

General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

[Tape 17]

Questions and Answers on

The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka

Chapter 9 continuation

13th August 1985

Devamitra : Today we consider the second half of the Chapter entitled; Total Reform and Unification of the Sangha. We have thirteen questions altogether this evening. The first one however comes from Dharmapriya, and is a follow on question from one of the questions last night concerning criteria for ordination.

Dharmapriya : Yesterday Bhante, you touched on the dangers of quantifying or trying to quantify any ordination yardstick with regards to the Order, our Order. This morning I ran across a text describing four criteria, not quantifiable criteria, for determining whether someone had gone for refuge. As it's quite short, I would like to read it, it is from Jeffery Hopkins introduction to *Compassion in Tibetan Buddhism*. And it seems it is quite traditional, but it is his language. He writes : "*Whether a person has refuge or not is determined by four qualities. 1) Whether he knows the attributes of the three jewels; 2) knows their differences; 3) accepts them as the pure source of refuge; 4) will not propound any other source of refuge.*" This formula struck me because the last two qualities seem to me to clearly reject the idea that one can simultaneously go for refuge somewhere else, presumably to sacred hills, groves, and springs in traditional societies, or to Christianity or materialism today. In other words it upholds the exclusivity of going for refuge to the three jewels. So the first part of my question is : Would you agree with this assessment of the passage I read?

S: Just give it again.

Dharmapriya : *Whether a person has refuge or not, is determined by four qualities.*

S: It is interesting that he uses the expression "has refuge" rather than "goes for refuge." Suggesting that the condition or state of having gone for refuge is as it were something fixed, even something static, so perhaps one could go into that, but anyway we won't do it know.

Dharmapriya : *(1) Whether he knows the attributes of the three jewels.*

S: Yes, maybe I should say a few words about that. The attributes of the three jewels are at least from a Theravada point of view, representing a sort of basic tradition of Buddhism inherited by the Mahayana and elaborated on. The characteristics or qualities of the three jewels are those enumerated in the Iti pi so formula, iti pi so, svakkhato, bhagavata dhammo and supatipano bhagavato, sarvakasango. Those formulae, whether

in that original simple state, or greatly elaborated give one the characteristics or qualities of the three jewels.

So one must be able to recognise those, you must be able to recognise that the Buddha is the one who is enlightened. Do you see what I mean?, that the Buddha is.... well that it obviously involves an understanding of what is meant by enlightenment and so on. Otherwise you cannot truly go for refuge to the Buddha unless you understand what the term Buddha actually means, what its characteristics and qualities are. And then ?

Dharmapriya : (2) *knows their differences,*

S: Ah, it's not clear here, and grammatically it is ambiguous I think, whether the differences between the qualities possessed by each of the three jewels and the qualities possessed by one of the three jewels as compared with another. That is not clear grammatically, I don't know whether it's ambiguous in the Tibetan, but it does seem to be ambiguous in the English. Perhaps it is more likely to mean a difference between the attributes of the Buddha and the Dharma and the Buddha and the Sangha and the Dharma and the Sangha. I think it is probably to be taken in that sense.

Dharmapriya : (3) *accepts them as the pure source of refuge.*

S: I am not sure what 'pure' means in this connection. Perhaps refuge without any flaw, complete, perfect, possibly, one might have to look at some commentary on that.

Dharmapriya : (4) *will not propound any other source of refuge.*

S: Again the term 'propound' perhaps cannot be taken too literally, perhaps affirm, it is something more like affirm, or not recognised, yes that is pretty obvious isn't it? These four criteria seem to correspond more or less with what GamPoPa, has to say on taking refuge in that chapter in the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*. So I think probably no school or tradition of Buddhism would disagree with that, though no doubt there is a great deal more that could be said under each of those headings and perhaps other headings also are required.

Dharmapriya: That really leads to the second part of my question. You have often demonstrated that the Pali Suttas show the fundamental importance of going for refuge. Do you know if any other texts, or any texts other than these Suttas, the one I have quoted, and your own writings which clearly show the importance and exclusivity of going for refuge?

S: Well there are texts like the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* which has that particular chapter. I remember reading some years ago - in fact I published it in the Mahabodhi Journal - an article, which appeared in response to something that Dr. Guenther had written perhaps also in the Mahabodhi Journal. I think he said something to the effect that; it was only in Tibetan Buddhism that they had elaborated the nature of the Three Jewels and the Three Refuges and the nature of the Going for Refuge. And a rather, or slightly indignant Sinhalese Buddhist wrote to reply that these matters were well known in Sinhalese Buddhism, the Theravada of Ceylon, and were frequently discussed and gave a long list of Pali and Sinhalese works which discussed these very questions, especially I think, Sinhalese works, which as far as I know have never been translated into English. I had never heard of these Sinhalese works before and have never seen any reference to them since, but clearly they do exist. So I

think it is maybe not surprising that there is a sort of common tradition of understanding of what is meant by the going for refuge, what is meant the three jewels, in all forms of Buddhism. But many of these forms of Buddhism, many of the different schools have allowed that to remain rather a dead letter in the sense that; though such teachings are there in the book, they don't figure very prominently in popular expositions. I think it is taken for granted that everybody in a Buddhist country has gone for refuge and that's that! No further comment, no explanation is required, I think that tends to be the attitude; you say Buddhāṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi and so on and you have gone for refuge, that's that!, there's nothing more to be said, which obviously is far from being the case. But in the literature it does seem that in all forms of Buddhism as far as one can tell, there are discussions of what the going for refuge means.

