment. And the same with the next one, I think.

"Ali (Peace upon him!) said:
- The worst of friends is one who discomforts you and obliges you to be polite and to have recourse to making apologies."

S: This is pretty strong: 'The **worst** of friends is one who discomforts you and obliges you to be polite and to have recourse to making apologies.' It's as though that sort of thing is an absolute contradiction of friendship. For instance, suppose you go to see someone, and when you arrive his house or his room is in disorder, and if you feel obliged to make apologies for the way in which you are receiving him and so on and so forth, it means that there isn't much real friendship between you. Not much to discuss there either. There might be something to discuss in the next saying.

"Al-Fudayl said:
- Discomfort is the cause of broken relations. A man visits his brother, is made to feel uncomfortable, and consequently breaks with him."

S: This does sometimes happen; I have seen this happen. 'A man visits his brother, is made to feel uncomfortable, and consequently breaks with

him.' Can you think of the sort of situation in which this kind of thing might happen nowadays? I can think of a very definite instance; see if you can think of it.

Subhuti: If you meet somebody who is married, you meet them outside the marriage situation, you get on very well with them, and then you go back to their house and they are completely different. I've encountered that.

S: I wasn't thinking in quite that way, though that is very much on the right track. But if you visit your brother at home, and his wife, for instance, just won't let you talk, either because she just won't leave you alone together, she keeps butting in; or not only that, the children - because sometimes the children have been so badly brought up it is quite impossible to have a conversation with the parents, let alone just with the father or the husband who happens to be your friend, while they are around, and you just in disgust stop going to the house. So if it isn't possible to meet that person outside the home situation you just can't help breaking off relations with them. I'm afraid this is often what happens nowadays in the West.

In India, if you go to someone's house, even a small one, a quite humble one with just a couple of rooms, if you are talking to your friend, say, in the front room, the wife won't intrude and she'll keep the children away from you, seeing that the two of you want to talk. Maybe one of them will just run in and a word will be spoken and then he'll run out again; there is no strictness in the Western sense, at the same time; but you won't be bothered, you won't be really interrupted, you will be able to have a talk without any sense of constraint. Quite naturally the wife or whoever else is around will just ensure that you are able to do this by keeping the children under control, if that is provided for; and very often the children themselves know instinctively that's not the time for them to go to their father. And the women certainly won't intrude.

But sometimes in the West one gets the impression that the first thing a woman - a wife, especially - wants to do is to make it impossible for her husband to have any male friends, or any friend except herself. That is really unfortunate.

So 'A man visits his brother, is made to feel uncomfortable, and consequently breaks with him.' And, of course, in the modern nuclear family, the husband who wants to spend an evening out with his friend - well, he might be allowed to spend one evening a week out with his friend, but more than that I think there would be trouble. Because the wife would say that she feels lonely and neglected because she is there all by herself, possibly with a small child. So again this grows out of the nuclear-family-type situation.

Kulananda: It's ridiculous thinking that a man should keep a woman company.

S: It's not even completely satisfactory to the woman, because there are all sorts of things she can much better talk about with her women friends.

Then there is a saying from A'isha, who was the last and youngest wife of the Prophet.

"A'isha (may God be pleased with her!) said:

- The believer is brother to the believer. He does not plunder him, nor does he embarrass him."

_____: You can plunder and embarrass non-believers to your heart's content.

S: Some people's friendship is like a sort of plundering; they are constantly asking for things. Perhaps that doesn't require much in the way of comment; it's pretty obvious. Al- Ghazali clearly attaches great importance to the accumulation of authorities.

"Al-Junayd said:
- I have known the fellowship of four classes of this party, thirty men to each class: Harith al-Muhasibi and his class, Hasan al-Masuhi and his class, Sari al-Saqati and his class, and Ibn al-Karanbi and his class. If ever two became brothers for the sake of God, and one was discomforted or embarrassed by his fellow, there was some fault in one of them."

S: We don't know who these people were, so perhaps we can't enjoy the meaning of the saying. Never mind. The general meaning, the general message, is still quite clear.

"Someone was asked:
- Whom shall we take for our fellow?
- One who will lift off you the heaviness of discomfort, and drop between you the load of formality."

S: The next saying goes with that.

"Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (may God be pleased with him!) said:
- The heaviest of my brothers upon me is the one who discomforts me, and with whom I must observe formality. The lightest on my heart is he with whom I can be as I would be on my own."

