

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 [Mitrans](#). These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Tiratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

SANGHARAKSHITA IN SEMINAR

Questions and Answers based on:

"The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka"

(An Anthropological and Historical Study)

by Michael Carrithers

Published by Oxford University Press, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras 1983

Held at: Padmaloka **Date:** August 1985

Those Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, (Chairmen's Study Retreat with Dharmacharis) Abhaya, Suvajra, Dharmapriya, Ratnavira, Devaraja, Dhammaloka, Padmavajra, Aryamitra, Susiddhi, Achala, Nagabodhi, Kulamitra, Vessantara, Vajrananda, Tejananda, Devamitra, Subhuti, Padmaraja, Kamalasila, Sona, Buddhadasa.

Devamitra: The first question comes from Padmavajra.

Padmavajra : Michael Carrithers maintains that the ideal of the Forest monks which comes from the Pali canon is not unitary, because of the composite nature of the scriptures. What criteria should we apply to the Pali scriptures, to establish a unitary ideal, assuming that the unitary ideal is desirable?

Sangharakshita (S:): I assume that what he was referring to is the fact that we find in the Pali Canon, with regard to the monastic life, in a sense, more than one ideal. (pause) He is after all, talking about monks, especially forest monks. I have touched upon this more than once in my various writings. For instance, in one part of the Pali Canon, the ideal will be that of the solitary monk. (pause). In some parts of the Pali Canon, we have descriptions of the solitary monk, the muni, who wanders alone, even as the horn of the rhinoceros is single. So in a sense, that seems to be the ideal, the ideal of the solitary monk. But again, in other sections of the same Pali Canon, the ideal seems to be that of the coenobitical monk, the monk who is living in the midst of a community, a community of monks.

So in a way one has got two ideals, and certainly both of those ideals enter into the history of Buddhist monasticism, since that time, since the time of the Buddha himself. But one may ask, in the case of that eremitical ideal, and the coenobitical ideal, has one in fact got two ideals? I mean, normally one would perhaps speak of them as ideals, the ideal of the solitary monk, the wandering monk, the ideal of the monk living in the midst of a spiritual community, a community of monks, but do they strictly speaking represent ideals.

I think, perhaps it could be said that they represent an ideal, possibly a unitary ideal, lived under the conditions of differing lifestyles, to use our language. The ideal surely is enlightenment? The ideal surely is liberation? -in the case of the solitary monk, in the case of the coenobitical monk. So I think it is possible to establish a unitary ideal, but only if one distinguishes very carefully between what is actually the ideal one is trying to realise, and the means through or by which one is trying to realise that particular ideal. Of course later on in the history of Buddhism, you get different ideals of enlightenment. You get the ideal of the Arahant, the ideal of the Pratyekabuddha, the ideal of the Samyaksambuddha.

But to my way of looking at it, that later development is in a way a deformation, if one takes them actually as separate, independent ideals. If one looks at those three alleged ideals in terms of the Buddha's original teaching, as it appears to be, there can only be one ideal of enlightenment, towards which every Buddhist is aspiring. But this enlightenment can be looked at in different ways, or from different points of view.

So maybe Padmavajra could read that part of his question, and we can then see how what I've just said fits and to what extent it replies to that question.

Padmavajra : The question really was; " what criteria should be applied to the Pali scriptures, to establish the unitary ideal."

S: You have for instance to look at what the Buddha says about the solitary monk, what he says about the monk living in the spiritual community, and ask yourself, what do they have in common? Clearly, if one looks at all deeply into the matter, what they have in common is their striving for enlightenment, their ideal is actually enlightenment. Living as a solitary monk, or living as a coenobitical monk is only a means to that end. It is only a matter of lifestyle, even though the lifestyle is very important. So it would seem that in order to establish a unitary ideal, you have to be able to distinguish between what is actually the ideal, and what are the means to the realisation of the ideal, including the lifestyle, and you must not confuse the two, otherwise the means itself starts becoming the ideal. I mean as in the case very often of Theravada Buddhism, even today, to be a monk is the ideal. It is not that Enlightenment is the ideal and that being a monk is a means or one of the means to realise that ideal. In theory yes, people will say yes, enlightenment is the ideal, but in practice they really regard becoming a monk as the ideal. (pause).

So therefore we might say, in the FWBO, it is not the ideal to live in a single sex community. It is not the ideal to live as a householder follower of the FWBO or householder member of the FWBO. Those are not ideals, those are lifestyles. The ideal is to gain enlightenment, or at the very least, the ideal is to gain stream entry, or on a lower level still so to speak, to go for refuge. But the ideal is not to live in a particular way, that is only a means to an end, even though for very many people the means may coincide and the means may be indispensable, but nonetheless, it is the means and not the end, and therefore not the ideal. Perhaps we should be more precise in our language. When we speak of the Ideal with a capital 'I', it means Enlightenment, and when we speak of the ideal way of life, well it's a small 'i' and it's the ideal way of life for me at present or for most people most of the time. But it's not the Ideal with a capital I, because it is a matter of lifestyle.

What was the rest of Padmavajra's question ?

Padmavajra : That's really it, actually.

Devamitra : Let's go on then, to a question from Kulamitra concerning the revival of a tradition, without kalyana mitrata.

Kulamitra : This, I think comes from the same passage that Padmavajra is referring to, where Carrithers says "*The ideal was itself complex, composed of different, and to an extent contradictory models, which had been laid one on top of the other in the course of Buddhist history, most*

of them so long ago that the changes may reasonably be regarded as ancient." So the question is, "In order to make from this material in the Pali Canon, a raft to reach the other shore, would one need the guidance of a Kalyana mitra who is linked to the tradition with insight?"

S: The tradition having insight, or the kalyana mitra having insight?

Kulamitra: At least the tradition, at least the lineage as it were, having insight, I mean, presumably maybe the kalyana mitras themselves don't actually have insight.....

S: Read that again.

Kulamitra : So the question, " In order to make from this material of the Pali Canon, a raft to reach the other shore, would one need the guidance of a kalyana mitra, who was himself, or herself, linked to a tradition with insight?"

S : So one is thinking in terms of two things, a link with tradition, and insight. Is one considering the possibility that those two things might be separate? Because clearly, you can be linked to a tradition in some way or other, without having insight, and perhaps even, you can have insight without being linked to a tradition. So what is the first part of the question?

Kulamitra: Well the first part is, " In order to make from what he describes as the sort of varied material of the Pali Canon, an effective means toward enlightenment.....

S: So that presupposes that you are linked with a tradition already, in a sense, you have got some contact with it because you are trying to construct, or thinking of constructing, out of the materials with which you are in touch or which are available to you, a raft. So in a sense, that part of your question is answered, the question itself answers it. Do you see what I mean?

Kulamitra: Yes, I was thinking though, that if what he says about the written word of the tradition is true, then in a way, it can be a bit confusing. Could you sort that out yourself? Or would you really need help from other people who had themselves had help from other people and so on.

S: I think it would depend who you were, because I think I can say that there are some things at least that I have had to sort out for myself. Though on the other hand, there were also things that I sorted out with the help of others who did seem to have some insight into tradition, others who did help me, or even sort things out for me. But there are certainly things that I had to sort out for myself. But insight. Because the situation, in a way presupposes that you don't have insight, because the fact that one is speaking in terms of constructing a raft, out of that material, you're constructing the raft to cross to the other shore, which means to help you to develop insight. So I mean without having insight, can you in fact construct such a raft or without having insight can you in fact teach yourself how to acquire insight. It's as though you can't develop insight unless you've got some insight already.

I'm not saying that some people couldn't develop insight entirely on their own, but I think it is a much rarer occurrence. So therefore, I think if

you are going to construct a raft for yourself, in a manner of speaking, out of those materials, those pre-existing materials, that you are in contact with, say in the form of Buddhist scriptures, you almost certainly will need to be in contact with some other person who has insight. Not that you cannot fashion such a raft by yourself, but that is extremely difficult because this would assume that you needed, or you would have to develop insight by yourself, and insight I'm pretty certain, is developed much more easily through communication and contact, even collision, with somebody who already has insight. So does that answer the question?

Kulamitra: Yes.

Devamitra: Moving on to a slightly different track, we have a question from Abhaya, on monasticism, and whether or not it was invented only once.

Abhaya: On page twenty-one Bhante, it says "*If we are to follow Dumont, renunciation and monasticism were invented but once, in ancient India, and spread from there.*" Do you agree ?

S: I really don't know. This is an historical question. That is Dumont's opinion, Some people might be inclined to agree, others not. I think I'd be inclined just to wait and see, let scholars discuss the matter thoroughly and we shall just see what conclusions they come to. It is quite possible, although again, I cannot help wondering where if at all ancient Egypt fits in. Perhaps they didn't have monasticism. They did have priests living in temples, and I think some of those priests at least for the period of their temple service, were celibate, but whether they had life long celibates living in communities which would seem to be the essence of monasticism, that perhaps is another matter.

So there is the possibility that monasticism as I've defined it, did originate in India, but I wouldn't like to be very sure about that at this stage. Probably quite a lot more historical research would need to be done, but certainly India has been a great centre of monasticism, in one form or other, and it is from India that monasticism has certainly spread to some other parts of the world. Whether all forms of monasticism really originated in India, that we cannot say, we cannot be sure of at present. As far as I know, the Chinese had not really thought of monasticism before the arrival of Buddhism, neither did the Japanese, and probably not the Tibetans. But whether western monasticism, whether Christian monasticism, originated ultimately in India, it is difficult to say. We know it originated, probably in the deserts of Egypt. The Essenes are sometimes mentioned in this connection, but it is doubtful now whether they were monks in the Indian sense. But what connection there was between the Essenes or the Therapeutae and India, we don't really, I think, know. So I think probably it would be wise not to dogmatise, and just to retain an open minded on the subject and await further historical evidence.

Devamitra: Now a question from Buddhadasa concerning worldly life and asceticism and the FWBO.

Buddhadasa: It is rather an involved question, so I will read the whole of it first. "In the Udana, page 86, the Buddha says, "Those who set chief value on training, who set chief value on the following after virtues, religious duties, a way of living, the Brahma life, this is one way. Those who hold that there is no harm in sensual desires, this is the other way. These two ways make the charnel fields to grow."

According to the commentary on this section, the Buddha is pointing out that a life of sensualism, or a life of asceticism both cause wrong views to increase. Given that there is a desire or tendency for individuals to polarise some human communities along the line of renunciation, for example such as we see happening in Sri Lanka today, is there a suitable common structure which is able to order and re-unite the spiritually developing individuals from within both communities? Traditionally when members of both communities come together, the ascetic way of life always appears to take precedent over the more worldly way of life. If both ways of life "make the charnel fields to grow", is there any reason why this should continue? Should we in the Western Buddhist Order continue along traditional lines and encourage the setting of precedents by the more ascetically inclined, for example, placing Kamalasila on the 'high table', or should we strive after an alternative ordering of the Sangha that will and can take account of the spiritual value of both ways of life. Basically is it possible to have a common spiritual structure and hierarchy which is applicable to members of both communities?

S: I can't help thinking there is a bit of confusion here in respect of terminology, probably carried over by the translation of that bit of the text. Let's go back to the beginning. The quote from the Udana.

Buddhadasa: In the Udana, the Buddha says, "Those who set chief value on training, who set chief value on the following after virtue - that ties in with ideal in the chapter on the pursuit of moral perfection, moral purity, religious teachers, a way of living the Brahma life this is one way; those who hold there is no harm in sensual desire, this is the other way; these two ways make the charnel fields to grow."

S: These two ways make the charnel fields to grow?

Buddhadasa : Then, according to the commentary on this section, the Buddha is pointing out that a life of sensualism, or a life of asceticism both cause wrong views to increase.

S: There is a certain amount of ambiguity here isn't there? Because the life of Brahmacharya is the spiritual life itself isn't it? I mean in the full, balanced Buddhist sense, which is not inclining to either extreme, to any extreme, but when we get a little further into the text, it would seem that Brahmacharya stands for the extreme which is opposite to that of indulgence in sense. So there would seem to almost a confusion here. Because how can the Brahmacharya, in the sense of the Buddhist way of life, "cause the charnel fields to grow"? That isn't possible. So what is the Buddha talking about here? He would seem to be talking about the two extremes, between which, the eightfold path is the middle way. So is there any question or can there be any question, of bringing these two extremes together in a common framework? There can't be. Both extremes have to be discarded, and one has to follow the middle way, the Brahmacharya in the full Buddhist sense. It seems almost as though there is some confusion in the scriptural passage itself. Let's go through it again so that we can see this.

You see what I am getting at because when it starts off, it is as though the Buddhist way of life itself is being described, but then after a while, it is as though the extreme which is opposite to that of indulgence in sense desires, is being described.

Subhuti: Is that the whole quotation?

Buddhadasa: It's actually the quotation from the Verses of Uplift. Would you like me to read the whole prose section?

Thus have I heard : On a certain occasion, the Exalted One was staying at Rajagaha, in Bamboo Grove at the squirrels' feeding ground.

Now on that occasion at Rajagaha two gangs were enamoured of, infatuated with, a certain courtesan. They fell to quarrelling, uproar and abuse over her; they attacked each other with fists, attacked each other with clods of earth, with sticks and weapons. Thus in that matter they got their death or mortal pain.

Now a great number of monks, robing themselves in the forenoon and taking bowl and robe entered Rajagaha for quest for alms-food. Having gone their rounds in Rajagaha, returned therefrom and eaten their meal, they went to see the Exalted One, saluted him and sat down at one side. So seated they said this to the Exalted One. "Sir, here in Rajagaha there are two gangs... and they explained the whole matter. Thereupon the Exalted Onegave utterance to this verse of uplift:

"What has been won and what is to be won, - both of these ways are dust begrimed for the man diseased who follows them. Those who set chief value on training, who set chief value on the following after virtue, religious teachers, a way of living, the brahma life This is the one way.

Those who maintain, who hold this view - there's no harm in sensual desire - this is the other way.

These two ways make the charnel fields to grow. The charnel fields make views to grow. By not comprehending these two, some stick fast, others go beyond bounds, but as to those who, by fully comprehending them, have not been of that way of thinking, who have not prided themselves thereon - for such as these there is no whirling around to be proclaimed."

[Transcribers note : Taken from The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon Part II Trans. F.L Woodward. Pali Text Society 1935, 1948, 1985]

S: Ah, that is clearer isn't it? Because you have got these two gangs, there are two gangs, but they are fighting for the same thing, in other words the woman, the courtesan. So in the same way, you have got these two different ways of life represented by the two extremes. You've got the extreme of hedonism, shall we say, and you've got the extreme of asceticism. They appear to be very different, but actually they are the same, they are after the same thing. Hedonism wants it now, but asceticism is prepared to have it later on, that is to say after death in a higher heavenly world as the result of asceticism. So Brahmacharya in this context simply means following that ascetic way of life with a view to enjoyment later on rather than enjoyment now. Of course that kind of Brahmacharya is not the Brahmacharya which is represented by the Buddhist middle way. So that does seem clear after all.

Voices : Yes.

S: So having clarified that, let's come on to the questions that follow upon that passage.

Buddhadasa: Is there a suitable common structure, which is able to order and reunite the spiritually developing individuals from within both communities?

S: Well, no. There are no spiritually developing individuals in the Buddhist sense, within either groups, because they are both following extremes. There is no question of bringing them together, but rather of each kind of person giving up his or her extreme way of life and coming

on to the middle way taught by the Buddha. I mean, perhaps you are confusing those two ways of life with the Bhikkhu way and the Upasika way, but actually they are not to be so identified because the Bhikkhu way only superficially resembles, one might say, the way of asceticism in this sense; and the way of life of the householder, that is to say the Buddhist whose life style is that of a householder, only superficially resembles that of someone whose life is entirely devoted to sense pleasures. Because the Buddhist who is living as a householder does definitely observe a discipline, and observes a certain measure of restraint, but traditionally that is less than the measure of restraint observed by the Bhikkhu.

It is as though, if you interpret say the Theravada at its most liberal, the bhikkhu and the upasika, both follow the middle way, only the upasika is tagging somewhat behind the bhikkhu, but they are both in principle following a middle way. Though the bhikkhu may be tempted to veer towards the extreme of asceticism, and the householder, the upasika, may be tempted to veer towards the extreme of sense indulgence. I think there is no question of a common structure bringing the two extremes, the two extreme ways of life themselves together.

Buddhadasa : What about the upasaka, and the bhikkhu, in that case. Shall I read the second part of the question?

S: Yes.

Buddhadasa: Traditionally when members of both communities come together, the ascetic way of life always appears to take precedence over the worldly way of life.....

S: Now we are dealing with a quite different question, which does not in fact arise out of that particular text because the text is not dealing with that particular binary.

Buddhadasa : Is there any reason why this should continue? Should we in the WBO continue along traditional lines, and encourage the setting up of precedents by the more ascetically inclined, for example, placing Kamalasila on the high.....

S: What does one mean by 'ascetically inclined'? Again there is ambiguity. Does one mean by ascetically inclined, one more inclined to a particular extreme view, or extreme way of life, or does one mean simply someone who is more conscientious or more thorough-going in his following of the middle way itself? Because these are not the same thing. So you know, there is still a question but it needs to be put in a slightly different way.

Buddhadasa :or should we strive after an alternative ordering of the Sangha, that will and can take account of the spiritual value of both ways of life. Basically, is it possible to have a common spiritual structure and hierarchy which is applicable to members of both communities?

S: So which two communities are you, or is the question, actually talking about?

Buddhadasa : I was referring to the lay community, and thinking in my mind of a monastic community such as maybe Vajraloka and what it

could actually turn into, or in fact what it is now, and the Forest Monks of Sri Lanka.

S: Well in the case of the FWBO, we always emphasise that commitment is primary and lifestyle is secondary. And the community, the spiritual community is the Sangha or the Order, is the spiritual community of the committed. So perhaps you are really asking whether there is a hierarchy of lifestyles?

A Voice : Yes.

S: So what does one think about that? Is there a hierarchy of lifestyles, or what would determine that one lifestyle was say higher or let's say better than another, better for whom? Is any lifestyle intrinsically better than any other? I think one can't say that it is even though a particular lifestyle is the best lifestyle for the majority of people. I think one still cannot say that that lifestyle is the best per se, because that would be almost to make it the ideal, rather than commitment. But then where does Kamalasila come in? (laughter). How does the question arise?

Vessantara : At the moment, just as we recognise that somebody who has explicitly gone for refuge, has in a sense, we give them a superior status, as it were, to those who haven't.

S: Right.

Vessantara : I suppose, by extension one could give, within the Order, a higher 'status', single inverted commas, to those people who had made an explicitly, more deep held working out of their precepts, and could actually make a distinction on that basis, then

S: But isn't everybody in principle, supposed to be working as hard as they possibly can on their precepts? Whether they make the form in which they are working on them explicit to others or not?

Vessantara : Well, if we said that it makes a difference to explicitly go for refuge as opposed to simply implicitly doing it, is there not a difference equally if you explicitly take your practice of the precepts as stage further.

S: Well, you have already made an explicit commitment to observe the ten precepts. Supposing for instance someone makes a public vow to give up smoking, what does that mean, does it mean that they have a special status or place in the hierarchy attaches to them? Or supposing someone makes an explicit vow, that they are going to be particularly careful about right speech. Do you see what I mean? I'm just digging into the question and its implications. So where does one stop? In the case of the principle of Kamesu Micchachara, when you turn that into Brahmacharya or Abrahmacarya Veramani, well, that is quite an important difference, quite an important change. But the question is whether it is a change that's sufficiently important to as it were put one a stage up in whatever hierarchy exists within the spiritual community. But I mean this perhaps also ties up with what I was talking about in reply to a question during the convention about the three levels of Brahmacharya. Because, though someone taking that vow is trying to practice the threefold Brahmacharya, all they can be sure that they will be practising is physical, voluntary Brahmacharya. So it would really be that that one was concerned about.

But then the question arises, why is it that so far within the Western Buddhist Order, we don't have a hierarchy within the Order, especially a hierarchy based upon lifestyle. Well it's partly because we want to emphasise the overriding importance of the going for refuge. Also because in practice I think, it becomes very difficult to determine what the hierarchy really is. Because you can so easily have someone who is nominally higher up in the hierarchy, but who in spiritual terms, really is not say more developed than the people who are technically below him or below her, in the hierarchy. Someone may be observing brahmacarya and observing it excellently, but that doesn't necessarily by itself put them any higher in the spiritual hierarchy, therefore why should it put them any higher in the practical hierarchy as it were? That particular person might have a really bad temper, or they might be very mean. So someone's place in the spiritual hierarchy is really determined by what they are, what they are like as a whole. That may even change from time to time. I mean, people do observe all sorts of extra vows for longer and shorter periods, so do they go up or down in the as it were external official hierarchy?