It is a question of resuscitating those discussions if one can.

Dharmapriya : I was struck because I hadn't run across any modern sources other than you before I read this, this morning. Do you know any modern writers who talk about it with any real understanding or depth.

S: Well Nyanaponika did write that booklet on, what was it?, the Three Jewels or the Three Refuges? The Threefold Refuge. And he had some understanding of the matter but it was rather surprising that we did find when we studied that work, definite limitations to his understanding. Some of them surprising and others not so surprising in view of the fact that he belongs to the Theravada tradition. Who has gone through that little work? Yes it is quite fundamental so people should try to go through it. I suspect that when they are translated, other Tibetan works dealing with the Path, Lam Rim type works, the stages of the Path type works like GamPoPa's works, when these works are translated we shall suddenly find discussions of taking refuge. I mean, TsongKhaPa's Lam Rim which is supposed to be the masterpiece of this type of literature, is in process of publication and there is sure to be a discussion of the topic there, it will be quite interesting to see that when the book appears.

Suvajra : You have written an article entitled *Ordination and initiation in the three Yanas*. I have not actually read this article yet. Could this be used as a basis for study in the FWBO or is it outdated?

S: I think within a certain context as it were because this is more of a just traditional study, the existing as it were state of affairs. I would have to look at it carefully, because if it was included in a collective volume of my essays and articles which I think is the idea, I probably would write an introduction stating from what point of view or in what context each article should be seen. I think I would certainly have to do that with that particular article. I have not tried to interpret or to go very deeply into the subject itself, but just to bring out the general, the current, Tibetan understanding of this whole question of Ordination and Initiation in the three Yanas. I wrote this article and published it in *the Middle Way*, mainly because I found there was a lot of confusion in Western Buddhist circles on this whole question of ordination. There is not quite so much confusion now, but there was a lot of confusion then. I am afraid some members of the Arya Maitreya Mandala were associated with this, because I read a report in a Buddhist magazine to the effect that a member of the Arya Maitreya Mandala in Hungary I think it was, had been given what was termed a Gelong Wongkur, that is to say a bhikṣu abiseka which was a complete confusion of categories, and I refer to this in the article. I say something like, it is rather like speaking of being christened a Bishop, or ordained a martyr, or something like that, a confusion of categories which doesn't make sense.

So the article merely sorts out the traditional understanding of the different ordinations in each of the Yanas, it does no more than that, but maybe that is useful for the understanding of what has come to be regarded as tradition at least. I don't go into the philosophy so to speak, the

underlying principles of going for refuge, or ordination.

I think the most important point I was concerned to make, and this does tie up with our own emphases, I had adumbrated it even then or anticipated it even then. I pointed out that the term for becoming say an Upasaka, a Bodhisattva, a Bhikshu, a Bhikshuni, was the same, it was always Samvara so that one could correctly speak in terms of an Upasaka ordination as well as a Bhikshu ordination or a Bodhisattva ordination and this made it clear, that Upasakas were members of the Sangha. Because the same term was used for their, as it were, initiation as was used for the ordination of the Bhikshu or the Bhikshuni. It was Samvara - ordination - as one might say. So I have used this to underline the fact of the basic, the fundamental unity of Upasakas and Bhikshus as well of course of Bodhisattvas, people taking the Bodhisattva ordination. So that of course is fully in line with our present emphasis.

Dharmapriya : The last part of my question links up again with last night. Last night you stated that it was harder to be ordained into the Western Buddhist Order than to be accepted into the bhikkhu Sangha. From my observations in India and conversations with Indian lay Buddhists ie. upasakas I have noticed that our Mitras meet a considerably higher standard than the traditional Upasakas.

So for Friends that do not yet meet the standards of Mitrahood or Mitraship, but are serious and want to express this, could we not institute a Pancasila upasaka ordination at least for India if not for whole Movement? This would not only allow Sahayaks and their Western equivalents to give ritual expression to a growing spiritual aspect in their lives, but also more clearly demonstrate to the external Buddhist world what it meant to be a Mitra or Dharmachari?

S: Well perhaps this could be considered but I always feel a bit doubtful about adding another level as it were. Also of course all those who do come along to us, that is to say those who are Buddhists in India, they consider themselves Upasakas already and have often received, or in all cases received the three refuges and the five precepts from somebody in the past. I mean in the case of a couple of hundred thousand of them, from me already! Do you see what I mean? So we take them as already being on that level as it were, the level of ethnic Buddhists. So in a way we recognise all those who just nominally become Buddhists as already on that level, and in a sense they belong to us, they are the outermost circle of the FWBO. So in a sense it's done already. Do you get the line of reasoning?