S: Perhaps we don't always realise the extent to which other people, or other people's presence, puts a constraint upon us. I think there are probably very few people with whom our behaviour is completely unconstrained - that is to say as unconstrained in their company as it would if we were on our own. Because when you are aware of other people, you are usually aware of some expectation of you or from you on their part; and that's experienced as a sort of burden, very often, a sort of discomfort.

Nagabodhi: Can that not have a positive value if we're talking about a spiritual friendship? Maybe if you're just like you are when you're alone all the time that's not necessarily you at your best, until you have developed integrity.

S: Nonetheless, what seems to be stressed here is that informality is essential to brotherhood. It's as if to say that the affection between you must be completely unconstrained; not just itself unconstrained but free from any complication by elements of constraint. It is not denied, as has

been made clear in previous chapters, that you are or you should be brothers for the sake of what we would call spiritual development; but nonetheless you should be able to be with your brother as you are on your own. For instance, if your brother does give you some good advice, that isn't experienced as a constraint; it's like yourself speaking to yourself. Not something uncomfortable coming from without. Your brother's reproach, so to speak, is like your own self-reproach, and that possibility is not excluded. But there mustn't be any burden of external formality or objective demands. Perhaps one point that is being stressed, even if somewhat indirectly, is that it is important that there should be at least one or two people with whom you do not feel any constraint or discomfort. But that does not exclude mutual spiritual help and advice.

Of course, it isn't easy to be oneself. When people speak of being themselves they often have a very wrong idea of this sort of thing - just letting go, so to speak.

Nagabodhi: You mean that's their idea?

S: Yes, or they speak in terms of being themselves before really they have any self to be; they are just a collection or jumble of warring fragments, one of which is uppermost on one occasion and another on another; and this is spoken of as being oneself. That is really nothing to be proud of at all.

I think that the sort of friendship which is envisaged here is - supposing a thought comes into your head or words spring to your lips; there is nothing in your relation to your friend which would cause you to check those words, and think 'What would he think if I said that? Would he think that I was silly, or would he think it an unnecessary remark?' Do you see what I mean?

Kulananda: With a friend you would assume that they would understand what you say.

S: They would understand even if it was a silly remark, and even if they thought it silly. They are not obliged just because they are a friend to think that your silly remarks, if you happen to make them, are in fact words of wisdom; that is not one of the duties of brotherhood! But it doesn't make any difference to the friendship when it's there. You are not going to really lose anything by it. They are not going to take advantage of the fact that you have made a silly remark. You yourself may refrain from making the silly remark, but not because their presence inhibits you; you may refrain from making it because you just think 'That's a silly remark, I shouldn't say that.' But you don't as it were refrain from giving expression to that thought just because they are there.

Kulananda: There is an element of discomforting people by making silly remarks, for example, as it were taking up -

S: If you are aware that it is silly and that you don't want to discomfort your friend, yes, you refrain from making it. But not refrain from making it just because they are there; refraining for your sake, as it were.

Tejamitra: Do you think this could be extended to thinking in terms of when you are with larger numbers of people, or other people? If you develop sufficient mettā, the more mettā you have developed in yourself, isn't that a case for being less restrained with larger numbers of people?

I'm thinking that the degree of being unrestrained with a friend corresponds to the amount of good feeling between you; so if you develop a lot of mettā in yourself you are less likely to be restrained by even large numbers of people. Would you say that's the case?

S: I don't think your mettā towards yourself has much to do with it, because in the case of large numbers of people you may be well aware that there are certain things they may not like to hear from you, whatever mettā you have towards yourself, so you wouldn't speak about those things.

The main point I am making is that normally we do feel under constraint from other people, and the fact that one has a friend or brother with whom one can be unconstrained is a great advantage, one might say, even psychologically, even spiritually, apart from being an essential part of brotherhood or *kalyana mitrata* itself.

You can sometimes be very unconstrained with large numbers of people. I know that myself from my own experience with ex- Untouchable audiences in India. I feel in many ways very unconstrained with them, even though there may be thousands of them. At the same time, I know that there are certain things which I cannot yet say, but which I hope to get around to saying one day; but I find I can say more and more. The same thing on a smaller scale has been my experience in this country. At the beginning, there were all sorts of things I couldn't say, but I am able to say more and more.

[End of tape 18]