So therefore, I've come to the conclusion personally, that is better not to have any hierarchy based upon lifestyle, or any hierarchy based upon taking any extra or additional precepts, to have no formal hierarchy at all. Because I feel convinced that, yes, some people are spiritually more advanced than others, but that fact will be, as it were, spontaneously recognised, and where appropriate that person will be spontaneously accorded perhaps, in a sense, a little more consideration, or whatever it may be. I personally think in view of what I have seen of spiritual ambition, or pseudo-spiritual ambition within the spiritual community or pseudo-spiritual community, I personally prefer to leave it like that. Do you see what I mean? Not because I believe in democracy, or egalitarianism, in the modern sense. I am trying to safeguard the spiritual principle and trying to make external facts really correspond to spiritual realities, because I've seen so many situations in the East where they don't correspond, and I really don't want that sort of situation to be repeated in the Western Buddhist Order.

Buddhadasa : Just a quick one. Is there any case at all for having a hierarchy based perhaps on the date of ordination or age?

S: Well, it can't be a real hierarchy, it can only be a hierarchy of courtesy. You can, yourself naturally, out of courtesy give say place, give precedence to someone who is senior to yourself in ordination if you feel that genuine respect for them, but I don't think that the person who is senior, can claim that as a right. There must be something that is spontaneously accorded for whatsoever reason, whether on account of simple seniority or a recognised greater degree of spiritual experience, or mere age. I mean, if you feel like respecting someone who is simply older than yourself, do so. It is always good to respect others, (Laughter) but I think it must be spontaneous.

Whereas if someone has an official place in the hierarchy, it's as though he can demand the respect, as many bhikkhus do in the east. I have seen people whom I regarded as thoroughly unworthy as bhikkhus, demanding and claiming external respect in the most extreme manner, and I'm very cautious about admitting into the Western Buddhist Order anything, any practice that might constitute the thin end of the wedge for that sort of development. In a sense I would almost rather go to the other extreme, if it is an extreme. But again where does Kamalasila come in? (laughter) ... perhaps we had better clear that up first... (louder laughter)... or where does the high table come in?

Devamitra : It might come in with the next question. It comes from Vessantara, concerning formalism, and whether or not, it might put people off from the FWBO.

Vessantara : It seems as if there is a movement within the Order, toward greater formalism, in the way we do things. As the society within which we live seems to be putting almost an increasing price on informality, as time goes on, is there not a danger of us actually putting off people when they come into contact with the quite formal ways in which we do things. Is this a price we have to pay?

S: Let's deal with the first part of the question, the assumption, what was the first part again?

Vessantara : That people, in modern life, seem to be developing a tendency toward increasing informality

S: Is that correct? I want us to look at that assumption to begin with, is that so?

Vessantara : Well, certainly compared to say, before the war. I would probably be prepared to extend it to the west.

[end of side one side two]

S: I am just wondering to what extent we can generalise. I am quite sure in certain respects there has been a decrease of formality. For instance the Queen no longer has drawing rooms, debutantes are not presented at court, they have not been for the last so many years, so yes on that level there has been a decrease in formality. (some laughter). But what about the so called working classes? From what I can remember, although they were a pretty rough bunch in my younger days, they seem to have adopted in some cases, or to some extent, the more formal manners of certain middle class people. You see what I mean? So we have to try and strike a sort of balance. I am not so sure that there has been uniformly throughout society in the west, an increase, at a regular rate, in informality. It seems to fluctuate, and one finds a different situation in different social groups perhaps at different times. But leaving that aside, let us move on to another aspect of the question, 'An increase in formality in the Order.' What does that amount to, or in what does that consist? Is one thinking of sitting in rows?

Vessantara: Sitting in rows, our eating arrangements

Buddhadasa: This is where the high table comes in. Last night we had a short discussion about one way we could make eating arrangements more aesthetic was to have a high table and.....

S: Because it is not particularly formal to eat at a table. Most people do nowadays.

Subhuti : It is at Padmaloka! (Laughter)

S: I couldn't help reflecting at one stage in the proceedings at one mealtime, that if someone who had been accustomed to living in a Zen monastery had come in at the mealtime, he would have thought that we were disgracefully, not just informal, but undisciplined, that would have been the impression. Anyway, perhaps people who are non-Buddhist from certain social circles would have found our behaviour not formal at all, perhaps insufficiently formal. Do you see what I mean? So, yes, there might be a greater degree of formality now within the Order, but we

have to try and see how that compares with the usual degree of formality outside it.

The question went on didn't it?, asking what sort of impression the Order might be giving to people who come in from outside. I would say to some extent it depends perhaps on social class, if one can in fact speak in those terms, that some people might find Order members over formal, others might find them surprisingly informal. It would depend on what one's assumptions or presuppositions were, what kind of background one came from. But I rather tend to think that it isn't really a question of formality and informality, as regards the impression created upon new people, I think it is a question of friendliness. You can be formal and still communicate a feeling of friendliness, and you can be informal, and communicate a feeling of friendliness. I think some people connected with the hippy movement years ago, tended to think that informality meant automatically friendliness, but my own experience certainly was that people could be very informal and very unfriendly, much less friendly than people whose social manners and behaviour were quite formal.

So formality should not be confused, per se, with unfriendliness, nor should informality should not be confused per se with friendliness. So I think in a way, the issue of formality verses informality in relation to people coming along to centres, is a bit of a red herring. I think it is basically a question of friendliness. Whether you are a bit more formal, or a bit more informal, will probably just depend upon possibly your own social background, or your temperament.

Nagabodhi : I think the vision that perhaps floated in the air during our meeting last evening, was something more approaching a monastic formalism, which is why this question emerged. We were talking about taking advantage of being in your presence at the meals. We agreed it was a shame that we had indulged in such a free for all, and if we'd waited for you to arrive, and not eating until you started eating. Perhaps had more of our meals in silence. We were envisaging changes of this nature, which perhaps would tend towards a more monastic level of formalism, and that robes in pujas and other things would (just occur?)

S: Well those changes I think, will grow naturally out of a increase of awareness and sensitivity, not to be imposed as a discipline from without. It is quite clear that people could be more disciplined. It is not even a question of greater formality really, but the outward appearance. It is a question of being more aware, more sensitive, and therefore more disciplined and that will probably assume a sort of formal appearance. As regards waiting until everybody has arrived, there has got to be some sort of pre-arrangement, because some people may go for runs, so they do not arrive for another half an hour, others may be late for one reason or another. So it is not so easy perhaps when one has got a large number of people, to be formal in that sort of way. But certainly there could be more mindfulness, for instance there could be an understanding that you filled up the first table, and that when everybody was seated at that table, then they all started eating, and then the second tabled filled up, and when that was filled up, then they started eating. But when too great a disregard of what other people are doing, whether they are yet seated and so on, well that does suggest unmindfulness, and naturally appears as a sort of indiscipline or informality in a rather negative sense. I would certainly like to see much more 'formality', in single inverted commas, when Order members gather together, but I think it must spring out of a naturally increased awareness and sensitivity, rather than being imposed, I think that probably has all the wrong sort of connotations and associations.

Devamitra : Now comes a question from Padmavajra, concerning Buddhism in the world....well the attempt to overhaul society.

Padmavajra : Carrithers asserts that the later doctrine of Buddhism in no way rejects or attempts to re-order the world of social hierarchy. Does this mean that there was a falling away from the Buddha's own rejection of the caste system, and if there was how long after the Buddha's parinirvana did this take place?

S: It does not seem that the Buddha attacked the caste system per se, the caste system, as it existed in lay society in the way that say modern reformers have done. But the Buddha was quite categorical that there could be no caste in the Order, and also it is pretty clear that the Order represented the ideal society. So therefore it represented an ideal for society as a whole, therefore castelessness was an ideal for society as a whole, not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. It does seem that in the course of the history of Buddhism in some areas caste crept in to the Sangha itself. I mean, caste considerations are very important within the Sangha in Ceylon, as I think we shall be seeing later on. So what was the actual question?

Padmavajra : Well, you have answered it really (pause). He made the point that the later doctrine of Buddhism in no way rejects or attempts to reorder the world of social hierarchy.....

S: I would be inclined to disagree with that, certainly it does attempt to do that at least by implication.

Padmavajra : So that's basically wrong, what he says there?

S: But again, I must repeat that the Buddha did not attack the caste system as it existed in lay society in the way that modern reformers do. Also it must be said that it would seem that in the Buddha's day, the caste system had not developed the degree of rigidity that it developed after the Buddha's day, perhaps quite a long time afterwards.

Subhuti : Can you make that implicit, the attempt to reorder, can you demonstrate that implicitly?

S: Demonstrate in what way?

Subhuti : Can you show in what way there is that implicit attempt to re-order the social hierarchy?

S: You mean, can one show the connection between the Sangha and the Sangha as an ideal?

Subhuti : That's what you mean when you say there is implicitly an attempt to re-order society, because the Sangha is a.....

S: Yes, because one might say, putting it very crudely, the Buddha would like everybody to become a monk. He would like therefore, the whole of society to move in the direction of becoming a Sangha. I think one could put it in that way, though perhaps the point is not made as explicitly as that, in those particular terms, in the scriptures themselves.

Subhuti : There is no attempt to re-order the politics as it stands?

S: Well, yes and no, because the Buddha, if we accept the Pali Canon as the Buddhavacana, did certainly uphold the ideal of a Dharmaraja and upheld the idea of the Chakravatiraja, and they were definitely committed to an ethical orientation of society, committed to the propagation of the ten precepts, or five precepts in some contexts. So therefore, if society was not a society in which the ten precepts were generally upheld, well perhaps the ten precepts on the ethical side, or on the practical side even, are the essence of the Buddhist way of life for the so called monks and so called lay people alike, well to say that society should uphold those, when it does not say, is really to say that the Buddha believes that the present society not upholding them, should be transformed into the future society upholding them. So from that point of view also, it would seem that Buddhism is in favour of working on the existing society.

I think that the ideal of the Dharmaraja and the Cakravatiraja, makes that in fact quite clear.

Padmavajra : Do you think that the Buddha not making, not explicitly rejecting the caste system, makes it possible for caste to find a place within the Buddhist.....

S: I'm not even sure that one can say he never ever explicitly rejected it. I would have to comb through the Pali Canon. For instance, the Buddha does say that, in the Sutta Nipata, the basis of caste is artificial and not natural, because he says that the distinction between animals is a natural one, between birds and beast and so on. There are different species of birds and beasts, but there are not different species of human beings which are the essence of the caste system. The castes [Bhante enumerates them too quickly to transcribe!] and their subdivisions were species, different species of humanity analogous to different species of animals, of non-human beings. The Buddha denied that and said there was only one human species, that all human beings were of one blood, so this would seem to undercut the caste system, the hereditary caste system of his day, completely, to cut the ground from beneath its feet.

So certainly, as it were ideologically, or in principle, he negated the caste system in its entirety, though he may not have launched a sort of crusade against the caste system, as it actually existed in lay society. But he certainly undermined the ideological basis of the caste system, and he ridiculed the pretensions of Brahmins. He made it clear that their descent was not as pure as they believed it to be, and so on.

Devamitra : Shall we move on to another question? We have one from Vessantara, concerning renunciation and society.

Vessantara : This is not fully formulated. I'll try and formulate it as I go. In our study group we were talking in terms of wings of the Order developing. Some wings living a more monastic form of life, others working very actively to transform society. The question arose : To what extent those people who are living a more renunciate life are actually acting as a model for society, for instance like the forest monks. They became monks, having seen a monk who had already left the world; to what extent do you transform society by leaving it? By acting as a model for those still within its institutions?

Go back to the beginning. I think there is a little bit of confusion there, at least semantic.

Vessantara : We were talking about, as it were, two wings of the Order, and that people could move between them. One a more monastic life, and one more of people working in the world.....

S: Yes, it was the next part.....

Vessantara : So clearly if you are working in the world, you are working directly to transform society, but if you are working as it were more on the monastic side, more leaving society, you are still providing a model.....

S: Yes, this is the point I wanted to pick up. This presupposes a certain type of monasticism, because one might say it was only the monk really who had the time and energy, the concentration and commitment to work in the world for the transformation of the world. Supposing your lifestyle was that of a householder and you had a family and you had to work to support that family, well, you would be in the world all right but not with much time and energy to work for the transformation of the world. So is it the monk, per se, who is not able to work in the world for the transformation of the world, or a particular kind of monk? For instance, in the terms of Buddhism, one might say that there is the Hinayana monk following the Arahant Ideal, and the Mahayana monk following the Bodhisattva Ideal, who is presumably still a monk in some sense, but who perhaps is working in society, for the transformation of society. In the same way in the west, you have got different orders of monks, you've got contemplatives and you've also got monks who are doing scholarly and educational work, perhaps, even social work in towns and cities. So perhaps the question needs to be refined a bit more.

Vessantara : Yes, now we have the monks who are not working directly in society, those who are practising meditation full time. They presumably are having to some degree a transforming effect by setting up an alternative ideal. They would be acting as a model for those living in society, who may then be attracted to that kind of life. They sort of symbolise an ideal of renunciation perhaps in a clearer way. for people than.....

S: I think there is danger of misunderstanding here, because certainly within the context of the FWBO, the monk, or the equivalent to a monk, who is say, leading a solitary life devoting himself mainly to meditation, without family responsibilities, would not really, I trust, be thinking simply in terms of self transformation. Presumably, if he was in the context of the FWBO, he would also believe in transformation of the world, so perhaps he wouldn't wish to be a pattern or a model for those who attempted, let us say, to think simply in terms of self transformation as opposed to transformation of the world. So one would have to find, if one was such a monk, or living such a life, some way of communicating that, because there would be the danger that you would appear in the eyes of others, to be upholding an ideal which in fact you did not consider yourself to be upholding. Do you see what I mean? So I'm not quite sure how one would in fact do that.

Kulamitra ; Bhante, there seems to be some confusion between again, lifestyle and commitment. I would have thought that any energetic, serious, experienced Order member would provide an ideal for a lot of people to lead the spiritual life, regardless of whether they were leading a more solitary life or working hard in a city centre.

S: But it would seem that people need, well simply something much more concrete and specific. They are not just attracted by the fact that you

are spiritually committed, but that you express that in a particular way. They like the idea of living in a men's community, or they like the idea of going off into the jungle. They think in those very concrete terms. So you may be seeing that particular lifestyle as a means to an end, but if you are not careful, you will cause them, unintentionally, to regard that as an end in itself, and be attracted to it as an end in itself. I don't see how we can in a way get over that, because for instance, some people may be so impressed by the way in which you operate as Chairman, they may just want to be a Chairman (laughter), forgetting that to be a Chairman is a means to an end, not an end in itself. You see what I mean?

Someone may go along to Vajraloka, and may think Kamalasila in his robes and shaven head, looks so inspiring, just sitting there meditating the whole time, and they may just want to go and live like that. But perhaps in a quite unrealistic sort of way, not also realising that it is a means to an end. So I think we still haven't solved that particular problem. Perhaps we need further experience within the FWBO, before we can do that. At least we can be aware of the problem, and make sure that others don't regard our particular lifestyle as representing the ideal. Though perhaps, admittedly some lifestyles are more inspiring than others, or more dramatic. (laughter).

Devamitra : Now we have a question from Dharmapriya, which pertains to the Sangha, and the upholding of the central values of society.

Dharmapriya : As far as I can gather from current news and other reports, Sinhalese society is by no stretch of the imagination a positive group. Michael Carrithers, however, states that the Bhikkhu Sangha preserves, quote, "the central values of Sinhalese life, and honoured figures at the centre of this society." Can such a Sangha actually be a spiritual community, and can the Forest revival, thus actually be the spiritual life?

S: Let's go through that bit by bit.

Dharmapriya : As far as I can gather from current news and other reports, Sinhalese society, is not a positive group.

S: Probably Sinhalese society, as a whole isn't. Obviously there are pockets of violence and tolerance and so on in Sinhalese Buddhist society, but perhaps one should also say that very likely there are smaller positive groups here and there. Because Gunavati, for instance, was telling me that when she went to Sri Lanka, she met a lot of ordinary Sinhalese, well Buddhists presumably and she says she was really struck by how gentle they all were and how kind. She was very much struck by this. So no doubt there are quite a lot of people who are still like that, so you might say that Sinhalese society is positive, or is constituted of positive groups, in patches. Whereas, of course there are other patches of a very different nature. That does not make the whole society either a positive group, or not a positive group. There are areas which can be identified perhaps as positive groups, and other areas - perhaps even larger areas -that cannot be so identified.

Dharmapriya : Then, Michael Carrithers, talking about the whole society, says that the Sangha, the Bhikkhu Sangha, preserves the central values of Sinhalese life and are honoured figures at the centre of this society.

S: " Preserves the central values," I think that is true. The question only is whether those values are still really Buddhist values in the full sense. I think there is no doubt that the Sangha in Ceylon preserves such values as literacy, education, culture, and even the arts to some extent. They are a clerisy, but whether they preserve higher spiritual values, transcendental values in any really meaningful sense as distinct from paying lip

service, is quite another matter. Of course it must also be said that the prestige of the Sangha, or in a way the centrality of the Sangha, in this respect has been to some extent disturbed just by the influx of Western ideas, and the prevalence of modern Western style education and secular thinking, and so on. But there is no doubt that to some extent, for many people in Sri Lanka, perhaps the majority, the Sangha is still central to a very great extent. Whether that central Sangha really preserves traditional Buddhist values, in the highest sense, is quite another matter.

One might even say that some of the values it preserves are not really Buddhist values at all. For instance, religious nationalism, or religio-nationalism, which is I think, largely responsible for the present unfortunate political situation in Ceylon. The Sangha certainly preserved that particular value, whether it's really a Buddhist value or not is quite another matter.

Devamitra : Now a question from Nagabodhi on the interpretation given in the book of the term 'Bodhaneyya'.

Nagabodhi : On page twenty-three, this concept of Bodhaneyya, is introduced, and perhaps interpreted in a particular way. He says; "In the Canonical tradition it is intelligence:" That is the direction of the craving for purity "that handful of people,'capable of being enlightened' (bodhaneyya) apprehends the significance of dukkha, the disease, and recognize the fitness of the cure, renunciation." Could you say a little about this term, Bodhaneyya, and in particular, whether it is correct to interpret it in this way, so as to suggest a handful of a kind of born elite of spiritual aspirants. Do you see any evidence for the existence of such an elite - in the sense of the practice, could it be seen as something one is born with.....

S: Well, the Buddha is represented as seeing after his enlightenment, that there were some people whose eyes were just a little covered with dust, and who would understand the truth, if it was preached to them. In principle, all human beings, are capable of gaining enlightenment, but it may be that there are some human beings who, on account of their previous heavy, unskilful karma, made it virtually impossible for themselves to gain enlightenment in their present life, and who are therefore in that present life not a Bodhaneyya, not capable of enlightenment, not even capable of having a spiritual understanding of things. But nonetheless one needs to apply this very carefully, if one applies it at all. Perhaps it is best to proceed, on the assumption that all people are in fact capable of understanding, capable of being enlightened, if the truth is put to them with sufficient force and clarity. Look at the example of Angulimala.

So I think there should not be any sort of formal distinction between those who are Bodhaneyya, and those who are not bodhaneyya. I mean, much less still, should one regard oneself as belonging to the Bodhaneyya, and certain others as not belonging to that particular class of people. So therefore, I say proceed on the assumption that all beings are Bodhaneyya, and are capable of understanding if one explains sufficiently clearly. If someone seems not to understand, or to have difficulty in understanding, it is better to attribute it to one's own inability to communicate what one understands with sufficient clarity, or sufficient force.

Devamitra : It seems curious to me that the term should have come into operation within the Sangha. It doesn't sound to me as far as I understand it, that it would have been a term originally used by the Buddha.

S: This could be because it is from the word Bodhi, and someone capable of Bodhi is someone who is Bodhaneyya. I'll have to look up the term

in the Pali dictionary, and look at the Pali grammar.

Devamitra : Shall we move on to another question? A question from Kamalasila, concerning what the author refers to as the craving for order and purity.

S: Which page is that?

Kamalasila : It is page twenty-one. Do you think that the appetite for order, which is mentioned on page 21, is a healthy one, which should have a part in our ideal for monastic communities?

S: Well, what does one mean by order? I personally think of order as a sort of pattern that is the expression of a kind of gestalt, or archetype. If you have let's say an archetype of enlightenment, and you are trying to give expression to that, to carry that out or to achieve that, I think that you will give a certain consistency to all your actions, to all your activities, and because all your actions, all your activities, and because all your actions, all your activities have that consistency, they will assume a certain pattern, and will express themselves in a certain order. Do you see what I mean. Is that the sort of thing you were thinking of?

Kamalasila : Well, he is talking about, if I remember rightly, he's linking together the ideas of purity and purity, and seeing these things as a thing which we all, in a way, want, it is both that we want and it's those things which draw us toward that sort of lifestyle.

S: Yes, from what I remember of reading through this chapter this morning, he is not quite clear what he means by purity. He seems to mean a sort of selectivity, he uses the analogy of the artist who removes from his painting everything that is not essential. So it is purity in that sort of sense, purity in almost a chemical sense in which you remove all the irrelevances, you remove all the bits and pieces that do not belong, that are not in keeping. So purity in that sense does come close to being synonymous with a sort of sense of order.