Dharmapriya : Yes, definitely for India.

S: Definitely for India, or for any Buddhist country in which we were operating where people considered themselves to have taken the three refuges and five precepts, and had in fact taken them at least formally from a monk perhaps not once but many times. So in a way we accept that as the basic level, the lowest level, the next being that of a Friend possibly, but maybe we should leave Friend out of it because the Friend could be a non Buddhist, or half Buddhist. Whereas, ethnic Buddhists do at least consider themselves Buddhist and don't consider themselves anything else. So perhaps the Friend with a capital 'F' is something rather different but from our point of view the next step is Mitra. Where we put the ethnic bhikkhus I am not quite sure but we will deal with that one when we come to it.. Perhaps we can find a place for the ethnic bhikkhus too. It's certainly superior to the ethnic upasakas.

Dharmapriya : A sort of supplementary question, I was thinking of when formulating this. You have really stressed in the last year the importance that Order Members really practise the ten precepts. Should we see or considering that Mitras really practise the five precepts, because it's not really inherent in the four criteria for Mitrahood.

S: Yes actually that's quite an interesting point because I did some time ago tell I think it might have been Devamitra, or it might have been Subhuti, I was thinking of giving a talk on the four requirements or qualifications for becoming a Mitra on the occasion of the Mitra retreat and I actually started making notes for that talk. But I quickly realised I would have to write a proper paper which I have no time to do. Because it seems to me that those four requirements or those four qualifications, needed considerable enlargement, and perhaps needed adding to. I think they are a rough and ready guide but I begin to feel, not really an adequate one. But there is a lot more to be said, I realised this when I just thought of giving the talk. But when I actually came to make notes and think in detail of what needed elaborating, and what needed adding, I thought actually it was a bigger job than I had anticipated. I think sooner or later I have to get round to that, because you can say I have spoken about 'going for refuge' there was that lecture which I gave in India on '*Going for Refuge*'. Plus that seminar on '*The Threefold Refuge*'. Then for the Ten Precepts, there is '*The Ten Pillars of Buddhism*'. So, in a way the Order Member is well provided for, but there is not any full and detailed explanation of the requirements of a Mitra. So sometime or other I have to get around to doing that. I think it is necessary because the rough and ready guidelines that have been so far given including those four qualifications I think are not really adequate. If one thinks for instance of one of them in particular, that one should have stopped "Shopping around" - Well, one needs to go into that quite a bit, what one means by shopping around, why we make this requirement. Why is it necessary to have stopped shopping around, and then of course there are different more practical considerations, could I for instance continue to be a member, let's say for the sake of argument of the Masons, the Freemasons? Could I retain my membership of a Church? Could I still belong to a Trade Union? What about political parties? These are all sort of connected questions that might arise in the Mitra's mind. So we have to make it quite clear, exactly where the line is drawn. Could I continue to be a member of the Buddhist Society?, someone might ask. In all innocence - they just don't know, and they want to know. I think you have to elaborate the principles much more clearly and give some reason for them and explain in greater detail what they mean, what they imply in actual practice giving concrete instances. Some people might ask; "Well if we must have finished shopping around, does this mean that if for instance the Dalai Lama comes and gives a lecture in London, we can't go and listen to him?" These are the sort of questions that Mitras, or would be Mitras will naturally ask, and one needs to have clarified they will need to have them clarified.

So this is why I did not actually finish making my notes for that lecture, I realised I would have to write something in a much more detailed and basic way. When, I am not sure, but it certainly is on my agenda to do.

Again going into greater detail, the regular meditation practice that one expect Mitras to keep up. What kind of practice, and for how long? Under what circumstances, and so on and so forth. What does one mean by helping out around the Centre? Supposing you are a Mitra who doesn't have a Centre nearby because some people have been accepted under those conditions. Would it say be enough, to be in regular contact with Order Members personally, even though you were not in contact with a Centre or helping out around that? Again these are the sort of questions that arise.

Devamitra : Moving on to today's material. We have a question from Nagabodhi on dreams in the Buddhist tradition.

Nagabodhi: Several of Carrithers' subjects take their dreams seriously enough to record them in their diaries. Could this suggest that they have scrupulous interests in the workings of their inner minds as a result of meditation practice, or simply that they were under the influence of their superstitious cultural conditioning? Then, have the practices of dream recollection and/or dream analysis ever played much of a part in the Buddhist tradition overall?

S: Let's have that again.

Nagabodhi: Several of Carrithers subjects take their dreams seriously enough to record them in their diaries. Could this suggest that they had a scrupulous interest in the workings of their inner mind as a result of meditation practice, or simply that they were under the influence of their superstitious cultural conditioning?

S: I don't think they had what did you call it, what sort of interest?

Nagabodhi: A scrupulous interest.

S: A scrupulous interest in the workings of their minds as a result of meditation practice, I rather doubt this. I think - the impression I get is that they were looking in their dreams for as it were omens. That is to say hints as to how they should proceed, how they should behave, or for confirmation of conscious attitudes. This in a way is not unreasonable one might say, perhaps we pay too much attention to the dictates of the conscious mind, ignoring the dictates of the unconscious mind that is manifested through dreams.