Kamalasila : So the question really is, "Is that a healthy thing? Is that something we should have as part of our higher ideals?"

S: In that case, I would say so because it means if you have a certain ideal, say the ideal of enlightenment, you want to remove from your personal life is everything which is not expressive of that. Or at least you want to make every aspect of your life more expressive of that. In that sense, you want to purify your life. It's not perhaps an ethical or moral concept, in the way that we usually take it to be because what we usually think of as purity is a sort of sexual purity and so on. But here purity seems to have a broader connotation, a more general connotation.

Devaraja : It seems a bit mixed though, because there are references to the monks having a strong fear of hell, of damnation through living in an immoral way. It does seem quite mixed as to what they actually mean by purity.

S: Well that would seem to be connected with the question of motivation, what motivates you to be pure. It would seem to be rather an external one to some extent, the fear of hell, rather than a positive one, an internal one by way of an attempt to express more and more unambiguously

and uncompromisingly, the ideal in which you believe. You would tend to eliminate all extraneous elements so that your life can perfectly express the ideal. I think he does suggest that the fear of hell type of motivation is a bit extreme, but we will be going into that in a later chapter, it becomes quite prominent.

Kulamitra : Bhante, I did feel there was some confusion of thought about purity. There seemed to be another strand which could be interpreted. He used terms like associating purity with physical cleanliness, as opposed to impurity with filth. Sometimes you got the impression that order was not so much realising the inner essence of unity under-lying something, so much as in imposing a rather brittle form, by keeping certain elements, but perhaps ones own nature, and certainly of the world at large, out of one's experience. To the extent that he did mean that sort of ordering, should we avoid that?

S: Well, very often we talk in terms of the mandala, and putting things at the centre of the mandala, or towards the circumference, so perhaps we need to distinguish between things that need to be thrown out of the mandala altogether because they are completely unskilful and things which need to be relegated to a position towards the periphery of the mandala because they are of secondary, or tertiary importance. I mean, for instance the implied comparison with excrement, well, what you could say is that excrement is something that can be completely thrown away. Though you can't even really say that of excrement, because it could be useful as fertilizer! (laughter) In somebody else's garden, if not in yours (laughter).

But purity does seem to consist basically in the removal of all irrelevances, all excrescences, and in that way order is produced. This seems to be the link with authority. Do you see what I mean, because purification leads to structure, and authority can be exercised only through a structure. For instance, I can remember hearing lay people from Ceylon, saying with regard to their own monks, so often this was their constant refrain, "Our monks are so pure", not like those wretched Tibetans, or Nepalese, or even Burmese, "our monks are so pure." They didn't mean that their monks were particularly chaste, no, they meant something more like what the author is trying to get at here.

Subhuti : Pukka.

S : Pukka yes, though 'puk' is also 'pure', yes ; - "Our monks are the real thing, they stick to the essentials, their lives are properly structured, and also they are sources of authority, they are the guardians and upholders of the values of Sinhalese Buddhist society." This is what they meant by, "Our monks are so pure." What they mean also by "pure Buddhism", that Buddhism which excludes all extraneous elements, all sort of Hindu elements, and Mahayana elements have been weeded out or kept away, and that gives structure, that gives authority, that gives power, do you see? They use the word "pure" in a quite, almost idiosyncratic way, from our point of view.

Devaraja : The impression that came across at the end of that chapter, is that in actual fact they have not moved out of society at all, because he refers quite a lot I think to, what I understand he means by this is, that they have an emblematic function within the society, so they are actually fully participating within the society, they have not moved outside it at all. Which seems to me to make clearer why they put so much emphasis on morality, as being the central concern of living a particular way of life, in a particular kind of way.

[End of tape one tape two]

S: Yes well, even a spiritual community, which is a genuine spiritual community, from the point of view of those who are not members of that spiritual community, but members of the society let us say, the group within which that spiritual community is embedded, from their point of view, or so far as they are concerned, the spiritual community will seem to be part of their group. But obviously the spiritual community will not see itself in that way, the spiritual community, to be a spiritual community, will need to have a dimension, wherein it is not part of the group, not part of any group, a purely spiritual, purely transcendental dimension. Whether the particular monastic communities which exist in Ceylon, or were set up in Ceylon as the result of this Forest Monks movement were really spiritual communities in that sense, is perhaps doubtful. Maybe there were glimmerings of real spiritual community, but not much more than that. No doubt we shall see, but if they weren't spiritual communities in the full sense, or to the extent that they were not spiritual communities in the full sense, they would be part in the sense of fully a part, of the surrounding society, the group in which they were embedded. They would be fully continuous with that group and therefore would obey the laws of that group, the psychological laws of that group, as well as the social and economic and even political laws of that group.

Devamitra : A question now from Kulamitra. This question pertains to the place of 'sila' in the FWBO.

Kulamitra ; In the book, Carrithers speaks of the axiomatically fundamental place of 'sila' in the lives of the monks in Ceylon, so my question. is; should the Order be giving an axiomatically fundamental place to 'sila', if so, does this just mean keeping the ten precepts, or does it imply some equivalent to a forest dwelling, monastic life?

S: Let's go over that again. Just read the first bit.

Kulamitra : Should the Order be giving an axiomatically fundamental place to sila?

S: I wonder what one means by axiomatically fundamental. But anyway, let me just comment in passing that from a Buddhist traditional point of view, sila cannot be doctrinally, as distinct from methodologically, fundamental, because it is, one might say, enlightenment which is fundamental, or at the very least, emancipation, or wisdom, which is fundamental. If 'sila' was fundamental, well, there would be no Buddhism, there would be no enlightenment. But that is just in passing, that is pretty obvious; so the next part of the question.

Kulamitra : If so, and I think I did mean, more from the methodological point of view, does this mean

S: You refer to the point of view of people in Ceylon, it is that bit I wanted to comment on.

Kulamitra : Well he says that from the point of view of the forest monks, 'sila' does have an axiomatically fundamental place. He also talks in terms of the forest dwelling monks needing to lead that life in order to keep their 'sila' spotless and pure. So in my question I'm asking, for us, would the 'sila', if the 'sila is central, would it be in terms of the ten precepts, or would one have to think in terms of

S: Let's deal with their way of looking at it first. Looking at the forest monks, or of Buddhists generally in Sri Lanka. That 'sila' is fundamental. (pause) I mean the Bhikkhus in Ceylon observe a much greater number of precepts than do the laity. They observe, both collectively and individually a total of two hundred and twenty seven silas. So there appears to be a tremendous difference between the lay people and the monks. The lay people, let us say, observe five, or at the most eight silas, the bhikkhus observe two hundred and twenty seven, so I think sila comes to be regarded as fundamental, especially in the case of the monks, simply because there appears to be so great a difference between laity and monks in this respect. Do you see what I mean?

In a way the comparison is not a very genuine one, because those precepts which are actually morally and ethically of the greatest importance are common to both. It is only comparatively trivial precepts which are observed exclusively by the monks. But the fact that you can count two hundred and twenty seven in the case of the Bhikkhus, and only five or eight in the case of the laity, makes it appear that there is a tremendous difference between the laity and the Bhikkhus, and the difference is in the field of 'sila'. So if the monks say want to emphasise the extent to which they differ from the laity well, they emphasise 'sila', because it is therein, apparently, that the difference consists, or is most clearly seen. I mean a monk may meditate for half an hour, but so might a layman, there is no great difference there, but when you look at their 'silas', they are apparently very, very different. So it is the observance of sila in the sense of lots and lots of extra silas, that comes to differentiate the monk from the lay person, and therefore sila comes to be regarded as so important, and perhaps, as axiomatically fundamental.

All right, so we come now to what bearing that has on the FWBO, or the WBO.

Kulamitra : Right OK, for us in the Order, does the place we give to sila just mean adhering to the ten precepts, or if we give it importance does it imply some sort of equivalent for us, of the forest dwelling monastic life?

S: Well, clearly in Sri Lanka, there is a disproportionate emphasis on sila. I'm not saying that sila should be emphasised less, but perhaps other things should be emphasised more, that is samadhi, and prajna. I think there is no doubt that in the WBO and FWBO, we need to emphasise the importance of sila more. Perhaps we are only just now getting around to doing that, because most people, so far have been following the path of fairly irregular steps. But that does not mean that by emphasising sila more, we follow in the footsteps of the Sri Lankan Buddhists and give a disproportionate emphasis almost in principle, to 'sila', without lessening in any way, whatever emphasis we at present place on meditation and wisdom. Perhaps we do need to give more importance to sila. I think a lot of people are beginning to realise that. Perhaps in some cases, some peoples attitudes have been a bit cavalier as though sila has almost been confused with lifestyle. It does not really matter really, whether you are particularly ethical, the main thing is to get on with your meditation and so on and develop insight. There is an element of truth in that, but only an element, because after a while you find you're not making any progress, you can't get much further, and then you have to consider the question of whether you need to strengthen your ethical basis.

So yes, provided there is no disproportionate emphasis on 'sila', I think we could well give a bit more attention to that, and be more thorough-going in our observance of the precepts. I don't think we need any extra precepts. It's a question of simply being more thorough going, with regard to the existing precepts, and seeing their deeper implications as I have tried to bring out in the *Ten Pillars*. Not just seeing them as rules, but as ethical principles, embodied so to speak concretely, in rules. Ethical principles which have got a quite deep and fundamental and spiritual,

even transcendental significance ultimately. The first principle has all sorts of metaphysical implications, the first precept, it links up with the love mode as distinct from the power mode, therefore it requires you to distinguish between the two. It is very difficult to distinguish between the two without a measure of insight perhaps - at least insight with a small 'i'.

Devamitra : Another question from Kamalasila, concerning the use of the word 'dukkha'.

Kamalasila : Do you agree with the author on page eleven, that the influence of Christian and enlightenment ideas of human quality, do in fact, blunt the impact for us of the teaching of 'dukkha'?

S: What reasons does he give for thinking is this way? I don't remember any actual reasons. Does he give any reasons?

Kamalasila : The reasons are the influence of Christian ideas and enlightened ideas on the equality of human beings.

S: Blunts the implications of the teaching of dukkha. But how could it do that? Because Buddhism teaches surely that all equally, one might say, are subject to dukkha. Where is that passage?

Padmavajra : He says we can't appreciate the tremendous synthesising impact of the teaching of dukkha.

S: Ah yes, now I remember

Padmavajra (contd) : on the cosmopolitan nature of ancient India, because ancient India was a struggle based society, because of the influence in.....

S: Yes well, this links up with what I was saying earlier on about the caste system envisaging human beings as belonging almost as different species. So difference was emphasised. But the Buddha's teaching of dukkha, brought together the different species, as it were, by emphasising that they all were subject to dukkha. All sentient existence was subject to dukkha. That they had these, well had this particular common characteristic So to the extent that things have common characteristics, they are brought more closely together, so a more unitary conception of humanity is arrived at. But why the impact of Christianity, and enlightenment undermines this, I'm not sure.

Padmavajra : Apparently it undermines our appreciation.....

S: Ah yes! It undermines our appreciation yes, this is true I would say, yes, because we take it so much for granted, so we perhaps can't realise what a new idea it was at that time. Because people were so accustomed to think of the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, the Shudra as almost four different species of life, but when the Buddha pointed out that the Brahmin was subject to suffering, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, the Shudra, that all human beings were subject to suffering, it made more evident the fact that there was one human race, united through its liability to suffering.

So perhaps we have got so used to the idea of there being one human race, and that everybody is virtually the same in all fundamental respects, we don't realise what a revolution it was perhaps when the Buddha pointed this out. For instance, even nowadays, a lot of people still do not realise that animals can suffer, and perhaps in the classical world, it wasn't always realised that slaves can suffer. So, I mean Brahmins and Kshatriyas very often didn't realise that Shudras can suffer, that untouchables can suffer. In India, high caste Brahmins even today, really don't regard untouchables as being fully human and having their sort of feelings, and sensitivities. But the Buddha emphasised that all human beings are subject to dukkha, they all suffer in this particular way. We all have that kind of susceptibility, that kind of sensitivity, so this helps to enforce, or reinforce the idea of one common humanity, one human race, one species.

It is perhaps difficult for us, brought up believing that all human beings were created by God. In the case of the Hindu, they believe, yes, that all human beings are created by God but different castes came out of different parts of God's body. The Brahmins out of his head, and the Kshatriyas out of his shoulders and so on. So there is a difference in origin, so that the division, the fundamental division of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra is justified. So the Buddha's teaching that all human beings, regardless of caste, are subject to suffering, was a unifying tendency, a unifying teaching. Yes it is difficult for us to appreciate that.

Devamitra ; A question again from Padmavajra, this time on the "mythic charter."?

Padmavajra : The forest monks are said to have a mythic charter, embodying change and ambiguity, what is our own "mythic charter" in the FWBO and what is its character?

S: Well, I suppose one part of it is the blue print of the new society, but we don't have a mythic charter, perhaps not yet, but we have a sort of charter as regards the world transforming side of our activities. No doubt that is the blueprint of the new society, one might say. But again, one can go a bit further than that, what is a charter? Who gives a charter? When a city is given a charter, where does the charter come from, who gives the charter?

A Voice : The King.

S: The King, so in the case of the forest monks, where does their mythic charter come from? Well, presumably it comes from tradition, it comes from the scriptures. So we might say that ultimately, that is where our charter comes from too, from the Buddhist scriptures, the Buddhist tradition interpreted in accordance with, or in the light of the needs of the developing individual or spiritually developing individual. But perhaps that is something that could be looked into further. Perhaps it is premature to look into it now, perhaps it might be looked into in maybe a hundred years time, because perhaps only a corner of the charter has emerged as yet, or a few lines of writing, not the whole charter, perhaps just one or two words.

Devaraja : It seems to me that the charter of the Order is, or seems like the image of the thousand armed Avalokitesvara.

S: Yes, yes one could say that. Though one could say perhaps that in reality, only two or three hands have emerged, We're only doing two or three different kinds of things. There are hundreds of other things that we could do. Hundreds of other expressions, of, in a manner of speaking, the collective Bodhicitta.

Devamitra : Perhaps that could lead us on to the next question. This comes from Dhammaloka.

Dhammaloka : In his hypothesis the author suggests five main motives for taking up the spiritual life. This is reviving of the traditional Buddhist way of life, escape from social oppression in a stratified society, escape from economic difficulties like underemployment and poverty, finding a way out of psychological stress, and previous religious experiences - here in terms of meditation. Transferring these motives to Western society, to what extent, and in what way should we make an effort to attract people through these particular motivations. For example; by presenting a businesses not so much as a means of right livelihood, but as a means of alleviating unemployment etc.

S: Let's go through these, one by one, these five, can you just mention them?

Dhammaloka : The first motive was reviving a traditional Buddhist way of practice.

S: Well that is not really applicable to the West is it? It might be applicable in the East. It is certainly applicable among the ex-untouchables, who very much like to think they are reviving Buddhism as it was in the time of Ashoka. Ambedkar is often looked upon as a second Ashoka, and the original mass conversion ceremony on the 14th October 1956, took place on the Vijayadasani Day which they have renamed Ashokadasani, Ashokavijayadassani, because according to Hindu belief, it is the day on which Rama returned from Sri Lanka after conquering Ravanna. But according to Ambedkar, and ex-untouchables, this is actually, the day of, Nagabodhi is maybe more versed in this that me, the day on which Ashoka abdicated violence, and took to the path of non violence. I don't know what historical basis there is for this particular belief, but anyway I site it just to show how they regard Ambedkar as a kind of second Ashoka. Inasmuch as he contributed to the revival of Buddhism in the way of extension, or expansion of Buddhism, in the same sort of way that Ashoka did.

So for our ex-untouchable friends and brothers in India, this motivation of reviving the Buddhist tradition, is quite a powerful one. But clearly it can have quite a powerful appeal for Hindus, certainly the more liberal minded ones. You can present Buddhism to them in these sort of terms, that when was-India at its greatest? When was it most united politically, most highly respected by other countries, at the highest phase of its own culture? It was in the reign of Ashoka, and what was that due to?, it was due to Buddhism. This has a definite appeal to some Hindus and some non-Buddhists even today, and perhaps more and more so. As under the influence of Western education, they become somewhat alienated from their own Hindu tradition in all its fullness, with all its own ceremonies and superstitions and so on. They come to think of Buddhism as a sort of acceptable alternative, and the fact that India was once Buddhist means quite a lot to them. The fact that the Ashokan period of Indian history was a particularly glorious one, strengthens the appeal of Buddhism for them. So that is a very relevant factor in India, but not in the West. All right the next one?

Dhammaloka : The next one is 'escape', escape social oppression in society.

S: Again this is something very relevant in India, but not so relevant to us. Perhaps we could put it more in this way. Because if they have got a caste system in India, well we have a class system in England. I don't know whether anyone has thought of presenting Buddhism as one way of bringing about a classless society? Perhaps one could make something of this in approaching people who work in Centres, the question of class differences. Say that Buddhism has been aware of these sort of from the beginning. That Buddhism in India was confronted by the caste system, and Buddhism did not accept the caste system. In the same way Buddhism does not accept the class system, we do not believe in those sort of social barriers between man and man. Do you see what I mean? We could perhaps, when speaking to certain people, make more of that point, and say that as far as we are concerned in the Western Buddhist Order, or within the Movement generally, these distinctions do not exist. Of course they are subtler distinctions, in many ways that you will find in the case of the caste system, but they are distinctions nonetheless, and though sometimes they are very subtle, can be for some people quite irritating. They can in fact constitute, though subtle, definite barriers to human communication. So it might be worthwhile to emphasise that more than we have done.

Perhaps pointing out that in the Order at least, we have people from all sorts of social backgrounds, and they are making a genuine effort to treat one another as brothers and sisters regardless of class, background, social origins, education, culture, and so on and so forth.

All right, third?

Dhammaloka : Thirdly, to overcome economic difficulties, like unemployment or underemployment etc.

S: I don't think we could present our co-ops at present as a solution. I think in order to work in co-op, you require, to begin with, a very strong spiritual motivation. Because if you were working in a co-op, I doubt if one would be get very much more money than if you were on the dole. So I think that in order to work in a co-op, you'd want a very strong spiritual motivation. You'd have to see it definitely as a means of right livelihood, which would mean you'd be accepting the principle of right livelihood, and therefore accepting the eight-fold path almost.

A Voice : Would it perhaps be a means of presenting a co-op say as a training situation for young people, who then could experience that it is much more than.....

S: I think probably the demands are such, the demands that are made on people working in co-ops are such that the average person who just wanted a job, or even just wanted training, probably would not be prepared to put up with them. That is my guess. Low pay, long hours, hard work, I think that you could only get someone to work in that sort of way, in that sort of situation, if there is a definite spiritual motivation. So long as the dole is an alternative, I think most people without that spiritual motivation, would opt for the dole.

Kulamitra : Bhante, I see exactly what you mean about that kind of thing. But on a more theoretical level, you have mentioned the fact that in a way all working life could be rearranged to redistribute leisure and work more evenly, and it is really selfish interests that get in the way of that. We could make more of that point of view.

S: Yes, we could make those points more, we could draw people's attention to those principles, we could certainly do that, as distinct from being

able to meaningfully open our co-ops to them. Yes, we could attack the whole notion of a full time job. Perhaps some people would attack it quite happily. (pause). Also attack the fact that leisure is a curse, that leisure is something which somehow has to be got rid of, or filled up with meaningless activities just to pass the time, so that time does not hang heavy on your hands.

What was the fourth one-?

Dhammaloka : Find a way out of psychological distress.

S: Yes, that's a very common motivation and I think people are well aware of the connection between meditation and the alleviation of psychological stress. It seems doctors even nowadays, GPs, are prescribing meditation to their patients, and I think we have perhaps made sufficient use of the connection between meditation and the relief of psychological stress. Perhaps that doesn't need to be emphasised any more.

Dhammaloka: And the was previous religious experiences.

S: Sometimes we do find people coming to us who have religious experiences and are trying to make sense of them, or find some kind of context for them. I mean, at the very beginning of the Eightfold Path series, I make the point that, quite a few people have had insight experiences, insight probably with a small 'i', in most cases. Perhaps more could be made of that. There are some interesting books by Sir Alistair Harvey in this connection, I have a couple which I have not yet been able to read. He is very much concerned with exploring the whole field of natural religious experience. He has collected quite a large number of cases, a large number of examples, of people who, without any particular connection, in most cases with a religious tradition, have had sometimes quite profound religious experiences, which very often they are at a loss to know how to explain.

So perhaps we could make more of this and say that we are inviting you to experience something completely unfamiliar, that you have never experienced before. It may be that you have had experiences that you have overlooked, experiences of great significance, and Buddhism could help you to understand those, and place them in a broader, in fact a universal context which would help you to make greater sense of your whole life.

So perhaps we could make something more of that, and maybe Alistair Harvey's writings are of interest, are of use in this connection. He has an Institute for, I forget the exact title, the study of religious experience, or something of that sort. It is a sort of almost phenomenological, almost biological approach to religion, which is a quite useful and quite interesting one. (pause).

Devamitra : The final question has something of a military nature (laughter) It is from Buddhadasa (laughter) He has a question on the army.

Buddhadasa : Bhante, having just arrived at the ambition to ask you the perfect question, I am almost ashamed to ask you this one. Have you any comments to make, concerning the Buddha's claim that of all the castes, that the warriors caste was the best. Could a military career be a fitting prelude to the taking up the spiritual life proper?

S: I don't think that the Buddha says that the Kshatriya is best absolutely. It would seem to be the best in the sense of the most highly regarded. This morning I happened to be dipping into the Lalitavistara, and that contained a passage that one finds elsewhere in the Buddhist scriptures to the effect that when the Bodhisattva in the Tusita devaloka, surveys the world, and is deciding where to be reborn. He decides to be born in a Kshatriya family, in those ages where the Kshatriyas are considered the superior caste, and in a Brahmin family in those ages when the Brahmin caste is considered to be the superior. So this would suggest that the Kshatriya caste, is not best or superior in an absolute sense, but certainly that it is one of the two best castes at the very least. Do you see what I mean? I think in the Buddha's day yes, the Kshatriyas were considered to be the best at least by the Kshatriyas. The Brahmins of course did not agree with this. So there a sort of connection, a sort of correspondence, because the Buddha certainly spoke of his bhikkhus as Brahmins, he uses the word 'Brahmin' as synonymous with 'Bhikkhu' in many contexts. In the Dhammapada for instance.

But he also on, one occasion at least, spoke of his Bhikkhus as Kshatriyas. He told them, "You are Kshatriyas," or "we are Kshatriyas, and in what sense are we Kshatriyas?", "Because we fight, well, what do we fight for?, for Sila, Samadhi, Prajna, and Vimutti." So the Kshatriya is one who fights, but who fights on the material plane, for material victory, military victory, where as the Bhikkhu, is one who fights on the spiritual plane, fights for spiritual victory, fights to overcome Mara. The Buddha is spoken of as conquering Mara. He is called the one who conquers Mara. The defeat of Mara is called his 'Maravijjaya', his victory over Mara. So again there is something of a military analogy or metaphor.

So one might say that the true Kshatriya is one who has mobilised all his energies in pursuit of a definite goal, consisting of a victory over an enemy. So one might say that if someone has been accustomed to thinking in these terms, if he was to re-channel all his energies, then thinking in those terms could have been a sort of preparation for the spiritual life. One could say that there are certain features of military life, which have at least an analogy with spiritual life, with religious life. To begin with, of course, soldiers are usually segregated in barracks, soldiers see quite a lot of one another, and warm feelings of comradeship do spring up amongst them. I do know from talking with my father and men of his generation that the one thing that they remembered with nostalgia, when they looked back on their own days in the army in the First World War, was the comradeship. That almost seemed to compensate for all the difficulties and suffering of military life. This seems to be the most vivid memory of many men of that generation. It's I think well known that some men were deeply affected by this and in a sense were always hankering after that sort of comradeship which they never experienced again. I suppose the comradeship of the trenches. There's quite a bit of literature about this.

Buddhadasa : This is still true today, when men leave the army after their allotted time span, they sometimes ask for readmission. They don't like civilian life.

S: Because it is not always that they miss the comradeship, one must recognise that. Sometimes they miss the security and they are happy not to have to accept responsibility. Even if you spend all your pay on payday night, it doesn't matter, because you have got shelter, you have got food. You can be as spendthrift as you like. It doesn't matter, you don't have to think about the future, the Sergeant Major is looking after that, the C.O. is looking after that. So there is that side to it as well, but yes, the experience of comradeship is a common factor and discipline, simplicity. One might say in the old days at least fearlessness, when you actually faced an enemy of flesh and blood, not a rocket coming from some miles away.

I think this is generally understood, at least in traditional terms, that there is a sort of analogy at least let us say between the life of the warrior and the life of the spiritual warrior, the monk.

Anyway it would seem that in certain periods of European History, perhaps the early middle ages, monks and military men, felt very much at home with each other, and even monastic life had a certain military tinge to it. There were orders of military monks, there was a sort of overlap in that sort of way. Perhaps we should not make too much of that. Far from attracting some people, it might put some people off. (laughter)

Someone did come to me today, a Friend, not even a mitra yet, from around the LBC, who had quite a bit of experience of other Buddhist groups. He had quite deep experiences in one or two cases, but has eventually opted for the FWBO, and he said what attracted him was just the friendliness, and the metta, which he had found in no other Buddhist group that he had been in contact with. He was a member of one particular group for seven or eight years. He was a disciple of one particular teacher for seven or eight years and he'd left. He said it was just what I needed, metta and friendship and he hadn't found them in any other Buddhist group. I was rather surprised, and pleased and at the same time sad. Pleased that at least there's a measure of friendliness and metta in the FWBO but sad that he could make that statement several other Buddhist groups. So perhaps we should not overdo this military metaphor. (laughter)

Because we mustn't forget that the 'asuras' are also represented as military men, with little rifles and cannons, bombarding the gods (laughter). So perhaps we should think carefully before putting out such slogans as " Do your military service in the FWBO." (loud laughter). "See Sergeant-Major Buddhadasa for further information." (laughter) There is the Salvation Army, they have quite a popular appeal. They are organised along sort of military lines, certainly with military ranks and titles. People seem rather to like it, rather than otherwise, don't they? It certainly makes them quite distinctive and recognisable. But perhaps one should not linger too much over all this. Is that the end of the questions?

Devamitra : Yes unless there are any comments you would like to add.

S: I might have one or two little points which have not actually been covered. They are more points to which I would like to draw your attention more than anything else.

Top of page four, the author says "*The arrangement of the hermitage, the daily schedule of the monks, their deportment, and their mental training in solitude, are in fact all conceived to be arranged around this central necessity, the cultivation of the mind.*" This has a lot of bearing on the FWBO as well, because one of the reasons why we want to set up the new society, why we want to transform the world, is to make it easier to lead a spiritual life. In other words, we want to set up a social structure, within which it is easier to develop certain states of consciousness. So this is something we have in common with the efforts of the monks. Do you see what I mean? We mustn't lose sight of the effect that our conditions under which we live have on our minds. We sometimes can change our minds, to some extent, or make it easier to change our minds, develop our minds, by changing our living conditions. I think this is something that needs to be emphasised and brought to people's attention, that it isn't all that difficult to bring about a change in your mind.

People often have experience of this and notice this and remark on it, when they go on retreat. They are living under completely different

conditions from what they usually live under, and they do find that their mental state changes, almost automatically. So this suggests that your way of life, if you like, your lifestyle, is quite important and should be given serious attention if you are serious about changing your mental states, improving your mental states. (pause).

Then a little further down the same page : "*These were attempts in the first instance, not to achieve liberation, but to revive the forest-dwelling way of life, and re-establish hermitages whence liberation could be sought.*" Well, that is almost a little Bodhisattva like isn't it, a little Mahayana like? You're not going all out for your own liberation here and now. You're trying to create a structure, within which liberation is possible, or more easily attainable. Presumably not just for yourself, but for others as well, so to some extent, this is the sort of thing that we are also doing in the FWBO. We are trying to establish, not just hermitages, but a whole society whence liberation could be sought, or a society whence liberation could more easily be sought. (pause).

Right down at the bottom of that same page, just at the end of that paragraph, that ends four lines above the end of the page, it says "*In the next chapter, I attempted to build a bridge of empathy by means of the European monks, and I have in subsequent chapters concentrated on biography as the most effective method of elucidating motives in social and cultural history.*" It struck me that perhaps the autobiographies and life stories, that people tell, are quite relevant here, and perhaps in future if someone does ever want to study the history of the Movement, perhaps a comprehensive and comparative study of all existing autobiographies, would be a very interesting way of doing that. Do you see what I mean? Because if you just go through the minutes, and you go through the issues of the newsletter, or even Shabda, perhaps you don't get such a full or multidimensional view, but if you were to take the autobiographies, the life stories, as told by themselves, of a large number of Order members, perhaps you would get quite a deep insight into what, in practise at least, the FWBO and the WBO were really all about. Maybe this is the path for some future historian of social and cultural history. I just mention it in passing (pause).

Yes, there is this hypothesis suggested on page eight by Nur Yalman. He puts forward the hypothesis : "*Those societies which are highly and rigidly stratified appear to accord prestige to asceticism, and other worldliness in their religious ideology. And elsewhere in the same article he suggests what the causal relationship might be by referring to the ascetic movements as a safety valve to allow individuals to escape the oppressions of caste society.*" This reminds me of the thesis of a book that appeared a few years ago called, "*The God Men of India.*" Some of you may have seen it, it came out in paperback in England in Penguin, "*The God Men of India,*" about the famous Gurus. It was a sort of sociological explanation of their role and function in society. The main point I think it was that was made by author, who was a Westerner and a sociologist and psychologist, was that amongst all the relationships which were important in your life, the only one which depended on your own free choice in a caste ridden society, was your relationship with your guru. You were born into a particular caste, and that meant that you belonged to that caste and your closest relations were within that caste, your friendships were within that caste. Even your wife was chosen for you. You didn't even choose your own wife, so you had no freedom with regard to your relationships, except in the choice of a guru usually. So according to the author, this was one of the reasons why the guru was so important, and why these 'God-men', these incarnations of God, who functioned as gurus, were so important in people's lives. They would develop an almost romantic relationship with them in some cases, almost falling in love with them, because that was the only area where they had choice and freedom. I must say that when I read this book, this thesis made sense at least in some cases, because I could remember the way in which Indian friends of mine, Hindu friends of mine especially, seemed to relate to their gurus. It was very much like that, you see what I mean? So I think that this sociological type of explanation can't be altogether

ruled out of question at least to some extent. This also reminded me of what I encountered in Nepal, because in Nepal, the Nepalese Buddhists who were called mostly Newars, I mention them in my memoirs, were very much suppressed under the Rama regime, they were forced to comply with the caste restrictions, and for many people the only avenue was religion, especially for women. Lots of women became Anagarikas, because that was the only way, without being married, that you could achieve some sort of status and independence, and freedom. It was noticeable that after the Rana regime was overthrown, you did not get a great upsurge of people becoming monks and nuns, now that they were freer to do so, it declined. Because so many other avenues opened up to them. So I could see that very clearly at the time, even though I didn't think in these sociological terms. It was quite clear that some of the people who became bhikkhus, were not so much motivated by religious reasons, spiritual reasons, they wanted the greater freedom of action, that that particular way of life could give them. They wanted the comparative freedom from the political regime even, the freedom to travel. If some monk came along from Ceylon, or Burma, and you wanted to get out of Nepal, well you had no money. But if you said you wanted to be a monk, then he would raise the money for you to go off to Ceylon or Burma. You could travel abroad.

But of course later on, well you didn't have to become a monk in order to travel abroad, so very few became monks. You see what I mean? The same or even more so with the nuns, the Anagarikas, because they were bound in so many more ways than the men even. They were bound through marriage. So if they wanted to live a free life and not to get married, and not be under the thumb of some man, well the only thing to do was to become an Anagarika. We find this even in the Buddha's day, the bhikkhunis, the Theris, in their songs often stress freedom from domestic responsibilities and domestic tyranny. That was in many cases the initial motive for them taking up the spiritual life. But in the case of many of those that I observed, the bhikkhus and anagarikas of Nepal, it seemed to have been the predominant reason, not only the predominant reason, that seemed to remain the reason and never really broke through into a purely spiritual dimension. I think that is true of the Sangha to some extent in many parts of the East, as it was true of course of the priesthood in the West. If you were a poor boy what would be the chief means of social mobility? To enter the church, to enter the priesthood. Now you don't have to, if you get fed up with it, as Abhaya described in his extract from his memoirs, you can leave at the age of nineteen. You could perhaps get a job, and be just as successful outside the priesthood as in it. But in the middle ages, if you gave up the priesthood, you would probably have gone right down in the social scale, right down to being a peasant again, unless you had been born into a noble or wealthy family.

So it does happen sometimes, that the monastic order, or the priesthood, where that has prestige, is used as a means of social mobility and social climbing by those to whom no other means of advancement is open. You can't blame them altogether. Wolseley was the son of a butcher of Ipswich. Well, if he had remained a butcher, he would never have gained the respect he did have as a Cardinal Archbishop and Chancellor of the Realm, but the gateway to all that was the priesthood. I think it is still the case in some parts of the Christian world. I think in some of the African and other developing countries, the ministry or the priesthood, is still a means of improving yourself. It is significant that in many of these countries, the religious leaders are also political leaders. Anyway that's bye the bye. (long pause)

I think that was about it. One or two little places I had marked but they are going to be dealt with in greater detail later on like the fear of hell as a motivation for spiritual life. (pause) Yes there is one thing in contrast you might have noticed. It's on top of page twenty.

" In fact the difference between the orthodox Theravada view and this heterodox proposal (about the primacy of mind and meditation) reflects

the difference between Buddhism as the indigenous religion of Ceylon, and Buddhism as a spiritual movement in the West. In the West, a few individuals, (most of them relatively well educated and intellectual) have come to it out of personal interest, and its particular attraction lies in the promise of release through self-cultivation. But it is difficult for Westerners, steeped in ideas of Christian charity, or social relevance to stop there, and it is commonly expected that self-cultivation will be the medium for transformation which will further render the meditator morally fit and compassionate. There are many doctrinal reasons for rejecting my conjecture but the impatience and even outrage, with which the monks heard it (the Forest Monks), and the unity of view with which it was rejected, left no doubt that the monks place moral purity in the central position I had wished to accord to meditative experience."

That is quite interesting. Anyway perhaps that will emerge further in the course of the book. Anyway, we have got through all those questions, I think reasonably satisfactorily. Any supplementaries occurred to anybody to ask? People satisfied they have got reasonably to grips with the introduction and with the whole book?

Suvajra : It was quite difficult, in the three groups to get to grips with the material, in the time that we had. We even went over time and some extra time, and still felt it was quite a short time in which to deal with it.

S: You are going to have to work quite hard I'm afraid. I'm quite aware there is a lot of ground to cover, much of it perhaps unfamiliar. At least the language and approach are relatively unfamiliar, but I think it will be worthwhile. It will repay our efforts.

[End of tape two]

Questions and Answers on the Forest Monks of Sri Lanka, Chapter Two - 6th August 1985.

S: Before Devamitra speaks, Bhante would like to interpose a word. This is just to add something I think I had it in mind to say at the time. This is in connection with the fact which I mentioned that according to the Canonical account, the Bodhisattva who is to become the Buddha, always takes birth in either in a Brahmin or a Kshatriya family, whichever caste happens to be in the ascendent at the time. I just wanted to make the point that this reflects a general sort of Indian Buddhist view, that one works as it were from the top downwards. That you as it were, take advantage of the existing structure of society, one might say. So from this point of view, it would be foolish, as it were, for a Bodhisattva, who would become a Buddha, to take birth at a level of society where he would be able to do less good, or even least good. Do you see what I mean? It would be foolish to impose that sort of handicap on himself from the beginning. I'm not sure whether this view can be attributed to the Buddha himself, personally I'm rather doubtful, but it is rather interesting that the tradition did develop in that way, and it was always assumed that you needed to capture the top people first. If you captured them, well, then you automatically captured the rest. This view is explicitly stated in the Bhagavadgita, by the way, and it is a view that comes up in the East all the time in a rather unfortunate form. Because you often find bhikkhus making a beeline for the influential, and the wealthy, and the prominent, believing that if only you can convert them first, then everybody else will be converted automatically. Sometimes it can mean that people think that they are propagating the Dharma, when they are only trying to fraternise with people in a high social or political position.

So I just mention this in passing as a point to be noted.

Suvajra : It's almost as if we are doing the opposite, with the Ambedkar movement?

S: Yes, I was very aware of this when I started the FWBO, or even when I came back to Britain, I was very aware that some of my Buddhist and bhikkhu friends in the East operate in a completely different way, and I did not see that that way worked. You were merely trying to fraternise with wealthy and powerful people, and very often it was more a matter perhaps of them influencing you than you influencing them. (pause) Sometimes people could move and mix with wealthy and influential people, really for the sake of mixing and moving with the influential, but deceiving themselves and thinking that they were thereby helping to propagate the Dharma. I saw so much of this when I was in India. I quite consciously decided to do things in a different way in this country.

Padmaraja : But you did have some quite influential friends in India, didn't you, listening to your autobiography the other night.....

S: I don't think I did, not at that stage, because for instance, my old friend Dharmaraja, he couldn't stop his own pension being cut in half, and less than half. He might have been prominent once upon a time, or might have been prominent under certain circumstances, but he certainly wasn't famous, no.

Buddhadasa : I'm not clear if this is a traditionally Buddhist view, in addition to being a traditional Indian view. Is it actually a Buddhist view too? I was thinking.....

S: It's a traditional Buddhist view, certainly reflected in Buddhist scriptures and Buddhist practice, but I'm merely doubtful whether it does go back to the Buddha himself.

Padmaraja : Bhante, I was just wanting to pick up a point. Do you think it would be a good idea if we did have a few high caste, or rather if we converted a few high caste Hindus? It's very good working amongst the ex-untouchables, but do you think it would be good to be working with other castes as well?

S: Well, when I was in India, I myself was quite closely connected with people of all communities. In fact I have emphasised to Lokamitra and others in India, that we mustn't confine ourselves to the Mahars, that is to say Buddhists coming from that particular community. We do have a few people coming along from other communities but not very many, because the Mahars themselves are quite suspicious, even those who have become Buddhists, are quite suspicious of people coming from other communities. This is in a sense one of the things which we are up against. But in principle, we don't want the Buddhist movement to become a Mahar movement, or even not just an ex-untouchable movement, because that would defeat its very purpose. Lokamitra is well aware of this as are some of our other Friends perhaps.

Devamitra : Shall we proceed to this evening's business? We had twenty-eight questions to sort out this afternoon, so obviously we don't have enough time I imagine to do all of those. So some questions we will probably not have time for this evening, and in any case many of them have common ground. So from the point of view of your finding questions that may be covered by someone else's question. This leaves us with somewhere between a dozen and fifteen questions for this evening.

Today we were studying the chapter on Nyanatiloka's biography, so the first question comes from Tejananda, concerning your personal contact, whatever that may have been, with Nyanatiloka or any of his colleagues.

Tejananda : Could you give any background information in general, with regard to any personal recollections you have either with the 'Island Hermitage' or of Nyanatiloka. Also a second question; I wondered why Nyanatiloka felt impelled to found his own hermitage, rather than using one of the few pre-existing hermitages of that time?

S: I'll answer the first question first. I had no personal contact with Nyanatiloka, though I believe that, in the very early days we did exchange one or two letters. He certainly sent me an autographed copy of his *Guide to the Abhidharma Pitika*, second edition, which I still have in the Order library. I had a very extensive correspondence when I was in India-with Nyanaponika, his chief disciple, who is of course mentioned in this book. When the *Buddhist Publication Society* was launched, I wrote about that in the *Mahabodhi Journal*, and welcomed it very warmly, and from time to time, I reviewed their work, and always praised it quite warmly. He appreciated that, and we had quite a correspondence over the years. I think I still have quite a few letters from him. We have corresponded occasionally in more recent times, that is to say since I have been back in this country, but probably I have not had a letter now for four or five years. But there has been quite a bit of contact in this way. I think I exchanged one or two letters with one of the other European bhikkhus who were there, I think with Nyanamoli, just a few letters. I had quite a correspondence with Nyanasatta, who died not so very long ago. He was of Czech origin, and a great advocate of Esperanto, and Buddhist literature in Esperanto. I corresponded with him for a time, and published articles by him in the *Mahabodhi Journal*.

But I never had a very close or personal contact. That I think was very largely fortuitous, I never went to Ceylon a second time, and they hardly ever moved out of the Island Hermitage. But we did have a quite friendly contact, I might say on the whole, through correspondence. They certainly knew about me, and knew about my work in India, and latterly of course Nyanaponika has known about the work of the FWBO. I believe that we do send them our *Newsletter*. And the second part of the question?

Tejananda : Why did Nyanatiloka feel impelled to found his own hermitage, rather than use one of the existing ones?

S: I really don't know. It could be because he wanted greater separation from the lay people. Because I think the author does mention about lay people wanting even hermit monks to perform ceremonies for them, and it seems that European monks were usually not very keen on doing that sort of thing. They regarded it as part of popular Buddhism, and well, they just didn't want much to do with that kind of thing. So it may - I have no evidence for this statement - but I think it is quite likely, that Nyanatiloka felt that if he set up his hermitage on an island, it would be much more difficult for the lay people to get to him in that sort of way. People could lead a quieter, more undisturbed life. That is my own explanation. It may be that there were other factors too. Maybe he just liked the place, it is difficult to say. But I cannot give a definitive reply to this question, I can only suggest one possible explanation.

Devamitra ; Next we have a question from Nagabodhi, which concerns Nyanatiloka's involvement and appreciation of music and your own experience of music.