There certainly are precedents in Buddhist literature and even Canonical literature, because the Buddha is represented as having dreams before his enlightenment. And in Tibetan Buddhism, perhaps I should say in Vajrayana Buddhism, dreams do seem to play a quite significant part. I believe in the life of Milarepa, dreams do play at times a quite significant part. So without being over- preoccupied with ones dreams, perhaps one should via the dream sometimes listen to what it seems your unconscious mind is trying to tell you. It may be useful, it may be worth listening to.

Not that you should follow implicitly any more than you should follow implicitly the promptings of your conscious mind. But I think you would be well advised to take your dreams seriously, especially if there was a recurring theme or motive, a dream that kept on repeating itself. That would mean that your unconscious was trying quite persistently, quite urgently, to tell you something that it thought so to speak, you needed to know. And even if you may not ultimately heed the dictates of your unconscious mind, you would do well to take them into consideration and not ignore them.

So perhaps even in the FWBO, we should pay more attention to our dreams, in this sort of way. Not in the way that people sometimes do pay attention to their dreams, not in a sort of self indulgent and self pre-occupied sort of way, but just being open to hearing so to speak the other side of the question. Listening to another aspect, another part of oneself. And of course there is the possibility that through the dream you do sometimes get intimations of some higher state, or some higher truth. There are such things as archetypal dreams which make a very vivid and very powerful impression and which need to be taken very seriously. I have sometimes spoken of one of my teachers in this connection, that is

to say Kachu Rimpoche, who always acted upon his dreams, and what he saw in the morning in his meditation. This is quite typical of some Tibetan Lamas, perhaps more particularly in the Nyingmapa School.

Nagabodhi : Among the Forest Monks or the Tibetans, would they recognise that the content of their dreams is from their own inner mind, or would they perhaps see them as implanted by gods or ..? This is what I meant by the cultural superstition, whether they recognise the idea of the unconscious mind.

S: Well, we are only given a limited sample, we are not told how they estimated or evaluated their dreams or whether they made those sorts of distinctions. But judging from the examples we are given in the particular biographical context, the monks concerned do seem to have taken their dreams quite seriously. Sometimes using them for sort of support and encouragement, or as giving them hints or suggestions as to what they should do or at least confirming that they were in fact on the right path.

So that seems to suggest that they regard them as coming from a slightly higher source, but there's no definite statement to the effect that they come from the gods or anything like that or even from their own unconscious mind or their own higher mind, we are just not given any information of that sort. So we are not really in a position to judge how they evaluated their dreams, or whether they thought in terms of evaluating them at all. I remember when I was going through Anagarika Dhammapala's diaries he often recorded his dreams. It is interesting within the case of the rationalistic Theravada, perhaps it is a good thing that they do pay some attention to their dreams. It would be interesting to enquire whether all bhikkhus tended to do that or not. Also perhaps there is the point that in the case of several of these Forest Monks, their position was quite uncertain, even quite insecure. They must have sometimes wondered which way to turn, not being sure how to go about things, how to proceed. So perhaps they were looking under those conditions, in those circumstances, for some confirmatory sign, and perhaps they just took their dreams all the more seriously because they were looking for that sort of confirmatory sign and felt or thought that they had found it in a particular dream or series of dreams.

Padmaraja : Bhante, have dreams played an important part in your life?

S: Well it depends what one means by 'important'. I have had recurring dreams to which I have attached some significance, but I don't think I have ever had in dreams, pointers as to what I should actually do in the material world as it were. I remember when I was in India for years and years on end, I had one particular dream or type of dream which repeated itself constantly in different forms. I am not quite sure what it meant even now, but I think that its general significance is fairly clear. In the dream, I was visiting, or living in, or inhabiting, a particular building; sometimes it was a house, sometimes it was a vihara, it was a temple of various kinds. But what was significant was that behind this building, behind this house or temple there was another house another building, another temple. In some of the dreams this existed on a completely different level, sometimes it was at the top of a hill, behind the first building and it was sometimes bigger and more elaborate, and in some dreams deserted. In some dreams, though I was living in the one house, I was always aware at least of the existence of the other. But in other dreams it was as though while living in the first house I had forgotten about the second house, the second building, but in the dream I discovered it and started exploring it. This dream in many sort of versions I must have had scores and scores of times. Sometimes it took very vivid forms, I can remember one or two of these forms very vividly even now, they seemed to have a form of archetypal significance.

I remember in one of these dreams, the first house was at the foot of a hill, and then one climbed up the hill behind this first building and one came to the edge of a sort of ridge, and that ridge on the top of the hill was enclosed by a courtyard so that you could look out over one courtyard wall on the one side of the hill, and over the other courtyard wall onto the other side of the hill. And at the far end there was this other building, this other temple or whatever. I can remember it very, very clearly, even now - what I found there, who I met there, and the conversations I had there and so on. So clearly since it was a recurring again and again, it obviously meant something, but it is not clear to me even now, what the full significance of it is, though the general significance is pretty obvious. But that's the sort of thing I mean. None of these dreams gave me any clue to my own actions.