Nagabodhi : Not so much the music. Nyanatiloka, was really a lover of nature and solitude from very early on in his life. This was obviously a contributory factor in his progress towards Buddhism, Buddhist spiritual values and Buddhist spiritual life. Now, most biographical material about you, portrays you as an avid reader and a lover of books. There is no mention of you as a nature lover, or a nature mystic, or a new romantic, or anything like that. But do you feel you were inspired by nature? Do you feel any sense of...

S: I hope some people at least have read my poems! (laughter), have read "*The Enchanted Heart*." I think that so many of the poems I wrote in Kalimpong reflect my appreciation of the natural beauty the place. Perhaps this is the place to draw attention to the fact that if anyone does ever want to write anything about me, they should not ignore my poems, even if they do not consider them much as poetry, they should at least be considered as evidence of my interests let us say. I was thinking only the other day, maybe after reading my chapters from my memoirs, that there are actually quite a few aspects of my character, one might say, or quite a few of my interests which don't get reflected in my writing at all. I was even actually thinking of this whole matter of nature, because I do have and I have always had, a very strong feeling for nature. This might to some extent have been inherited from my father, because my father was brought up in the country in Norfolk. He loved the country and was always hankering to get away, back into the country, and he used to take me and the rest of the family. When I was small we went for outings on Wimbledon common on Sundays and things of that sort.

He really loved to get out into the country. He wouldn't class Wimbledon Common as country, but at least it's the open air and there are trees and flowers and things. I think that probably he did influence me quite a lot in that respect, but I always have had have a very strong feeling for

nature indeed.

I appreciate some nature poetry. I can't say that I have a sort of pantheistic, or mystical feeling for nature. I have not thought about it at all, but the idea comes to me just now, that in that respect my feeling for nature is very much like that of the Indians. The Indians actually as represented say by their classical poetry, don't have a mystical feeling for nature. They don't feel that nature is imbued with spirit, or has any great spiritual significance, but they are very aware of the presence of nature, of natural objects, trees, flowers, animals and that they are alive. They have a feeling of kinship with them, on a sort of basic organic level. So I think this is what I feel. I feel that nature is alive in that sort of way, and I don't see usually devas and fairies and pixies or things of that sort, but I am very aware, I feel very strongly the organic presence of nature. I am not sure I am making myself sufficiently clear. But I certainly do feel what I've been calling recently the living-ness of nature. I talked a bit about this on the women's convention as a reply to a question - there's a bit on tape about it there, but this doesn't come across in any of my writings. Perhaps it come out a little in my poetry, so I think people must be very careful if they do ever do write anything about me, not just to rely upon the evidence of my writings, and perhaps should realise that there are quite large areas of me and my interests, which are not actually represented in my writings at all for one reason or another, if only because I have not had the necessary time.

But anyway, that was sort of interrupting you in the course of your question, rather than answering a question.

Nagabodhi : No that goes some way, and it is really a matter of pushing it a bit further, and to ask you whether you could feel a kinship with Nyanatiloka in this respect as to whether your love of nature, your appreciation of nature, has been for you, or was for you, a tributary factor which pushed you towards an openness to Buddhist values.

S: I do not think it was. I mean I had read Wordsworth, I had read some of that German romantic literature, but I don't think that was an element in directing my interest towards Buddhism. If there was anything that was at all decisive, it was my reading of those two texts which I have often mentioned, the "*Diamond Sutra*," and the "*Sutra of Wei Lang*." I think it was probably quite a long time before I got around to tying up whatever I got from them, or experienced in connection with them, with the various other aspects of my life, including even the ethical. While we are on this topic, in fact I thought it was the sort of question you were about to ask me.

Nagabodhi : I do have a supplementary, shall I ask ?

S: Yes you ask your supplementary.

Nagabodhi : OK. Within the context of the FWBO, the appreciation of nature is upheld as an indirect method of raising consciousness, it is also nature which is also obviously a generalised object of awareness, of mindfulness, but do you think that nature, or the appreciation of nature, could play a more crucial role in our practice? Should we be training ourselves to contemplate nature as a source of analogy, symbol and even insight?

S: I personally don't see the need so much in terms of awareness and contemplation, and looking at nature, though that also is important, so

much as immersing oneself in nature. I appreciate the beauty of nature, but I think what I feel is important is this experience of a sort of oneness with nature on what I can only call the organic level, the level of organic life, even the biological level. I think a lot of the tensions and dis-ease and un-ease, that we experience in perhaps sexual tension can be alleviated by more immersion in nature. When I say that, I mean immersed in nature quite literally, not just strolling in the garden, looking at all the trees and bushes, but really being in really thick, dense vegetation which has a definite effect upon one. One certainly feels something, one has an experience which you don't get in any other way. I think this is largely because we've been cut off, to some extent, from our organic roots, and lost contact with it in that way, that we attach so much importance to sex or sexual activity, and I think if we had more direct contact with nature, immersed ourselves more in nature and had that sort of organic awareness of nature, then we would feel, that is those who are trying to be celibate, would feel sexual pressures and tensions to a very much less degree. We do not often encounter nature in this sort of way. You need to get into a really thick wood, something of that sort, or into a bit of jungle. It is not a question of strolling on the grass and just looking from a distance at a tree. Do you see the sort of thing I'm trying to get at?

Devamitra : I'm not quite sure I understand what you mean by," an organic awareness of nature."

S: Well in a way it can't be described. I suggest if anyone is not clear, well you just have to go and spend some time in the depths of the forest. Maybe just camp, even somewhere like the New Forest, on your own, and just be in the midst of all the ferns and the undergrowth, and the oak trees and so on. Maybe just walk about at night in the midst it all, and just see what you feel, what you experience.

Until quite recently, man did live much more in the midst of, and embedded in nature, in this sort of way. I think if you can experience nature in this way, immerse yourself in nature, it has a definitely refreshing and soothing effect.

Anyway that was your supplementary. Yes, I was thinking about Lama Govinda because Lama Govinda and I once talked about Nyanatiloka, Lama Govinda at one stage of his career lived at Doden Dua. He knew Nyanatiloka, and the other German monks, and I vaguely remember a conversation I had with Govinda. I think it was around the time of Nyanatiloka's death, we probably met shortly afterwards, and I recollect that Lama Govinda definitely felt that Nyanatiloka had limited himself by giving up, I'm not sure whether he said his musical interests, but certainly his artistic interests. There was no doubt that in Ceylon, as a bhikkhu, he could not have pursued his musical interest, that would have been quite out of the question, but he could have pursued perhaps literary interests. I remember Lama Govinda saying that Nyanatiloka's German was very beautiful German, and that one should not judge him by his English, which was wooden and clumsy, and did not do justice to his German. His German works were very much more readable than his English ones. He translated his own German works into English, and translated very woodenly, relying heavily on a dictionary, and his sentence construction was really quite clumsy and so on. But Govinda thought it a pity that he had to neglect and even lay aside that whole artistic side of himself. You can understand Govinda feeling this, and also I recollect that Govinda actually held him up as a sort of warning, because according to Govinda, the last two to three years of his life, Nyanatiloka was virtually senile. He died in hospital. According to this author - I forget exactly where he says it, Nyanatiloka, he says, led a full meditative life. Govinda would have disagreed with that. I got the impression from Govinda that Nyanatiloka ended up as a mere scholar, and that Govinda deeply regretted that. Also I remember quite clearly Govinda saying, whether rightly or wrongly, that had Nyanatiloka devoted more of his time, more of his life to meditation, he would not have ended up in the last two or three years of his life, in the mental state that he did. I remember him telling me this quite clearly. I think it must have been shortly after Nyanatiloka's death. Nothing of this comes in the book, so I mention it as evidence from

what I believe is a reliable source, of a somewhat different nature from what has been recorded in the book. Very likely the author draws his information from Nyanaponika, but this is what Govinda told me, so perhaps it is appropriate that it should as it were go on record.

Dharmapriya: Bhante could I ask a supplementary to your answer to Nagabodhi's supplementary question? You talked of really immersing oneself in nature to find out what this organic awareness of nature is. Maybe I'm reading too much into your use of the word, 'organic', but if I think of deserts, or high Alpine peaks, well they do have organic life, but more on the level of micro-organisms. Would you?

S: No. I am definitely thinking of plant life. Plant life primarily, and animal life secondarily. There is not much animal life or wild life about in Britain anyway. I did talk on the Women's Convention about wild life in Africa, animal wildlife, the difference that it made as I had understood, to be surrounded not just by the odd dog or cat or bird, but by hundreds and thousands of antelopes or giraffes, or ostriches, all sorts of creatures, which is I think still the case in some parts of Africa even now, even though the wild animals have been greatly depleted in recent decades.

I must say when I myself have come into contact with plants, especially flowers one might say or flowering plants, I have a very strong sense of their organic identity, as one might call it. So I think people should not overlook this aspect of my nature or temperament or whatever, even though it has not found as yet really any vivid literary expression, but it is there nonetheless all the time.

Devamitra : You mentioned a few moments ago, the senility to which Nyanatiloka succumbed towards the end of his life, and it strikes me that possibly Abhaya's question may be connected with this in some way.

Abhaya : Yes, I felt that his love of nature, and his German romantic attitude to it that he took into the hermitage somehow limited his spiritual experience. He substituted that or his spiritual life was impoverished and it prevented him perhaps from developing insight.

S: Well, according to Govinda, he was one-sidedly intellectual, for want of a better term, though Govinda had a high esteem for him. I mean, he did not make the comment I remember by way of a criticism. It was a sort regret that he was expressing for someone who was really a quite fine character like Nyanatiloka, had only in fact been able to develop the intellectual side of himself. I mean, Govinda himself for a while, was in much the same situation, in the island hermitage, because he had come there with a background of interest, not in music so much, but in art painting and archaeology as well as Buddhism. So he was living as a brahmachari anagarika in Ceylon at the Island hermitage much of the time. He studied Pali, he studied the Abhidharma, he was in a way treading in the footsteps of Nyanatiloka. But then he got this invitation to represent Southern Buddhism at a conference in Darjeeling, and he went to Darjeeling and Tibetan Buddhism and its symbolism just hit him, and I suppose it linked up with his previous artistic interest. I think he's made it clear in "*The Way of the White Clouds*" that he just saw a vision of a completely different, broader, richer, more comprehensive Buddhism, and he just stayed in Darjeeling, and became more deeply involved in Tibetan Buddhism.

But in the case of Nyanatiloka, that never happened. Perhaps he was too set in his ways by that time. Do you see what I mean? So I picked up from Govinda, a definite regret that Nyanatiloka, though a distinguished scholar and so on, perhaps from a strictly spiritual point of view, hadn't got very far. You don't pick up anything of that sort from this book, but I remember Govinda's comments, and I remember the feeling with

which he communicated it very clearly indeed. I took it in a way, as a sort of warning. (pause)

Nagabodhi : Carrithers seems to suggest that Nyanatiloka and other German romantics who made their way to Buddhism as depicted here, were more than lucky in that they found something that more than satisfied their yearnings. Could it be posited that, in a way, they were unlucky to have not come across something more like the FWBO, which could have given a more rounded vision of the spiritual life. Or, do you think there is a particular type of spiritual aspirant who is suited to the kind of life that they ended up living. For example, or to put it in other words, could you imagine, somebody coming along to an FWBO centre, who after a few meditation classes, would be best off going straight to Vajraloka?

S: There might be some people like that. I must say, I never picked up from the writings of Nyanatiloka any feeling that he had definitely gained insight. I think you could in that situation, but it is almost as though he got side tracked into purely intellectual work, which was very useful, but I think perhaps which represented just one aspect of the spiritual life. I really doubt, from what Govinda told me, that Nyanatiloka got very deeply into meditation at all. It was a quiet, peaceful life, and he was very industrious, and could produce lots of books in German and English, very scholarly books, but Govinda certainly gave me the impression well, stated in so many words, that Nyanatiloka, had very little experience of meditation. He made the point that had he had more he would never have ended up in that senile state. What senility really is, I'm not sure, that is another question, the point I'm making is that Govinda was of the opinion that Nyanatiloka had had very little experience of meditation. Who was his meditation teacher for instance? One doesn't hear that. From all that I have heard about the monks of Doden Dua, they have been very worthy people, very ethical people, hard working people, conscientious, scholarly, but I have never heard that they were great meditators, or that they meditated much at all.

Subhuti : The impression I arrived at in that chapter, was that he was in love with the life, rather than seeing it as a means to an end. Rather like what we were talking about yesterday. He liked the image of the life, almost as though that was just the fulfilment of his romantic and

S: There were several other little significant touches, that they didn't have a proper temple, they just had a two foot image of the Buddha in the dining room. That seems quite significant.

Abhaya: Carrithers refers to him once as saying that he referred to the island as 'his island'.

S: My island, yes. Again from a strict Buddhist, from a monastic point of view, that is the last thing that one should have said. And he seems to have meant that, he seemed to have identified with the place.

Aryamitra : But didn't his disciple write a book on meditation, "*The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*"?

S: That is true, but I mean, part of the "*Heart of Buddhist meditation* " is based mainly on literary resources. It is a sort of translation of a text with commentary. He certainly had some experience, but my personal impression, the first time I read that book was that there was very little personal experience behind it.

Vessantara : Extremely dry.

S: Yes that's true, yes.

Dharmapriya : The mitra who has just arrived here, Gary, spent three weeks at the island hermitage about two years ago, I was talking to him about it just today. When he was there, he said there were six monks there, two Germans, two French, I don't know who one of them was and the head monk was Ceylonese, and they did all definitely meditate. I remember the time when we spoke before, he wasn't sure how subjective he was, but he found the atmosphere quite, let us say, not very joyful. He was contrasting it with another community in Ceylon, where he learned to meditate.

S: Ah ! That's interesting, though anyway, perhaps we should not pursue that too far, because there are lots of other questions. I just wanted to put on record what Govinda had told me in connection with Nyanatiloka, whom of course he had known very well.

Devamitra : The next question comes from Devamitra.

On page twenty eight in the text, the author says : "*In the discussion which follows it will be seen that the European tradition might be thought of - and was thought of by Nyanatiloka - as culminating in Buddhist monasticism.*" Could you comment on that ?

S: The author makes it clear that Nyanatiloka was very influenced by Schopenhauer. It could be regarded as belonging to the Romantic tradition ,and Schopenhauer speaks very highly of both music and the spiritual life, and the life of asceticism, and indeed of Christian monasticism. So if one wasn't particularly committed to Christianity, but was still following that particular line of thought or line of development and if one regarded Buddhism as a non-theistic religion, and being on a higher level than Christianity which is a theistic religion, well one could see a sort of continuous development. And in that way, Buddhism would be seen as the culmination of German Romanticism. (pause)

I mean the author mentions Goethe in this connection and some years ago when I read, "*The Italian Journey*", I was struck by the number of references Goethe makes to being more aware and cultivating himself, and developing self awareness. I extracted all these into a notebook, and I found there was a quite large number of them just from this one volume, and there are similar references in the conversations with (Ekenar). I had a sort of semi question here, maybe its just something which I will put to Dhammaloka for further consideration; Whether any of the people coming into contact with the FWBO in Germany nowadays are representative of this sort of 'Romantic', with a capital 'R' tendency, whether that Romantic tendency is at all alive in any quarters?

Dhammaloka : I think to some extent it is, this idea of self cultivation, which is often spoken of as a self fulfilment, which may go in a different direction. It is still quite alive, but certainly not as it was in previous times in Germany. It was very dominant. But just to mention this, there is a book now written, which I have not read yet, on Goethe and Mahayana Buddhism. It seems that although Goethe has had no direct knowledge of Buddhism, the author seems to imply that there are quite many connections.

S: That is interesting, perhaps it will be translated into English some day? (chuckles). Anyway perhaps we should press on.

Devamitra : The next question comes from Devaraja, it concerns human renunciation.

Devaraja : It falls, I think into two questions - two areas in this question. To what extent do you think that the attraction to the solitary wandering life, or more specifically, the forest dwelling bhikkhus' life, is an expression of the universal human need, and is in fact the living out of a myth; and to what extent are the apparent causes used to explain this urge, such as the German Romantic conflict between society and nature in Nyanatiloka's case, or the Four Sights in the Buddha's, that important?

S: Let's just have the first part of the question again, about the myth.

Devaraja : To what extent, do you think that the attraction to the solitary wandering life, or more specifically, the forest dwelling bhikkhu's life, is an expression of a universal human need, and is in fact the living out of a myth?

S: What is this myth that this way of life is the living out of? I am not clear about that.

Devaraja : Well, I can give examples of what I have identified as that from other areas. Say for example, the wandering knight is a figure in some of the Troubadour songs, to some extent, even

S: Yes, but in what sense is that even a myth? What does one mean by living out a myth?

[End of side 1 side 2]

You have to identify the myth, I mean it is not that someone who wants to live in contact with nature, is just living out some particular myth, so what is that myth?

Devaraja : The myth would be that of a wanderer, with very few possessions who would be

S: Yes, but in what sense is that a myth? That is not the myth, that's a living out of a myth, but what is that myth, of which, living in the forest, or wandering about as a wanderer, are the expressions? (pause).

In other words, I am questioning whether that is an appropriate way to look at the matter. Isn't it enough to say well, you just like living in the country? Does one have to say one is living out a myth, because the question then arises, what myth? Isn't it natural that man having sprang from nature should enjoy contact with nature? Living in big cities is a comparatively recent development. Isn't it natural that man should enjoy just the peace and quiet of the country? Different people in varying degrees? I mean is it appropriate or helpful to speak in terms of the living out

of a myth?

Dhammaloka : Could one say that the wanderer is the searcher for truth, and truth to someone who again and again, might experience that it is not to be found in the normal way to someone like that. Could it be seen like a myth, truth is somewhere, but it isn't really graspable. So couldn't one see it in that sense, this wanderer, searcher for truth ?

S: I think you can only think of the searcher in a literal sense when someone, as in fact the Buddha did, has to go from teacher to teacher, and he is only wandering from place to place because the teachers live widely apart. If they were all living in the same city he wouldn't have to do that. He would just go round from door to door or house to house. So perhaps it isn't a question of living out of a myth, it might be just a matter of practical necessity.

We know this was the case in the middle ages, and it was the case say with Chinese monks, you went from teacher to teacher, or university to university, gathering knowledge wherever you went. It wasn't that you were living out a myth, perhaps that isn't a helpful way of looking at it. Though I can myself think of a myth that might be lived out of in this way but no one seems to have thought of it.

Padmavajra : You speak of the myth of the journey as in the "Journey to Il Convento" and you site the Orientalists, the School of Philosophy in Persia who oriented themselves to

S: Oh yes, you can speak of a journey, a physical journey, as reflecting a spiritual journey at the same time. But in the cases I mentioned, you wander from place to place not because you are yourself in a way almost consciously working out a myth, or living a myth, but because of certain practical necessities, that is another matter.

Let me give my example now. I would say that if someone was to take the myth of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden seriously, and think that man should try to get back to that state and recapture that lost innocence, and thought of going and living in the midst of nature as a way of doing that, well, then he would be living out the myth of Adam and Eve. Do you see what I mean? Especially if he took, of course, his own personal Eve along with him. Here there would be a direct relation between the way of life and the myth. So he could be said to be living out that particular myth. He would be trying to get back to the condition Adam and Eve had, or were living with before the Fall.

But I wonder whether Nyanatiloka was living out a myth in that sort of way. It was not a myth of living in contact with nature, it was more like a sort of ideal. He regarded that as the ideal way of life. I think a myth is something rather different. A myth is a sort of happening on the archetypal plane which you're trying to live out on the mundane plane, the earthly plane.

Devaraja : That's what I was wondering, whether it was something that had an archetypal significance of actually being a wanderer and departing from home.

S: I don't think that it did. It seemed to me that he liked nature, that is pretty obvious, from an early age, and he found the sort of environment

that suited him in Ceylon, in the Island Hermitage. I think it is unnecessary to speak of it as the working out of a myth, or living a myth, that seems rather redundant. Not that there is not such a thing as the living out of a myth, but his life does not seem to have that sort of significance.

Devamitra : We have a series of questions on Hell. You did mention Hell last night.

S: It's going to come in further on in the book. Yes, individual biographies are discussed in which the fear of hell is a powerful motivation. It might be good to leave such questions until then.

Devamitra : In that case we have a question from Dharmapriya, on aspiration.

Dharmapriya : Bhante, on page thirty-nine, Carrithers states that the most important origins of Nyanatiloka's Buddhist monastic calling are Christian, and "*That in their consequences for the formation of an aspiration, they are similar to the roots of Buddhist aspiration.*" Would you comment on this passage, especially on the assumed similarity of spiritual aspiration in Buddhism and Christianity?

S: "*If we regard the most important origins of Nyanatiloka's Buddhist monastic calling, as those which lie deepest in his childhood, there is no doubt that these are Christian; and that in their consequences for the formation of an aspiration, they are similar to the roots of Buddhist aspiration.*" I think this could be regarded as an over generalisation. He is only dealing with one particular case, one particular person after all. (pause) No, I think one could not say that, the basis is so slender on which to erect such a big generalisation. No, I think it is a weak statement, in a way it's so weak that there is really little to discuss. No, the facts of Nyanatiloka's life are as stated. I don't think one can use those facts as a basis for any generalisation about the similarity between Christian and Buddhist aspiration, though no doubt in the case of Nyanatiloka's life, there was a continuity.

Dharmapriya : The reason I asked was not so much Nyanatiloka's life itself, but rather the paragraph that follows, where he tries to give general reasons and general argument actually supporting it.

S: Ah, but he is speaking of homily. He says, "*The question is after all not one of philosophy but one of homily, the unsubtle guidelines laid down by preachers for the edification of children, and admonition of the wayward.*" This reduces the matter to one of social necessity. You are just trying to keep young people in order, and if you are merely trying to do that, whether you are a Buddhist or whether a Christian, your homily will take more or less the same form. You'll probably try to frighten them into being good, or threaten them. You see what I mean? I think it can be taken as meaning no more than that. He does specifically say that the question is after all, not one of philosophy, but of homily. "The unsubtle guidelines laid down by preachers for the edification of children, and admonition of the wayward." So Buddhist and Christian homily, not philosophy, share a stark moral dualism, a sharp division between good and evil. Yes, you have to lay it down, you mustn't do this or you should do that, you have got to be very black and white about it. I think he is saying no more than that. I think that is in a large measure true. I mean it's a question of the techniques of social control, and they operate in much the same way whether the terminology happens to be Buddhist or Christian.

Devamitra : Moving on to a completely different subject, Suvajra has a question about the Vedanta.

Suvajra : It seems that the Vedanta played a part in Nyanatiloka's taking up of Buddhism. I wondered to what extent Vedanta has affected Western culture in general, and if it still perhaps plays a part in people moving toward the spiritual life, or even not taking up the spiritual life.

S: I think Vedanta, that is Advaita Vedanta (one mustn't forget to qualify), Advaita Vedanta as preached especially say by Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission and their followers has certainly contributed to the vague, woolly sort of universalist type spirituality that is so all pervasive in certain circles. I think Vedanta, a sort of vastly popularised and vulgarised Vedanta, diluted Vedanta, is quite an important ingredient in that particular soup one might say.

But Advaita Vedanta as such, as a genuine spiritual tradition, which it is, in certain quarters in India, is not really very well represented these days. I think it was best represented by (Hariprasad) Shastri, and his Shanti Sadhana. He died some years ago, but I don't know if there is any reputable Advaita Vedantic Institution, or movement in Britain these days. There are quite a few sort of popular Vedanta Societies and groups in the States. I think they have been largely overshadowed by later Hindu developments like Hare Krishna, and so on, and even by Buddhist groups and movements, Zen and Tibetan and so on. Vedanta does not seem to be very prominent or very popular these days, compared perhaps with what it was around the turn of the century. But it has certainly contributed to this universal "soup" as I call it.

Nagabodhi : Do you feel, accepting that in these days it seems to do more harm than good, do you think historically though it has at least played a part in opening people's minds to Eastern influences?

S: Oh yes, I certainly think for instance when Vivekananda appeared at the Parliament of Religions in 1893, and it was to some extent, if not largely due to him, that it wasn't what he called " a Christian Show." After all the then Cardinal Archbishop of I forget whether it was New York or Chicago, I believe he was the only one, or perhaps one out of two Cardinals at that time, Catholic Cardinals, head of the Catholic Church, he presided and the Christians clearly expected to show to all and sundry the vast superiority of Christianity over all other religions. The World Parliament of Religions was a part of the Chicago Fair or Exposition in 1893, and Vivekananda's presentation of Vedanta was so effective and dramatic, that I think he was largely responsible for that World Parliament of Religions not being a Christian show, and many people realised that. They realised that Eastern Religions did have quite a lot to say for themselves, and they couldn't be just dismissed as the Christian Missionaries were trying to dismiss them. It is significant that the Head of the Catholic Church never accepted another invitation like that perhaps not right down to the present day.

So that was a great shock, a great jolt and I think that did open a lot of people's eyes, that there were quite advanced spiritual teachings, quite sublime spiritual teachings, emanating from the East, whether in the form of Vedanta, or in the form of Buddhism, or Jainism, or whatever. So I think it is certainly true to say that Vedanta, especially perhaps as represented by Vivekananda and a few other people like that, did play quite an important part historically, in the opening of people's eyes in the West to the fact that Christianity did not have a monopoly of enlightenment to say the least.

So yes, I think Vedanta, especially Advaita Vedanta, albeit somewhat vulgarised and popularised usually, did play a very important part in that whole process. I think it is only fair to say that.

That was 1893. Dharmapala appeared there too. He made a very good impression, but he was not such an effective orator as Vivekananda. Vivekananda was apparently a very, very effective orator and made a tremendous impression through his speeches. Dharmapala also made a very good impression, but I gather from all that I've read, not such a powerful or dramatic one as Vivekananda. They did of course know each other. Vivekananda was a Bengali from Calcutta, a disciple of course of () Ramakrishna. At one time I studied all the literature put out by the Ramakrishna Mission, started by Vivekananda. I think by about 1950 I had read all their literature. It was then that I studied all their translations of Shankaras' works. So I studied some of them with the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order.

Devamitra : We come back to nature again, a question from Padmavajra.

Padmavajra : This may have been answered, but I'll try it anyway. Michael Carrithers sees a continuity in Nyanatiloka's life and his interest in German Romanticism to his adoption of the Buddhist monastic life. But he also sees irreconcilable differences between the two. Would you comment therefore on the following. "In the Romantic, the solitude is identified with a glorified and pantheistic nature which is tame yet profound. In the Buddhist context however, the forest is a much more dangerous place. The Buddhist hermit, by his spiritual virtues, tames the forest and finds it a beautiful and indeed a rather sensual place. In the tradition it is not a source of pantheistic wisdom however for the real purpose of the forest solitude is inward meditation, and in any case Buddhism has little pantheism about it."

S: I think that is a fair statement of the position, I think I'd accept that.

Devamitra : Buddhadasa also has a question on nature.

Buddhadasa : It does tie in with what we have been discussing, Do you think the Romantic Movement and its glorification of nature might actually represent an alienation from nature as it really is, and what value if any, is there in the Romantic Movement.

S: Let's just deal with the first part of the question first. Nature as it really is. Well, what do we mean by "nature as it really is"? Is it nature as seen by the scientist, or as seen by the poet? When one speaks say, of the "glorification of nature", does one mean the projection onto nature of something that is not in fact really there or does one mean a seeing of the true glory of nature? Do you see what I mean? I think there can be a glorification of nature in the former sense. I think some Romantic poetry, some Romantic literature comes terribly close to that. but I think it is also possible, as perhaps in Wordsworth at his best, to see in nature, something more glorious, or if you like something deeper, which is in fact, genuinely there. Or if you like, not so much to project on to nature, but to see nature as a symbol of something greater, as a symbol of something spiritual. But I don't think one finds that particular outlook in the East, neither as far as I know in Buddhism or in Hinduism.

Now as regards to alienation, we all know that the Romantic Movement arose, or the Romantic Revival arose at about the same time as the Industrial Revolution, also at the same time as the "Post Enlightenment" period. It does seem perhaps, that the poets and visionaries started

seeing in nature, or turning to nature for those things that were no longer provided for them by religion. In other words trying to look to nature as a source of higher values, regardless of whether they themselves were perhaps projecting those higher values onto nature, or really actually seeing in nature higher values that were really there. So I think there is certainly a link between the rise of Romanticism and its appreciation of nature, and something to which may be given the name of "alienation".

Perhaps at that time, man was alienated from his spiritual roots, and tried to recover those roots through his contact with, or experience of nature. This is putting it quite crudely and badly, but I think there is some such link. But it would have to be properly followed up and explored, and made the subject of a comparative study. I can't really answer the question properly just off the cuff. Anyway that's the first part of the question.

Buddhadasa : The second part I think, in a way, has been answered: "What value if any, do you give to the Romantic Movement?"

S: Again, that is a very big and broad question. So the Romantic movement is many faceted, it has very important expressions in literature, especially poetry, in music, in the fine arts. So what importance does one give? Well I think what's important at least historically, and perhaps still is that at a very bleak period in the history of Western man, when Reason in some ways, was triumphant to a great extent, the Romantic Movement at its best, gave one a glimpse of some kind of higher vision, and helped to keep that higher vision alive. Or at a time one might say when man, many men, had lost faith in traditional religion, and many of those who were educated and cultured were influenced more by rationalism and science, Romanticism did keep alive some sense of higher spiritual values, and did afford some glimpse of those at least. It did appeal to the imagination, to some faculty higher than reason, higher than mere practicality. I think that is the enduring value of Romanticism at its best, and perhaps the best products of the Romantic Movement, whether in art, literature, or music continue to have that value for many people even today.

Devaraja : A supplementary question coming out of our discussion on nature. Do you think that in China, the contemplation of nature had a spiritual function, which was part of the Buddhist tradition?

S: The contemplation of nature had a spiritual function? Was nature contemplated? What does one mean by contemplating nature in the spiritual sense, as distinct say from admiring the view, or taking advantage of the peace and quiet of nature in order to meditate?

Devaraja : No, as far as I understand, it did seem to actually fulfil, and actually speak a religious language in that it comes across in some of the poems, the imagery of the mists and

S: But is that actually an appreciation of nature, or contemplation of nature, or is it just the using of natural symbols for that particular purpose? I'm not quite sure what is meant by the contemplation of nature. How does one contemplate nature for a spiritual purpose?

Devaraja : That is actually confusing the issue. Unlike say, Indian Buddhism, nature, the imagery of nature seemed to occupy a much greater place in Chinese religious poetry, i.e. the poet, people like Han Shan and so on, and also in paintings.

S: I'm not sure about this. Yes we are aware that the mountains and streams are present, say in Chinese paintings, and are mentioned in Chinese poetry frequently, but what their exact spiritual significance is, if any, I think is quite difficult to say. I wonder whether they did have a directly spiritual significance, or if they were not just part of the setting. As I said, you got away into the country because it was quieter there and you could lead a peaceful life, you could meditate, you were not disturbed, but what does it mean to look upon nature as having a spiritual significance. That seems to carry the whole process a step further. I am not sure really what the attitude of the Chinese to nature, in that sort of sense was.

In the case of Indian art and literature. they seem to have had what I call this more organic sense of nature. It wasn't sort of mystical. Sometimes the epithet 'mystical' is applied to Chinese painting even to some Chinese poetry, but I don't even know whether that epithet helps us very much. Certainly the Chinese didn't see nature in the same way as the Indians did quite, but what is the specific nature of that difference and what is the relation between their way of seeing nature and the spiritual life, I find it very difficult to say. Perhaps the subject has not been sufficiently explored. I think perhaps we must be careful not to jump to any premature conclusions.

Perhaps we would have to take some examples of Chinese poems and analyze them, and try to perceive what they are actually saying, and what role, so to speak, nature is playing in those poems. Is it merely illustrative or what is it? I was trying to think of a Japanese 'haiku' that might serve as an explanation. For instance, there is that famous one by Basho - there are all sorts of translations of it - it usually goes like this;

*An ancient pond
A frog jumps in
The sound of water*

Now is that about nature? Does it reveal a particular way of looking at nature? Well the old pond is mentioned, a frog is mentioned, is it about nature? If so, in what sort of way? That is a very simple example, but I think we have to get down to concrete poems, and maybe a lot of concrete poems, and study them and discuss them and compare. I think without doing all that preliminary work, we can't come to a conclusion, and I don't know if anyone has yet done that. Certainly not in the FWBO perhaps. There may be books on the subject, but until we go into things in this way more thoroughly, it would be very hazardous to attempt to answer the question.

Devaraja : There is a further supplement to that. I think that Romanticism grew out of, not just the response of poets and artists, but it actually grew out of a whole current of thought that was arising, I think, in Europe. This was at the end of the eighteenth century, and the beginning of the nineteenth century, which was concerned with restoring the relationship of the inseparability of subject and object, and the Romantic poets as I understand it, in a way, expressed that sort of vision and did not differentiate between..... Some of the poems, particularly in Wordsworth point to this sort of relationship between inner and outer, and the inseparability of the person perceiving, and what is perceived and so on. So I think that in a way what they point towards is actually very sympathetic and resonates with Buddhist vision. So do you think that is true? Do you think that is relevant?

S: Well, there are two points here, one is the romantic poets and so on, as giving expression to a current of thought that was widespread at the time. Well this is probably true to some extent of all artistic movements, they do not exist in complete isolation, though some writers and poets obviously are more original than others, and express their own vision quite independently of any particular social influences. On the other as regards this whole question of subject and object, I really wonder whether the Romantic experience, including the Romantic experience of nature can really be discussed in such abstract terms. There is a well known poem by Wordsworth, where he describes a lover travelling through a certain landscape on his way to meet his beloved and the landscape seems wonderful and beautiful, but something happens, that is, he does not meet her, she is not there or she is dead, so he rides home, and the same landscape looks completely different. Well, is this an example of as it were the unity of subject and object? Do you see what I mean? I think it is probably very difficult to reduce the Romantic experience, as we call it to any formulation as abstract as that. Again one would need to go into the work of so many poets and artists and study the relation between what one might call subject and object in the work of each one of them.

Coleridge is credited with having introduced this distinction into philosophical English usage from German philosophy which is perhaps significant. But I think it just needs more study of concrete instances.

The answer might be quite different for Shelley, different for Wordsworth, different for Keats, and so on. One might even find instances of exactly the opposite thesis. One of the Romantic poets says, "I'm one for whom the objective world exists". It is a sharp distinction one might say there is a sharp distinction of subject and object. He certainly doesn't want to merge the two. Interesting work here for Abhaya in the future?

Devamitra : Vessantara has a question now, to do with the 'spectacular' spiritual experience, I believe.

Vessantara : This is really left over from yesterday. Many people who have become involved in the FWBO, had associations with such things as the 'hippy movement' in the sixties and early seventies, and seem to have brought it into the movement with them a concern with meditation and the spiritual life in general in terms of having experiences, especially spectacular experiences. This is something we have talked about in the past. Do you see any lurking tendencies in the Order and the movement as a whole, to think in those terms? Is our thinking within the Order say, still to some degree influenced by that?

S: I certainly haven't noticed that it is as I rapidly look back and try to think of any examples. I don't think people do think very much in that way. That is not to say that some people do not have quite striking experiences from time to time, especially when they go on solitary retreat. They do and they quite often write to me and tell me about them at great length in letters. But people do not seem to regard that as the norm, and they don't seem to work, or try to work towards peak experiences, or try to bring about 'peak' experiences, or extraordinary, dramatic experiences. They seem to take them in their stride, and learn from them what they can, and as it were just get on with the business of working in a coop, and meditating and communicating. Do you see what I mean? I think on the whole in this respect, the general attitude within the movement is quite healthy. There is not a straining after extraordinary experiences, by any means.

I think that most people do understand that the spiritual life is, for most people, a matter of slow and steady growth, punctuated from time to time by, well somewhat out of the ordinary experiences. But they very well understand that experiences are not to be sought for their own sake, and

even if they do occur, are not to be grasped or to be hung on to. I think that is well understood now on most levels of the movement. I regard it as quite a healthy sign.

Devamitra : I think Vessantara had another question?

Vessantara : I do. Yes, I wasn't expecting to ask this, so I have not formulated it properly. I suppose it arises out of your mention in the questions and answers on the Convention about music as medicine, rather than food. I was wondering, firstly, if you look at indirect methods of raising your level of consciousness, some are as it were more active than others, and listening to music, you could say would be a relatively passive way in which to raise one's state of consciousness. Could we make a distinction, and say that those forms of indirect method which are passive rather than creative, are the ones which one would just use as medicine rather than take more of as food?

S: I think in a sense, you are being passive all the time because you are thinking in terms of indirect methods because those indirect methods are all working on the mind, so in a manner of speaking at least, the mind is passive. I would distinguish between say music and something like working in a co-op, say packing beans. I would distinguish between them by saying that in the one case, the case of music, the effects were immediate though not very lasting, the effects were very strong and immediate but not very lasting, whereas in the second case, the effects were less immediate, not so powerful at the time, but inasmuch as that particular activity was kept up for a long time, in the long run perhaps, more lasting. I would prefer to distinguish in that sort of way. Because as everyone knows, you only have to put a record on and listen to a piece of music, and it can have an immediate effect upon you, quite a powerful one, but when you change the record or switch it off and you are very often just back where you started. Whereas if you are following a particular way of life, and doing something on a regular basis, well, over the weeks and months that does have quite a powerful effect on you. It can even restructure your consciousness, whereas if you just went on listening to music and listening to music I think you could have a surfeit of it and be quite fed up with it in the end and almost feel quite ill. You repeated that piece of music for a sufficient number of times even though you enjoyed it to begin with. I think this is why I emphasised that music could be used medicinally to sort of get you into a positive state of mind, and you then had to make a positive use of that positive state of mind. You then had to take that as your point of departure and on the basis of that positive state of mind induced by the music just get on with something of a more positive nature which perhaps you had not been able to get on with before. But you could of course, distinguish between the music that you merely listened to and with regards to which you were completely passive, and music which you not only listened to, but which you were making yourself at the same time. So there, you would be both active and passive. Some people do I think believe, that it is more natural and even healthy, to make your own music and not always be at the receiving end as we usually are these days.

Devamitra : We have now got through sixteen questions.

S: Are there any supplementary? Anything that we could go into further or has someone got a question that was eliminated but which he feels could well be answered or hasn't been answered?

Achala : I have one. It might be a bit of an old chestnut.

S: Well we can always crack it!

Achala : Life in the Forest Hermitage is depicted as being uncluttered by details, compared to say the FWBO Chairman who has a number of business concerns to deal with. The Forest monks don't even need to do their own cooking.....

S: Most Chairmen don't! (laughter)

Achala : Presumably someone who is leading a life which is very full of business will be at a disadvantage when it comes to their meditation. Do you have any general advice to give those people who are so busy with Dharma related business activities, so that their meditations are detrimentally affected. Is it inadvisable for such a person to go for long periods in this way, rather than deliberately taking steps to make their lives less cluttered?

S: Well, let's take the first part of the question first.

Achala : Life in the Forest Hermitage is depicted as being uncluttered by details compared to say the FWBO Chairman, who may have many business concerns to deal with.

S: Ah, right. I think to some extent the picture is a false one. Not intentionally so I am sure, because the author does refer to Nyanatiloka's and other monks scholarly and literary activities and they were certainly very busy with those. They were writing, they were translating, they were corresponding with other scholars, they were getting things printed, they dealing with publishers, they were getting things sent off by post, and they were having to do this very often,.....

[End of Tape 3 Tape 4]

.....so they were not in fact so free from Dharma related business activities as the idyllic picture painted here might suggest. But all right, let's leave that aside, no doubt there are hermitages where there are people who are not engaged in literary activities and do not have those sort of Dharma related business activities to occupy themselves with at all. But one might say that even intellectual activities, supposing they weren't publishing anything or even writing it but were just studying, Buddhaghosa makes it quite clear, that study is inimical to meditation. So one mustn't think it's only as it were Dharma related business activities that are inimical to meditation but even the study of the Scriptures themselves carried beyond a certain point, is inimical to meditation inasmuch as it encourages mental activity, sometimes hyper mental activity. So maybe we have to understand that clearly first, but nonetheless the question itself does still hold good, so let's carry on.

Achala : Presumably somebody who is leading a life which is very full of business, will be at a disadvantage in their meditation.

S: I think there is no doubt about that, unless the person has really trained themselves. I think it is possible, but I think the person concerned has to be very strict with himself. I think it is very easy to think, " Well, I'm too busy to meditate," or whatever. I think if someone who is busy say

like a Chairman makes a definite resolve that " I'm going to start the day off with a period of meditation," he can stick to that almost regardless of circumstances. But I think the danger is that people think that they have not got the time, or they think that they have got to sacrifice their meditation time, when in fact, that is not the case. It might very occasionally happen that you have to sacrifice that particular time, but I think actually that is really quite rare if you order your life so as to make it possible for you to have normally an early morning meditation.

So I don't think that that is incompatible with quite a bit of activity, but again that means that during the activity itself you must remain aware and alert and mindful. If you allow yourself to lose your mindfulness while engaged in those business activities, well of course it will be difficult to meditate. But whatever you do, whether you are just strolling around the garden, or whether you are engaged in business negotiations, you must maintain awareness. It's necessary in all situations outside the situation of meditation itself.

So I don't think that it is actually impossible to combine at least a daily period of meditation with a very active life, provided that you go about it in the right sort of way. (pause) Obviously you cannot do more than a certain amount of meditation, and even if you do manage quite successfully to have a good meditation every day, and to carry on with your normal duties, say as a chairman, you still will need to go away from time to time and have a solitary retreat, or have a week of nothing but meditation, or a fortnight of nothing but meditation. So if you aren't getting on very well with your meditation due to your duties and responsibilities, how much more so will you need that? I think it's really fatal not to make provision for that. It's not a very wise thing to do. It's counter productive in the long run, because if your sources of inspiration dry up, well, what can you do, even in connection with your Dharma related business activities? They'll become merely business activities and cease to have much relation to the Dharma. So there is a bit more isn't there?