Though yes I can remember again one particular dream that made a very vivid impression at the time which gave me a clue as to what was going to happen. In this dream, I was fighting, I was fighting an asura, and we each had a sort of rapier. And this asura looked a little bit like a Red Indian, in the sense that he wore sort of leather long trousers, but the upper part of his body was bare, he might have had some feathers in his head or his hair. So anyway we were fencing, and of course I don't know one end of a fence from the other! (laughter) And in the dream I beat him, I defeated him and apparently your opponent was defeated, or you were defeated, if you succeeded in just making a slight scratch across his body so as to draw blood, then you had won. So I sort of scratched his body in this way, so he said : "Aha, you have beaten me. All right, I shall tell you something. Within a few days time you will be in great danger from fire. But don't worry I shall give you a mantra which will protect you. So he said the mantra is : "OM RAM HUM"

So I remember this, and when I woke up I said to myself OM RAM HUM. I knew of course that RAM is the bija mantra of fire, I knew that already. Anyway some days later, this all happened in Bombay, and some days later I was attending a meeting in a building which had recently been acquired by my friend Dr. Mehta, for his organisation. It was the inaugural meeting and there were various talks and so on and he was in the chair, and among others I was to speak. So I was talking away, as usual it was a fairly lengthy lecture (Laughter), and I was quite absorbed in this and the audience was quite intent because I was quite popular with them, I had often addressed that audience. I was vaguely aware of something happening, my friend who was in the Chair had received a note from someone, he had read the note and had just left the meeting. I did not think about it because my mind was fully absorbed in my lecture. But anyway, afterwards he said, "It was just as well that you were talking and holding everybody's attention, there was a fire while your lecture was going on. The note was passed to me that the shrine room had caught fire." There had been a sort of dedication of the shrine room beforehand and candles had ignited a curtain and the whole thing went up in flames. So he and others were fighting the fire while my talk was going on. And he said that if I had not been lecturing and holding people's attention in that way, there could have been a panic and a stampede and people could even have been killed.

So he said that it was just as well that you were talking. This happened just a few days later. So then of course I remembered my dream again, even now I can remember this dream very vividly. Anyway that is all by the way. But I don't think I have ever received any hint in dreams as to what I should do, and I don't think I have ever acted upon a dream in that kind of way.

Devamitra : We do have another question concerning dreams from Kulamitra.

Kulamitra : A very simple question really, arising out of Carrithers' use of his subjects' dreams. Is it valid to use dream analysis in an

unprofessional way, to try to understand other people? I mean obviously one does it oneself.

S: I think it obviously depends on one's degree of intuition and empathy with those other people. I think in this case Carrithers is recounting the dreams simply because the dreams provided, well, some evidence of the monks states of mind. And also because they did inspire them to act in a particular way or confirm them in acting in a particular way. So however one evaluates the dream itself, the fact remains that it did have an influence on the life of that person howsoever interpreted, so one is justified in including it in any biographical account of them or of their activities.

Kulamitra : In this particular chapter though Bhante, he recounts one dream, not only recounts the dream, but then analyses it in quite some length, two or three pages.

S: Yes I remember that now. I felt a bit dubious about that because well, it's not that there is the dream, it has a meaning. I think it's generally understood now that you have to take into account the dreamer as well as the dream. I mean one particular person may dream about a corpse or an elephant and it has one meaning; somebody else dreams about a corpse or an elephant and those things have completely different meanings. Because different meanings are attached to different symbols as it were, different objects that appear in dreams, by different people. So I did think that his more extended analyses of one or two dreams were in a sense a bit amateurish, I don't know whether you can analyze a dream in that way without reference to the dreaming subject. The analysis seemed plausible but the very plausibility may be quite dubious. (Laughter) He may have been right, he may have hit the nail on the head, but I can't say that I felt really convinced.

Devamitra : The next question comes from Abhaya and concerns the subject of romanticism.

S: Well, Abhaya should be answering the question too! (laughter)

Abhaya : Well it's a particular use of the word romantic. The picture emerging from Nanananda's life story in this chapter, is of a man partially motivated by a romantic view of life as a Forest Monk. I use the word romantic in the sense of visionary, idealistic and even impractical.

S: Even unreal.

Abhaya : Yes. This somewhat romantic view in his case seems to have led him astray into a sort of egotistical, slightly grandiose mode of operation. While recognising this, we concluded in our discussion that some degree of romantic view is an inevitable motivating factor in one's spiritual development, and quite helpful if balanced by a down to earth approach. Do you agree with this, and do you think we have sufficient of it in the Movement? If not, what do you think we might do to develop it?

S: Let's take that bit by bit.

Abhaya : The picture emerging from Nanananda's life story in this chapter is one of a man partially motivated by a romantic view of life as a

Forest Monk (romantic in the sense that I have expressed it). This somewhat romantic view in his case seems to have led him astray into a sort of egotistical, slightly grandiose mode of operation.

S: Yes I think that is true and I think I touched on this toward the end of our session last night, when I spoke about those monks who wanted to revive Buddhism by training up a hundred young men altogether etc., etc. yes.