Achala : Well, that is one example. Do you have any general advice to give those people who are so busy with Dharma related activities that their meditations are detrimentally affected?

S: Well, if their meditations are detrimentally affected, either they must cut down on their Dharma related business activities or increase their meditation, or both. Or, they must change their attitude to the way in which they work, even their attitude to their meditation, or they must get away more often. Perhaps all these things. So they need to review the whole situation quite carefully, quite exhaustively, from all these different points of view. Possibly even - this is another possibility - changing their type of meditation, depending on what they were doing before, their personal temperament and so on.

Buddhadasa : This is a supplementary to this question : You did once say that people should go away on solitary retreat, at least once a year. Since I have been back in England, I have had the impression that solitaries in fact are not so popular, or considered perhaps quite as important as they once were. Have you any comment about that?

S: Oh. I'm not sure about that, because I get quite a lot of letters from people saying, " I've just been on a solitary," or "I'm going on solitary," and describing their experiences to me. Though perhaps on reflection, I get rather more such letters from mitras, than I do from Order Members.

Buddhadasa : I'm speaking specifically about the Order Members.

S: I'm not sure how it compares with the way things were some years ago. But yes, quite a few Order Members have had solitary retreats. Several have been away to that place in Spain. Others have been to Ashvajit's caravan. Others have been to other places. I do still think that each Order Member should do his or her best to get away for a one month solitary retreat every year. If that isn't possible well try to split it into two, two week periods, I think probably even a busy Chairman could manage that. I mean why not do a little research, and try to find out say during the last twelve months, which of you, how many of you, have had a solitary retreat, and if so for how long? So in the course of the last twelve months, let us say, how many of you have been on a one month solitary retreat? Hands right up! (laughter)

Nagabodhi : Would that include a working solitary retreat ? (loud laughter)

S: Well, let me define. By solitary retreat, I mean first of all, a retreat which is solitary. You don't take anybody with you. Also, let's say at least half your time is devoted to meditation, at least half of your activities let us say, devoted to meditation activities, that is to say, as distinguished from study, walks, pujas, and so on. So a one month solitary retreat in that sense - who has had in course of the last twelve months?

Ah, good! How many have had three weeks? Two weeks? (pause) Oh! (laughter), one week? (laughter) Well, so clearly there is a lot of room for improvement at the highest level. But no doubt some people have been on retreat. What about meditation retreats? How many have been on meditation retreats, say of a week or more?

Suvajra : What do you classify as a meditation retreat?

S: Say a Vajraloka Retreat where you not solitary, you are with other people but you are doing mainly meditation. Yes, a few more. (pause) And then retreats in general, who has been on retreat, even as leading? Yes, there are a lot of retreats. So that would suggest that solitary meditation type retreats need stepping up. All the other things are good, but solitary retreat is in some ways the best and most useful of all, for yourself and indirectly for others.

Devamitra : I think Nagabodhi has a supplementary question.

Nagabodhi : It is perhaps a personal question that would affect four or five and maybe hopefully more of us. When I was in India writing I found once my inspiration took off, that my meditation became very difficult, not so much for the negative reason, that I was full of worry, but rather because I couldn't stop my ideas flowing, and I was frankly reluctant not to follow them through. In the case where you are acting and living in a very integrated way, very concentrated, do you think there is an argument for even forsaking meditation? I wanted to keep meditating, but I really did find it a tremendous conflict.

S: Well, I think one has to look even more closely at the question, and ask oneself what is meditation? I would say that if you are writing in that sort of way, and if your writing is about the Dharma, that is up to a point, tantamount to meditation. You are certainly not in a dhyana state, but you could well be in a state of 'upachara samadhi' that is, neighbourhood concentration, which is compatible with intense mental activity, and indeed compatible with insight.

It is not impossible that in the course of that intensive literary work, connected with the Dharma, you do actually develop insight, at least to a minor extent. So one might say that there was something to be said for allowing oneself to continue in that way, for even a period of months without doing very much in the way of meditation, because you are in a very concentrated, skilfully concentrated, mental state. The ideas that are passing through your mind, your mental activities, are all connected with the Dharma, and presumably, one is in a quite blissful and even ecstatic state at times.

But then I would say that when that phase is over perhaps one should think in terms of balancing that by a second period of meditation proper. But I think if you are engaged in creative work, I don't think you can switch that off. I think you can switch off business activities, and in fact it is a relief sometimes to switch off those and meditate. If you can't it is often due to the fact of your emotional involvement in those business activities in a wrong sort of way. But one cannot apply that to literary work, because your emotional involvement is positive in that sort of way. I really can't imagine a business man being involved in his business activities, even Dharma related business activities in a way analogous to the way in which a writer or an artist is involved in his creative work. I don't think there is a true parallel.

Padmaraja : Running a centre, and a co-operative and communities does have quite a strong creative element. I am not a writer, but I can very much identify with what Nagabodhi was saying, in terms of feeling very much in creative ferment, and being very excited about developments and possibilities.

S: I wouldn't regard that as creative in the strict sense. I think nowadays, that the word creative is used quite loosely. I would say, yes, in a manner of speaking, working connected with a centre and so on, running classes can be creative, but I think that is a much wider and in a way looser usage of the term, and I doubt very much whether even that sort of activity could be regarded as equivalent to meditation. I think one would be very unwise to regard that kind of activity as a substitute for meditation in the way that say creative literary, or artistic activity is.

Padmaraja : I do find it disconcerting though when the Chairmen report in very much at times as though Dharma related activities are very much a drudge.

S: Well, some can be less inspiring than others. I mean you may have to go into say a very detailed planning application, or something like that. With the best will in the world, I think it is very difficult to find that as inspiring say as discussing meditation, or the setting up of a new meditation class, or the writing of an article, or something of that sort. You may have a very long and difficult session with your bank manager. I think it is very difficult to work up the same enthusiasm for that. Some exceptional people might, but I think very few people would be able to do that.

You are enthusiastic in principle, but the actual details of it you may not enjoy at all, and you may have to accept almost as a chore, even though, yes, you are happy to accept it as a chore, but you don't actually enjoy the details of it. And I think there are a lot of those sort of things having to be done in connection with Centre activity and Co-op activity, and I think your positivity carries you through those. You don't find them sources of positivity and inspiration, as you do other Centre or Centre related activities.

Devamitra : Abhaya has been trying to ask a question for the last five minutes.

Abhaya : Going back to what you were saying about writing and meditation. You have said to me that writing and meditation were a very good combination. One could go on solitary, do some writing and some meditation, and this is a very good combination. Could you say more about that?

S: Yes, if your inspiration is not flowing so urgently. I personally feel this, that say writing poetry which I can only do in quite short instalments at a time, and meditation are very very compatible. Especially if your poetry is, let us say, of the more Romantic type, whether out of date or not. But I think that's rather different from the sort of situation Nagabodhi was envisaging. When I spoke of a combination of say literary work and meditation, I was thinking perhaps of something more gentle, more gently flowing as it were. I think the two would be very compatible, but if inspiration was flowing in full flood, well I don't think you would want to stop it, and perhaps shouldn't stop it, in order to engage even in a related activity.

Kulamitra : Bhante, I sympathise with Padmaraja's point of view. I think that sometimes as a Chairman, you are in a position where you are not having to follow through all the things in detail, when in a sense, from your own feelings, you are beginning to organise and marshal ideas, maybe communicate those to other people, but so far those other people perhaps are following through.....

S: Yes, they have to go and see the bank manager and so on and so forth.

Kulamitra : Yes, in which case you can experience a sort of creative excitement. I think the bank manager is very easy to leave behind. The two things I feel will stay in one's mind are the negative anxiety things and a certain amount of this excitement that Padmaraja is talking about. At least from time to time, when you have just seen a new way of doing things, and you are just beginning to mobilise your own personal resources, and the resources of your Centre to make that happen. Is that not creative?

S: No, not necessarily. Not just in itself. It is like a sort of excitement, because the writer can also feel excited at the idea of the great book he is going to produce. I think when he is actually writing it he is not excited because he is too concentrated to be excited. So I think that the Chairman's excitement, or any other such person's excitement is almost a sort of near enemy to concentration. Even though it may in a sense be creative, his excitement is no substitute for meditation.

Padmaraja : A lot of the ideas actually come out of meditation. It's not that there is any barrier between them, very often, one is spilling over into the other.

S: Well, in a way you are giving the game away (chuckling), because if you have got to meditate to get the ideas, and get the inspiration, then that is also a source.....

Padmaraja : I'm sorry, I did not quite catch that one ...

S: Well, if you say ideas come from the meditation, well, that presupposes you are meditating, so that is an argument for meditating from time to time, even though you are a busy, active creative Chairman.

Padmaraja : When I originally proposed what I proposed I wasn't suggesting that it should be a substitute for meditation, not at all. I couldn't imagine, being able to function in that way without a basis of meditation.

S: Yes, but we were discussing with Nagabodhi the artistic activity, or creativity in the artistic sense, as in a sense, a substitute for meditation, and I said yes, it could be, certainly for periods, even though one would need to balance as I said by meditation proper later on.

Padmaraja : That is another point though.

Devamitra : There is a supplementary question.

S: Yes, we have got time, we are not in a hurry.

Buddhadasa : I was be interested. You have just used the phrase, "excitement is the near enemy of concentration," I am rather interested as to what you mean by "excitement?"

S: I wasn't the one to use the word first (laughter), but excitement is a sort of unrest, or disturbance one might say, in comparison with the calm concentrated state of meditation. So if you are thinking of meditation as creative, and if you are thinking of excitement as creative, then you are in a way confusing the distinction between excitement and concentration, and in that way, in that sense, excitement if used in that way, can become a near enemy of concentration to the extent that you are confusing the two. Thinking that you had the one when you had the other, or because you had the other.

Kulamitra : Might Nagabodhi not have experienced just excitement in his writing?

S: Well, I'll see that when I go through it (laughter), because if it was merely excitement, it won't be very good writing. You would have to be in the midst of that deep concentration. Excitement is a little bit like a low grade 'priti' which needs to subside if there is to be real concentration. Excitement can have a very scattering effect which is the opposite of the effect of concentration, which has an effect of integrating. Perhaps one also needs to try and distinguish more between - I'm not going to try to this but I put it as a suggestion - between excitement, enthusiasm, inspiration, stimulation, these are all quite different things, and perhaps we tend to mix them up.

Padmavajra : When we studied "Mind in Buddhist Psychology," Guenther translated the mental event as ebullience, which definitely is negative.

S: Right, yes because excitement is very akin to that, clearly in its literal implications. Anyway, any further supplementary?

Suvajra : There is not a supplementary. It's a different area.

Coming back to the text there were several areas which when we studied the text, we were not happy with what he had said. So we decided not to pursue them, we just took them as being misrepresentations, but one that we did not quite sort out was on page forty-two, and forty-three. The last paragraph on page forty-two is dealing with Romantic and Buddhist views of the self. It does not seem very clear what the Romantic view of the self was.

S: I would agree with that, when I read it I found it rather unclear.

Suvajra : When he came to the end of page forty-three, to sum up, he has this sentence; "*These are very deep, and for many, irreconcilable differences in sensibility: some Western Buddhists and Buddhist Scholars to this day have failed at great length in print, to accept the consequences of the doctrine of non-self (anatta).*"

S: I would put it more simply, and say that they had failed to understand. Even quite recent writers, I was reading a book recently on the Buddhist Jataka stories, and the author of that was a quite good scholar, quite sophisticated, I forget his name, had so much difficulty understanding the anatta doctrine. That difficulty and his sort of misunderstanding of that doctrine or misrepresentation of it leads him into the weirdest sort of ideas with regard to the Jataka stories themselves. It seems extraordinary that the same old hoary misunderstandings, of that doctrine should be resurrected again and again and again. I mean this particular author, does not misunderstand the anatta doctrine, but nonetheless, these particular passages are really quite vague. Perhaps it's a question of over generalisation. But what in particular, did you find vague or unclear?

Suvajra : Well, that last quote that I gave you there, what was he trying to get at? What was it that he saw that Western scholars have missed in print, to put across? "*To this day they have failed at great length, in print, to accept the consequences of the doctrine of 'non-self.'*"

S : I'm not sure what he means by "consequences of the doctrine of 'non-self.'" I would accept that they have failed to understand the doctrine of 'non-self' itself, because if they failed to understand the doctrine they would also fail to understand its consequences if it had any. But I don't know whether he is thinking of cases where scholars have understood the doctrine, but have not understood the consequences of the doctrine, this is not clear. In other words it is not clear what that whole sentence really means.

Suvajra : Is there anything that we can actually say about the Romantic view of the self? He is not very clear on that?

S: Again, it requires further study, and closer examination of texts, because the Romantic view of self - you have got all the great poets and writers, the German, the French, the English - One can't even begin to generalise. What is the conception of 'self' in Byron? What was the conception of 'self' in Shelley? What was the conception of 'self' in Schlegel etc., etc. We can't begin to generalise. We would have to gather material, and then look at the facts.

Padmavajra : He does generalise.

S: He doesn't refer to any standard works on the subject which perhaps do make it clear what particular view of self the Romantics in general did have. If he could refer to a standard work like that, that would be a different matter, but he doesn't do that. So he does seem a bit weak when he is dealing with these more general background matters. He seems on quite firm ground when he is dealing with Buddhist monastic life in Ceylon, but he seems a bit out of his depth sometimes doesn't he?

Suvajra : So, if he is out of his depth, how much reliance can we actually place on his interpretation of Nyanatiloka's life ?

S: Well, perhaps we can't too much on the interpretation as distinct from a recital of the facts which he has definitely ascertained. Facts are one thing, and interpretations are another, though sometimes it is very difficult to see where one ends and the other begins, because sometimes, what are presented as facts, are in fact riddled with interpretation.

I was thinking supposing again - this is just speculating -someone was to write about my life, well, what were the influences that worked upon me? A young lad growing up in Tooting. (chuckling) What were the general social and cultural influences at work upon me that led to me becoming a Buddhist monk? Or was it some experience I had on Wimbledon Common? (laughter) or what was it?

Abhaya : You did have an experience in Tooting Bec, you mentioned having a spiritual experience there, or Tooting Broadway or somewhere?

S: Yes, I did have a spiritual experience walking along in the direction of Tooting Broadway, but I don't see any direct connection between that or any other experience I might have had, and what I actually eventually did. Also, chance plays its part. What took me out to India actually was the Army which I had not wanted to join, or be called up into at all! So I have not gone into, in my own memoirs, this whole question of influences and whether I was the product of certain influences or not. I have not gone into that at all, I have just told my story. But perhaps I could be placed in a context of influences where I could be made to be seen as being the product, or at least the illustration of those influences. Was my life in fact, though I don't know it, just an example of the effect of the Education Act of Eighteen Seventy some thing, and the opening of the Public Library to the working classes? (laughter) Can it be looked at in that kind of way, do you see what I mean? What effect did the war have, and the stories my father used to tell? I don't see any connection, but who knows? I might just be the product of all those influences.

Padmavajra : Do you think Michael Carrithers is actually looking too much for exterior causes, or social causes?

S: Well, definitely he quotes something which I actually would agree with right at the very beginning. He does not give the authors' name but I think it is from Marx. Yes it's the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, that's by Marx isn't it? Yes, "*Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.*" Well, I think no one can quarrel with that statement. But perhaps Carrithers does not sufficiently show the dialectical interplay of these two factors. Perhaps there is the slight tendency to reduce the one to the other, and to see someone as almost entirely the product of circumstances, rather than his life story being the product of the interaction between the man making his own history, and

the circumstances under which he makes his own history. Do you see what I mean?

The fact that I was a Buddhist, well that depended upon me. But the fact that I was carried to India, well, that was part of the circumstances under which I was operating. I think had I not been carried to India by the Army, and had I remained in this country, I would have still been a Buddhist but under rather different conditions, and no doubt with a somewhat different outcome, at least by way of objective expression.

Dhammaloka : Perhaps from what you have just said, one could ask further questions about Nyanatiloka. The author seems to suggest that at least Nyanatiloka's aspiration to take up the spiritual life is very much determined by his German Romantic background. The author does not talk about the possibility of this German background as even determining Nyanatiloka's understanding of Buddhism, but there seems to be a certain resemblance between Nyanatiloka's background and what he sees. The author does not go at all into whether Nyanatiloka found some sort of original way of interpreting the sort of Buddhism which he encountered in Sri Lanka. Would you see any originality, or anything which could have drawn Nyanatiloka out of this background to a larger extent than actually did happen?

S: Yes, in Nyanatiloka's Buddhist writings I see no great originality at all. I do not think there is any originality. He is clear, he is precise, he is faithful to the text, there is nothing else. Though as I mentioned, Govinda, Lama Govinda assured me that his German writings were quite beautiful and he had a far better command of German than he had of English, as perhaps one might have expected, but even allowing for that difference, there seems to be nothing original in his writings in the way that there is for instance, in Lama Govinda's writings. There is nothing at all of that. It seems to be a straight forward reproduction of quite dry scholastic Theravada Buddhism, illumined by hardly a spark of life. Though it must have meant something to him personally, quite deeply, he certainly hasn't succeeded in communicating that.

Padmaraja : Yet he was obviously a very dedicated man, he lived to be very old, and he spent most of his life actually working for the Dharma. I find it really quite sobering that he should have made such little spiritual progress, having invested so much energy and life into the study of Buddhism.

S: Well, it is sobering one might say, because there are other scholars, well, there are many scholars who make a great contribution to Buddhist studies but who appear not to benefit greatly from their studies themselves. There are plenty of them, perhaps nowadays more of them than ever. They are producing extremely good work which is very useful, work for which we can only personally be very grateful to them. But nonetheless they themselves, in many cases, seem to have benefited from that work very little.

Kulamitra : Bhante, to follow on from Dhammaloka's point, in a general sort of way in the Chapter, it seemed that there were certain influences in Nyanatiloka's past. His early Christian upbringing, his later experience of the German Romantic Movement, and that for him, what he encountered in Buddhism, in the form of the Theravada, to some extent fitted his preconceptions of what the spiritual life should be. Perhaps to some extent he also fitted even the Theravada into these previous preconceptions. But unlike Lama Govinda, who was so moved and overpowered almost by Tibetan Buddhism and thrust forward by the impulse of those spiritual figures, nothing in Nyanatiloka's contact with Buddhism seems to have broken him out of his already sort of natural inclinations and preconceptions.

S: Yes, because supposing you read Govinda's "*Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy*" you can see the family resemblance between him and Nyanatiloka, except that even in that particular work, Govinda shows a quite fine intelligence and there's an element of originality and organisation of material which is not ever there in Nyanatiloka's work as far as I know. You can see the family resemblance, but if you were to read "*The Way of The White Clouds*" or anything else that Govinda wrote afterwards, there is no family resemblance at all. It is so different, though Govinda also had connections, even roots in German Romanticism, and it even would seem, believed himself to be a reincarnation of one of the great Romantics.

A Voice : Who?

S: Well, there is some confusion about that. I believe he has himself said Novalis, yes. But I remember a conversation with him and I happened to mention that in my very early days I had read Herman and Richter and some of the other German Romantics, and when I read his writings I immediately felt there was some link there. I felt something of the same spirit in his writings as in the German Romantics, and he confessed that, yes, there was a connection but I was under the impression, I may have got it all wrong, that he had hinted to me - it was no more than that - that it was Hermann that he considered himself to be the reincarnation of. But I may have just got it wrong, but he certainly has said in print, or has hinted in print, that he was perhaps Novalis in a previous life. Hermann is a less known, and in a way more mysterious figure. But it is interesting that Govinda has been - I don't know about his very early life - but in many ways a sort of duplicate of Nyanatiloka. Of mainly Germanic origins, influenced by the Romantics, with definite artistic gifts, going to Ceylon, leading a celibate life in the Island Hermitage, studying Pali and Abhidharma, doing useful work in that area, and then of course here is the great departure - this is where the resemblance ends - being influenced by Tibetan Buddhism, and devoting himself, and committing himself to Buddhism in its Tibetan form.

But again, not just taking it ready made, but assimilating it, reshaping it, and presenting his own vision in those terms. So Govinda seems to go so much further than Nyanatiloka, who seems very very limited in comparison. But it is as though, perhaps as you were saying, Nyanatiloka found his early dream fulfilled in the Island Hermitage, whereas perhaps Govinda was much more open to possibilities of further development. His dream had not been fulfilled there, though even when he went to Darjeeling, he did not know that. When he went to Darjeeling he was still quite satisfied, as far as one knows, as far as one gathers, with his life in Ceylon at the Island Hermitage. It was only when he came in contact with Tibetan Buddhism and all that that represented, that he realised the limitations of his previous approach, and presumably realised that he had in fact himself all the time needed something much more, which was not available in Sinhalese Theravada.

But Nyanatiloka must have had some indirect contact with Tibetan Buddhism because he was, after all, interned with Govinda, in the same place certainly during the Second World War when they were together for six years. They must have talked, and I'm sure they talked. But though literature was available, Evans Wentz's books or some of them were available and Nyanatiloka knew what Govinda had done, and I am sure Govinda remained in contact with him, he still did not consider that possibility. It was though he was satisfied with what he had, and perhaps it was the fulfilment of his boyish dream, howsoever that dream arose, and nothing more than that.

Kulamitra : Bhante, I would like to pursue it a little further, particularly in the light of your comments yesterday about Kalyana mitrata and insight, and interpreting tradition. Because it seems to me that obviously individuals do differ very greatly, and that one person may find it

within themselves to go further than another person. But it almost seems a surprise, and certainly sobering, that within his contact with Theravada, there was, as you put it, there was no collision with insight, as you called it yesterday, which could shake him out of that childhood dream, and into a deeper appreciation of Buddhism and the spiritual life. And in fact there wasn't even that for Govinda. By all accounts it was Tibetan Buddhism.

S: For instance I was just thinking a little while ago in connection with Nyanatiloka. well, let's suppose for the sake of argument, he had the same kind of background, or let's suppose somebody else of much the same sort of background finding a place like the Island Hermitage. You could imagine that person living there in exactly the same way as Nyanatiloka, being looked after by the local people, and leading a very simple life, but not studying Buddhism and writing books about Buddhism, but studying the local butterflies, and writing books about them, which would be well received, and authoritative works on the subject. Do you see what I mean, do you see what I am getting at?

In other words, was it really a Buddhist way of life?, I'm almost asking that question. Because sometimes people who are scholars sometimes live in that kind of way, maybe not quite to the same extent, but in much the same sort of way. But instead of studying say Buddhism and Pali, it so happens they study something else, but the way of life is not all that different. They found the way of life suits them, and an occupation that suits them, in that sort of environment.

Kulamitra : Nevertheless, you would not expect a collision with a butterfly to change your attitude, but you might expect your collision with other real Buddhists, to either stop you being that kind of scholar, or show you a way.

S: So it suggests you did not meet any real Buddhists then, doesn't it? Or if you did that you were impervious to them, because I'm sure that - I mean I didn't ask Govinda about this, perhaps unfortunately - but I'm sure that Govinda must have had arguments with Nyanatiloka. Not that Govinda was an argumentative sort of person, he wasn't, but they must have discussed and they must have seen that there were differences. I remember Govinda's very definite regret with regard to Nyanatiloka and the way in which his life had ended. I remember him making the point almost in these words; 'that shows what happens to you if there is no place for meditation in your life, even though you are a great intellectual and so on.' So perhaps we can't be sure whether that is the correct construction to put on the situation, or on Nyanatiloka's life, that is to say that he had merely lived out a boyhood dream, and not much more than that, but perhaps that possibility deserves some investigation, It may be that there was something of that sort because he does seem to have been very satisfied with that situation.

Padmaraja : Bhante, you spoke about the connection, the possible connection, between Lama Govinda and Novalis, and other German Romantic writers and philosophers. Do you feel any resonance yourself, between yourself and figures in writing or philosophy?

S: (chuckling) Well, unfortunately I feel a resonance with everything that I read (laughter), I mean that quite literally. I do actually find at the time of reading, I can completely identify myself with the point of view, or the experience, or attitude. How I subsequently evaluate that on calm reflection, that is quite another matter. I find it very easy to identify myself with the experience of any author, I mean great authors especially I am speaking of, that I happen to read. Maybe very marginally I do have my preferences, at least over a long period. But I have never felt that maybe I am the reincarnation of this, that, or the other, no, I have never had that sort of feeling. Though I have always had the feeling that yes,

that is exactly how I feel, or could feel, whatever it might be, however different or even contradictory the authors might be, I feel able always to empathise with them without any difficulty. So that makes it rather difficult, doesn't it? (laughter)

Nagabodhi : You must have been Walt Whitman.

S: Well, I enjoy Walt Whitman, but I can also enjoy Pope no less. So I am not quite sure what that leads me. (laughter) Maybe that is something that does not come out in my writings. I refer to a few authors, but I think the extent of my reading, and not only my reading, but my enjoyment of what I've read probably doesn't come out anywhere in my writings, and it has played a very important part in my life, and I do realise very strongly in a way to use a very trite term, to use a cliché, the unity of humanity. I feel that quite strongly, I feel quite able to identify with almost anybody's experience that I read or happen to hear about.

Devamitra : Presumably in Govinda's case it was more than just feeling a strong resonance with the literary productions of whoever it was. There must have been another factor that led him to that sort of conclusion.

S: Yes indeed. Again, we did not go into this, but I believe he did believe that he had actual recollections, at least of a previous life. But this is something we never actually discussed in detail. It may be that he had recollections of that particular life, I don't know. Unfortunately I never asked. I was not in a way very interested in those sort of questions. Perhaps if I had asked, he would have told me more. And of course after Lama Govinda came in contact with Tibetan Buddhism, his art also bloomed again. He found almost ideal subjects for his particular kind of art. All these cubiforms, as I've called them, of monasteries and temples and so on, were exactly the sort of things he liked to depict. He found those subjects in Tibetan Buddhism, even in the Tibetan landscape. It all seemed ready made for his particular kind of approach. Whereas poor old Nyanatiloka, he gave up music for good, because that was frowned on in the Theravada Buddhist circles in which he was moving. Perhaps there was a loss to him there. But in this connection, I remember reading a short story years ago, this is quite interesting, apparently there was a woman in America who started up her own sect or cult, as we would say, or even new religion. She was very successful, and she had hundreds and thousands, and tens of thousands of followers and the movement was very wealthy. But what she had always wanted to do was to build a wonderful temple. She had a vision of this temple in her mind, she had it for years, and eventually she had enough money, and she started building this wonderful white marble temple with three beautiful white marble steps, and a row of ten marble columns. Inside there was a crystal dome and all the rest of it. So one day it was all complete, and she was so happy, and just after the completion, she had a letter from her sister, with whom she had no contact for years and years. She said; "You will be sorry to hear that our mother died, and I have just been clearing out the attic, and I found a few things you might like to have." One of the things was a story book, and I forget the actual title, but it was "Mabel's Dream" or something like that, and here was that little girl standing and gazing up at a wonderful white marble temple, with three steps and ten columns. The moral is obvious.

So could it not be that Nyanatiloka was doing that sort of thing? Perhaps it's an over simplification, but again it is worth considering, whether he was not just living out his childhood dream, and one might wonder what essential connection it had with Buddhism after all?

Abhaya : Do you think we might be doing that as Chairmen, Bhante? (laughter)

S: Well one must consider that possibility too. Were you a bossy little boy at school? (laughter) Were you suffering from an unsatisfied desire to be Head Prefect? Or even Head Master? (laughter) Perhaps there is always an element of that, but perhaps one might say, getting a little away from the specific case of Nyanatiloka, that there is a difference. You might say that someone could actually have a boyhood dream and then find its fulfilment in Buddhism which would mean that he was not really involved with Buddhism, he was merely involved with the fulfilment of the boyhood dream under Buddhistic guise. On the other hand there could be somebody who had even from birth, a deep involvement with something like Buddhism, but then he saw in his surroundings say in the Romantic poets and so on, something that vaguely reflected his actual Buddhist intuitions, and cottoned to those things because of their resemblance to what he aspired to already within himself. But then, when he found the real thing, he discarded the resemblance and involved himself in, or committed himself to, the real thing. So that would not be the fulfilment of a dream in the same kind of way. Do you see the difference?

Abhaya : Yes, but I'm thinking that in the FWBO, there is a lot of opportunity for fulfilment of all sorts of ambitions, even psychological, not social, but achievement ambitions, that if one had stayed in the world, one would never have realised.

S: I think then what is important is that one establishes a hierarchy between ones ambitions and ideals. You have to make sure that the fulfilment of the lower ambitions and ideals is subserving the fulfilment of the higher ambitions and ideals. In fact maybe you have always wanted to build something, well, alright build a Centre, build a temple, for the sake of the Dharma. But not insist on building something just because you want to build it, regardless of whether the Movement needs it or not. You can sometimes see people trying to bend the Movement or a portion of the Movement in the direction of the fulfilment of some special need of theirs, or some special interest of theirs, which isn't very relevant from the point of view of the Movement as a whole.

Abhaya : For example?

S: Well, I gave an example of building something when the building wasn't required at this particular moment. But you do see people tending to do this sometimes. You can sometimes feel when different proposals are being discussed, that they are quite distinct from the utility of those proposals from the point of view of Buddhism and the Movement. A particular person has got almost a psychological vested interest in that kind of proposal because it means a lot to him subjectively, quite apart from its value or significance for the Movement.

For instance, someone may have a thing about the colour red, and he just wants to paint everything red. So if you are discussing a colour scheme for the Centre, he's dead set on red. Not because it is the best and most suitable colour, but he's just got a thing about the colour red, and he wants to fulfil that desire to see everything painted red. I like to see everything painted gold!

So we have talked about Nyanatiloka quite a lot. Perhaps we should start winding to a conclusion. So what do people feel that they have got out of the consideration of his life? Has there been any useful lesson learned, or some useful point illustrated?

Suvajra : I think the point that you mentioned, or which Padmaraja brought up, the sobering point, that you can actually live out a life in such a

way that is not actually real Buddhism, it is not the real Buddhist life.

S: Yes, you are not necessarily leading a Buddhist spiritual life because you have found some niche, a personally satisfying niche, in the overall structure of Buddhism, or in Buddhist society, whether in a Buddhist country in the East or even nearer home.

Suvajra : I think most of our group felt there was something missing in Nyanatiloka's life. It came across in the chapter in the area of insight.

S: The reason why Carrithers introduced his life, was that that life might form a bridge as it were into the lives of the Sinhalese Forest Monks. We have not come to their lives yet, but do you think that you have felt that you are getting into things?

Voices : Yes, oh yes.

S: So it has fulfilled that function, as intended by the author?

Buddhadasa : You have said was Nyanatiloka leading a Buddhist way of life. Could one actually go on further to say was Nyanatiloka actually a Buddhist?

S: Well, he believed in all the correct Buddhist, or at least Theravada, doctrines, but then again, is that enough to make one a Buddhist? He certainly had a correct understanding of annata and paticcasamuppada, though perhaps not going all that deeply. Well no, maybe I should qualify that. Perhaps he didn't have as deep an understanding say of annata as Govinda had, because he definitely saw it in negative terms.

Padmavajra : In the Survey, don't you accuse him of pluralistic realism? (Laughter)

S: Well that would still be Buddhism, even if it was Sarvastivadin Buddhism. Though again one might say in the light of the Buddha's original teachings the pluralistic realism is a deviation from the teaching. I think I accused Nyanatiloka of that pluralistic realism. Yes, I think in the words I have just used, the point really is that to find a niche in a Buddhist structure, a niche with which you are satisfied, is not the same thing as leading a Buddhist spiritual life.

Dharmapriya : I think the point you made just before that is very relevant too. One has these left over dreams, and seeing them as ideals it is very easy to view oneself as fulfilling them, when one is actually pursuing a far higher goal.

S: Yes.

Devamitra : So what is the antidote?

S: I suppose, spiritual friends who can see that this is in fact, what you are doing, that you have just found a comfortable niche in a Buddhist

structure. You are not in fact leading a Buddhist spiritual life, or that you are in fact trying to fulfil childhood dreams.

Kulamitra : I think certainly in my experience of the Movement, has been that it very much challenges those preconceptions of the spiritual life. I can easily imagine how, if one did not get challenged in that way, one is motivated as much by one's own preconceptions of the spiritual life, as by what it really is. I could imagine having wanted to go and live in a hermitage like that in Ceylon.

S: There are lots of people in the West comparatively speaking, who are attracted by the romance say of being a monk, or being a nun. Lots of women seem to like the idea of being a nun, wearing those beautiful robes, and even shaving their heads, and clearly the appeal is at least partly sort of romantic with a small 'r'.

Padmavajra : There is an aphorism in *Peace Is A Fire*, I can't remember it exactly, but it is something like; "Most people come to Buddhism for confirmation of their own

S: (interrupting) Yes, "confirmation of their beliefs". It would be better if their beliefs or their ideas were challenged, rather than confirmed. Yes, that is true. It's true that sometimes in a genuine way people do find in Buddhism the confirmation of what they were already thinking, but I think it would be wise as a matter of general practice to examine anything in Buddhism that especially attracted you, or it seemed like the fulfilment of what you'd always wanted or always believed with extra care, at least that.

Because in a way, though only in a way, if Buddhism confirms what you are already thinking, you should be on your guard. But that is not to rule out the possibility that you have genuinely been groping your way towards Buddhism, and genuinely have had a sort of intuition of something like Buddhism, and that intuition does find fulfilment in Buddhism when you actually meet it. That is possible I am sure, but one must also consider the other possibility.

Padmavajra : Could you see that in terms of...perhaps one way of seeing that, that one is a particular psychological type, or one has one particular faculty uppermost. And that what attracts you to Buddhism in a way confirms that particular faculty, and in a way, investigating that, you see perhaps what you need to balance.

S: Perhaps it won't be easy for you to see that, and that is why I said that spiritual friends are really the antidote, because they can sometimes see more clearly what you are doing than you can see it yourself. Also I think, since we have been talking about Chairmen, I think Chairmen ought to be very careful not to impose their limitations onto the Centre of which they are Chairmen.

Devamitra : Impose their own limitations?

S: Yes.

Devamitra : Could you explain what you mean?

S: Well, to resist or avoid the temptation, of getting your Centre, or the activities of your Centre to conform to your own psychological type. For instance, you as a Chairman may not have any interests in the Arts, so you discourage the Arts, so far as your Centre is concerned. You say well, "that's all nothing to do with the Dharma, what we want is straightforward Dharma," or, "What we want is just meditation, we don't want anything to do with the Arts." because you don't have any personal interest, so you don't allow any of the arts to develop around your Centre or in connection with the activities of your Centre. In that way you impose your personal limitation, and it is a limitation on the activities of the Centre. Or maybe you are not interested in things like yoga or Karate or Tai Chi, so you refuse to allow those sort of things to flourish under the umbrella of your Centre. Or maybe as a Chairman, part of your temperament or character, you just don't like spending money (laughter), so you don't allow anybody to spend money. You are a very tight fisted Chairman, and you make your Treasurer tight fisted, and your Council tight fisted, so there is not much in the way of expansion. It's all in the bank. That is just conforming to your particular personality type, or it could be the opposite.

So a Chairman therefore, or anyone in a position of influence, has to examine himself very carefully. He has to examine his own characteristics, his own temperament and make sure that he is not in fact trying to impose the pattern of his own character or temperament, on the Centre and the activities of the Centre as a whole. The Centre should not suffer from his limitations, he should be objective enough to see where his limitations lie and make sure that there is somebody else around to make up for those.

Devamitra : And yet people in the FWBO in the past have certainly commented, as far as I'm aware that particular Centres definitely take on to some extent the flavour of a particular Chairman.

S: I think that is all right if it is just a flavour, but not if it is an actual limitation. I think a flavour is only to be expected. But it mustn't be a too exclusive flavour, or a flavour which is so strong that all other flavours cannot be perceived (laughter). You get just a flavour of pepper, or a flavour of garlic, or what ever else it may happen to be and nothing else, (pause) or the smell of musk (laughter).

Kulamitra : Presumably the answer to that is also spiritual friendship, but in the sense of a real working team, a co-operation between individuals so that the Chairman is not in a sense, too much in control.

S: Yes that's right. Because a Chairman is not an autocrat, even though he does definitely give a lead, and is expected to give a lead, and to have a more far-sighted vision perhaps for the Centre and the future of the Centre. But he should certainly welcome quite strong interaction with his peers ,as it were, fellow members of his Council, or fellow members of his Chapter, or community. Welcome positive critical feedback and lots of fierce friendship.

I was thinking that everybody knows how I got into contact with Lama Govinda and how we started corresponding. It occurs to me that I was at the same time more or less in contact with Nyanaponika and in correspondence with him, and he was in some ways a replica of Nyanatiloka, though a more urbane one, one imagines from his writings. But I never felt like getting into contact with him in the way I did with Govinda, I never invited him to write for *Stepping Stones*, I am not sure I was in contact with him at that time, though I certainly did not invite him to write

for *the Mahabodhi Journal*, when I started editing that. It was as though I did not pick up on anything that was particularly attractive, though, yes he impressed me as a worthy man and I probably thought at that time he was a good Buddhist and so on. Whereas in the case of Govinda, I definitely felt there was something very attractive, and something I definitely wanted to be in contact with. There just seemed to be something more there. We've got Govinda's writings and we've got Nyanatiloka's writings in the Order library, and Nyanatiloka's writings are available, but we know definitely who is the more popular of the two, at least in the FWBO, and perhaps way outside the FWBO too. Personally, I have found Nyanatiloka's, his Buddhist Dictionary very very useful, but they are only useful in that scholarly, intellectual kind of way. There isn't anything in them really of the way of inspiration.

Somebody by the way, is already starting to write a life of Lama Govinda. I forget his name, I hadn't heard it before, but he has written to me and wants to interview me by post. I am not very happy with that, I would much rather meet him. I am trying to persuade him to meet me, though I am willing to answer his questions. He wants to know if I have any letters from Govinda and so on. Apparently, Li Gotami has agreed to his being the biographer.

Padmaraja : Is it an Englishman or an American ?

S: I am not sure, that does not transpire, although he is writing from England. I hope he can make a really good job of it. It would be a shame if the biography was not adequate, but I wonder if there can be a fully adequate biography so long as Li is alive, because the biography would have to examine their relationship in depth, wouldn't it, to be honest? But I don't know whether that can be done whilst she is alive, but we will just have to wait and see.

Buddhadasa : Have you any comments to make about his relationship with Li yourself? Maybe not speak now but just record it for posterity say.

S: Well, I am hoping, because I have written about my first meeting with Lama Govinda, but then a year later, I spent a week with them both in their own place, and I subsequently saw them up in (Alomorera?) and elsewhere. We stayed together in Sarnath, so I want to recount these different episodes. I do hope I get round to this in the course of the next two or three years. The picture of them both will become fuller and fuller, and yes the relationship between the two of them will come out more clearly. This doesn't come out in what I've written about my first meeting, in fact it didn't transpire then, but when I stayed with them near Bombay a year later I did begin to see how they did relate to each other.

That was quite interesting, because the main thing that I noticed was that there were constant arguments. Lama Govinda would be talking with me, and would mention something. He would say for instance in such and such a year Li Gotami and I happened to meet so and so and she would butt in and say, "No it wasn't! It was the following year." He would say " No dear, it was such and such a year." She would then deny it and he would very gently expostulate, and there would be a long argument. Govinda always being very patient, I must say, and in the end he was invariably proved right, and she admitted that he was right, and then the discussion proceeded (laughter). Then after a few minutes she would butt in again and this was happening almost the whole time. So this was one little thing that I noticed. There were various other things I noticed later on. He was so patient with her. He would say " No dear, that is not correct, it was such and such." She would get quite heated, she did not get angry, but she was certainly heated and kept butting in in this way, and disagreeing with him and contradicting him, and was

invariably proved wrong (laughter), and had to admit it, but Govinda never got heated or argumentative, he was always very patient. So I noticed this on that next visit.

Kulamitra : It just occurs to me, perhaps in the longer run, it would be good if some Order members, when more Order members write, did do things like write a biography of Lama Govinda. Because surely as practising Buddhists we would be more likely to see the real value of another Buddhist's life than just any old biographer.

S: That is true, but first of all you would have to be prepared to spend time gathering the facts, doing the research. It is sometimes a business lasting years! Then you have to have the literary ability, the literary skill, to marshal your material and write the life in an interesting way, a way that did justice to the subject. To be a faithful, sincere, genuine, committed Buddhist would not be enough, I'm afraid. One would need in addition to that, certain other qualities, certain other talents, even perhaps a touch of genius. But yes we would be perhaps the best qualified people. I would like to write more biographies if I had the time. I really enjoyed doing that little sketch of Dharmapala, and I would really like to do something on Ambedkar, I feel I could do it better than anybody else. I am even hoping to write a book, a very limited book, because I don't think I would have time to do all the research necessary to do a proper life of Ambedkar. I would like to produce a book on Ambedkar and Buddhism. I could do that. But again it is a question of time.

Padmavajra : Are there any biographies that you think are exemplary biographies in terms of their approach?

S: There are a lot of good biographies around these days. It's almost the heyday of British biography, there are so many good worthwhile biographies, it really is quite amazing. There is no dearth of talent in this field. There is a new Life of Alan Watts coming out, and a new Life of Thomas Merton, they should both be quite interesting. A life of Evans-Wentz has come out but that is quite poor. Though again there's some interesting material in it but it's really quite a poor work. It is quite short, only a hundred or so pages, but it is interesting, it does throw light on Evans Wentz and his character. He seems to have been rather a strange person in some ways. We have it in the Order library. But yes, that is another field into which we could expand, biography, but be aware of the standards that have already been set. The standard is very high. Very good biographies are coming out every year, plenty of them, on all sorts of figures, historical, political, literary. We have a long way to go in this sort of area. Anyway, perhaps you had better all go to bed and dream about it, after your puja, or whatever else you do.

END OF SESSION