Abhaya : While recognising this, we concluded in our discussion that some degree of romantic view is an inevitable motivating factor in one's spiritual development, and quite helpful if balanced by a down to earth approach.

S: I think that's the nub of the matter, quite helpful if balanced by a down to earth approach, which implies that you can make that dream or that romantic element relevant to your actual situation here and now. It seems that it's that which Nanananda fails to do. I think Carrithers indicates that when he points out that Nanananda saw the future Prime Minister as a sort of King, whereas actually there was no question of him being a King - Carrithers makes that very clear, that he was the democratically elected Prime Minister of what was in fact at that time a secular State - there was no question of him being a King in the old fashioned romantic sort of way, and giving that kind of patronage to the Sangha.

So he wasn't sufficiently down to earth in the sense that he did not see the inappropriateness of that particular dream, or that particular aspect of the dream, to what he was actually trying to achieve or to the situation within which he was working. Do you see what I mean? So perhaps a dream or that romantic element is useful as an inspirational factor, but you mustn't be so absorbed in the dream, so carried away by the romantic element, that you fail to see its irrelevance to the situation in which you are actually operating. And that is what happened at least to some extent in the case of Nanananda. And then you go on to ask ?

Abhaya : And then, do you agree with this? And do you think we have sufficient of this in the Movement?

S: Well in some parts of the Movement we do because we must not forget that there is also an important wing of the Movement in India. They've got a sort of dream of a romantic element, or many of them have, many of the ex-untouchable Buddhists have, and even other Buddhists. This element is shared by our own Friends and that is this dream, this romantic element represented by the fact of the glorious past history of Buddhism in India. A glorious history which can in fact be revived. They are greatly inspired by this and perhaps they have an over.....

[End of side one side two]

..... romantic view of the glories of the Buddhist period of Indian history, do you see what I mean? But that is a very inspiring element for many of them. We don't have that, we can't look back nostalgically to King Alfred the Great, Buddhist King in ancient times, and how wonderful it would be to revive the glories of that period. We have nothing of that sort to look back to, so that element is rather lacking in our case. Perhaps it would be a good thing if there was a greater presence of that kind of romantic element but I'm not quite sure where we are going to get it from. Yes, I think it would sort of liven things up, a bit, perhaps it requires further thought. Perhaps we could make the appeal of

Buddhism a little more romantic as it were for people in the West.

Suvajra : This discussion that we had arose out of what you were saying last night about Sri Lanka and Buddhism perhaps taking off there. We asked a question about which of us was actually inspired or if not inspired then at least moved by the romantic view. Not necessarily the practical implications of it, but the romantic view of the Dharmachari life, the Anagarika life in Sri Lanka and about half of us were actually moved by this, but when it came to the practical.....well..... (laughter)

S: Well, what was it in the romance of it that did move people? What was it which they felt they were perhaps not actually able to carry out or put into practice? Did they like the idea of swanking around in yellow robes?

Suvajra : Well some of us felt that was part of it, the robes.

Subhuti : I said it would be good if I had some pupils to teach. (laughter)

Suvajra : Yes well you said that for yourself, but part of the romantic view would be that, yes, we would be in robes.....

S: But what is there romantic about robes? Perhaps you have to put the question a further stage back. Why are robes so romantic, why are robes more romantic than three piece suits?

Sona : I think it was mainly because of the whole connection with the whole Buddhist tradition going back to the Buddha himself, and if one has an image of the Buddha walking around in robes one can identify oneself with him.

S: That is true and that is all right to the extent that one can actually live up to what the robes represent or represented at least in the Buddha's day and that's no doubt where the difficulty comes in. What else, did anyone else make any other such confessions?

Kulamitra : Bhante I think it is partly to do with the feeling that we had when you were talking of being able to quickly influence quite a large number of people and begin to see the way towards transforming a whole culture, I think I found that quite inspiring. That was one element anyway, maybe there were many elements.

S: Though perhaps actually in practice it wouldn't take place as quickly as one had hoped. But on the other hand it might because in India think how quickly we've influenced thousands of people perhaps now, at least to some extent. Thousands of people have come into contact with us, tens of thousands if you include all those who have been to our lectures. I think I estimated that in the course of my tour, not the last visit but the visit before when I had a proper tour, I think I estimated that in the course of my tour of [Indian Name] fifty thousand people, which was a conservative estimate, my friends there would have given a bigger figure, but a conservative estimate was that fifty thousand people actually heard me speak.

So that is the scale of our work there now. I doubt if fifty thousand people have heard me speak in this country in the course of twenty years. That was in the course of one month.

Kulamitra : I think another element at least for me was that in studying this text, sometimes I found it quite depressing, even a bit disturbing that something as noble as Buddhism could have sunk into such a squalid state, and I suppose there is that vision of a genuine regeneration.....

S: Renaissance.

Kulamitra : in a way that maybe these Forest Monks have not been and will not be able to.

S: Yes in a way their struggle seems to have been rather pathetic, you can't help sympathising or even empathising with them, but you feel very sorry for them because they seem to have struggled so hard and endured so much in the way of hardship and opposition without achieving all that much either for themselves or for the society, and in any case the Forest Monk Movement seems to more or less have petered out. Maybe there are a couple of strong centres left, maybe not much more than that.

They didn't have the reinforcement of, for want of a better term, an ideology, a systematic reinterpretation of the Dharma, getting back to the origins of the Dharma, the common root of all the different schools and developments in a very basic fundamental sort of way. They don't seem to have been equipped to do that, and of course there was the all pervasive ethnic Buddhist group ready to absorb them as happened to some extent in the case of Nanananda. He provides a very good example of that. In a sense he compromised from the beginning - with the best of intentions. I have sometimes thought that it was probably a blessing that in our own case in the case of the FWBO, we were virtually excommunicated from the beginning. I think that safeguarded us, and I think had we been in a sense on very friendly terms with some of the other groups, our contact with them would have acted as a very sort of centrifugal force in connection with the people who were coming along to us or so far as they were concerned. As it was sometimes people got very much attracted by Zen or Tibetan Buddhism and we lost some in that way. But I think the fact that we were not in contact with the other Buddhist groups and our members were not in contact with other Buddhist groups, and our members were not in contact, our Friends were not in contact for quite a few years helped us really to get started and strike out on our own in a way that we needed to strike out. So it was really a blessing in disguise.

I think I have recounted the story of when I was in Calcutta I received a letter from the Sangha Trust saying that they did not want me back, though of course several of them at least, at the time of my departure, had begged me to come back on time and not to stay away for too long and all that sort of thing. But anyway, some of them changed their minds while I was away, so the result was that I got this letter saying in effect I would not be welcome back. I said to the friend who was with me that my instant reaction was: This means a new Movement! I saw at once the implications, I saw that I had my opportunity. So although it looked very black, and some of my friends and supporters were quite dismayed at what had happened, I personally felt quite liberated. After we got back my only real fear was that some of my well meaning friends would succeed in reinstating me in the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara. But I could not tell them that I didn't want to be reinstated, and I was privately praying that they wouldn't succeed, (Laughter) and they didn't.

Nagabodhi : Bhante you say at that moment you saw your opportunity, but you had seen a need?

S: I had seen a need yes, but I had not seen an opportunity because I saw quite clearly that if I had said at that time before leaving, that I wanted to start a new Buddhist Movement, my own friends and supporters would have been against it, saying : "We've already got *The Buddhist Society*, and we've got *The Sangha Association*, and *The Sangha Trust*; why divide the Buddhist Movement?" Do you see what I mean? They would have been quite happy carrying on just attending my classes and lectures under the auspices of either *The Buddhist Society* or *The Sangha Association*. They weren't able to see further than that. But when *The Sangha Trust*, not the Association, said they didn't want me back (the Association did want me back) but when the Trust said they didn't want me back and they controlled the property because they owned it, then I saw my opportunity. I had the perfect excuse to start up a new Movement and luckily *The Buddhist Society* didn't want me to function there either for quite a few years. So I had to start up a new Movement, so of course, those who wanted to attend my lectures and classes - they came to that new Movement, and that's how we started the FWBO! But those same people who supported me then, that I brought with me so to speak from the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, would never had followed me I'm sure, if without that breach, I tried to start up a new Buddhist Movement. They would have said : Why divide the Buddhist Movement further, it is already more divided than it should be." And of course one also could sympathise with that point of view. But I was forced to start up something new and in a sense they were forced to follow me, and that's how it started.

Padmaraja : Would you say that the break was inevitable Bhante?

S: Oh that's a very difficult question. Because is anything inevitable in human affairs where human beings are concerned? It wasn't inevitable because actually there was quite a tussle within *The Sangha Trust* before they sent that letter to me. Because three wanted to send it, and two were very strongly against it. So it was almost a sort of toss up as to whether the letter went off or not, and the two against whose wishes the letter was sent off, very shortly afterwards resigned in a sense in protest.

Kulamitra : Bhante, I found Padmaraja's question interesting, because it seems to me that one could posit an alternative view; which is that you being you and just getting on with what you saw needed to be done, sooner or later, unfortunately, was likely to provoke reaction, and in a way they took their opportunity.

S: Yes, I think actually in that sense it was inevitable, I think sooner or later there would have been a clash. But it happened in this dramatic way, and this unfair way that gave me a greater moral advantage, and a sort of watertight excuse for starting up, so to speak, my own Movement, because I pointed out that I had promised that I was coming back to work in England. So whether I was welcome at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara or not, I had to come back to fulfil my promise, I had no choice, this is genuinely how I felt, I had solemnly and publicly stated that I was coming back to work for the Dharma in England, so I had to do that whether or not there was any support, or whether or not people wanted me.

Also what struck me in a way more than anything else was the fact that even though those three Trustees and other people knew I had publicly stated this and given this public promise, they still felt that I could not only be persuaded to break my promise, but also I could be persuaded to put out a false statement to the effect that I had changed my mind, that I had thought things over after returning to India and had changed my

mind and had decided not to come back. They virtually tried to blackmail me, by saying that : "If you don't agree to put out this statement, well we shall say whatever we want to say, do whatever we want to do to prevent you, to stop you from coming back." So they didn't take seriously the fact that I had made a definite public promise. In other words they didn't take me seriously, they didn't realise in a way what sort of person I was. They didn't realise that having made a public promise, I took that seriously, which suggested that perhaps they did not take their own promises seriously. This is what surprised me or even shocked me more than anything else, they thought I could be as it were blackmailed into issuing a false statement and of course staying away.

So they were really surprised when I came back notwithstanding. A lot of people didn't think I would be able to survive without the support of the Sangha Trust and the Buddhist Society. I was again surprised and I said : "Well look, I have survived all these years in a foreign country, without anybody's help or support to begin with. Can I not survive in my own country?" I felt it was extraordinary that so many people felt that without Christmas Humphreys' permission, I couldn't come back. It was extraordinary and some were really astonished that I managed to come back even though he was against me, as though he was like the 'King' almost and could stop me by force. It was really quite extraordinary.

While we are on the topic, I will not go on too long, but I remember one particular incident. I had this friend, Gerald York who was the reader for 'Rider', and who had accepted *The Three Jewels* for publication, it was about to be published. I remember shortly after my arrival, he invited me for lunch to talk over the situation. I went along to his flat in the West End and he had one of these, what do you call it, intercom systems. So I rang the bell and the door swung open, and as I entered the hall I could hear him upstairs shouting to his wife, "He's arrived Angela he is all right." And from the way he received me and looked at me, it was really as though he expected me to be covered with bruises and wounds and with my arm in a sling, yes. He looked at me and I was bright and cheerful and he couldn't believe it. He expected to see me sort of creep in, crushed and bowed, yes it was astonishing. (Laughter) It was almost as though he wanted to feel me to see that there were no bones broken, and that I was all right, having gone through it all and entered the country, without Christmas Humphreys' permission! (laughter). Really you have no idea what things were like in those days. But by doing that, I think I can say that I sort of broke the spell of Christmas Humphreys' authority which was a quite unreal thing, but which he'd somehow built up over the years. And Gerald - I in a way felt quite touched by his concern, and he was so relieved that I was all right, I was intact. That I hadn't been seriously damaged by all the things that had happened and I was better than ever, and really quite cheerful, I was glad to see him as he was a good friend of mine in a way. But anyway, as I said that is just by the way.

So yes to get back to that point, I think it was probably inevitable that I would have clashed with certain people sooner or later. But from my point of view I clashed at the right moment and in the best possible way even though that had certainly not been my intention. When I left England with the idea of coming back I didn't really know how I was going to be functioning. I knew I had to make some kind of new departure, I even discussed that with a few people before leaving. Whether independently of the Sangha Trust or the Sangha Association and the Buddhist Society, we couldn't hire halls quite independently where I would give talks or where I would conduct one day retreats, we had already started talking, or I had already started talking with just a few closer friends along those sort of lines. But in a very tentative sort of way, not being able to see how else I could proceed.

Kulamitra : Bhante, were you aware just how deeply your simple Buddhist activity had upset certain people when you left, were you aware of this?

S: I think I wasn't, I think I wasn't fully aware of how many toes I had in fact trod on. I considered it afterwards and realised that I must have trodden on quite a few toes but one of the strange things was that I trod on toes in one particular way which was this: That I annoyed quite a few extreme supporters of the Sangha Trust and the Sangha Association who wanted nothing to do with the Buddhist Society. I antagonised them by functioning at the Buddhist Society and encouraging people from the Buddhist Society to come to the Vihara and vice versa. I offended certain people in the Buddhist Society because I was functioning also at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, besides being a bhikkhu, and some were against bhikkhus as such; and also offended them on account of the fact that some people from the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara followed me to the Buddhist Society for lectures and classes there. I offended the extremists on both sides and when it came to the crunch in effect they joined hands against me, even though they were also opposed to each other, this also happened.

Some people I upset because of the remarks I had made on Vipassana. So there were a number of people on whose toes I had trodden on, and these were not the only ones. Anyway that is again by the way.

Devaraja : Bhante do you think that you are ever likely to write up the history of this period in the not too distant future?

S: Well I don't know about the not too distant future but as I mentioned the other evening, those events treated from perhaps a slightly idiosyncratic point of view or in a slightly idiosyncratic way would be the subject matter hopefully of my fourth volume of memoirs, but I've only got a third of the way through volume two. But I know exactly how I'm going to tell the story. It won't be a straightforward blow by blow account, no. It is going to approach the whole question from a completely different angle.

Devamitra : The next question comes from Kamalasila on the term lajjava.

Kamalasila : Could you say something about the concept of lajjava and lajadharma on pages 188/9, and do we have anything similar in our society?

S: I don't think that I can really say very much. I think actually the author does give quite a good account of what they basically constitute. I don't think I really have anything to add to that except the term is a Pali term that goes into Sinhalese from Pali. It could be translated a shame as well as modesty. Shame in a quite positive sense. The notion is of course connected with the Pali '*hiri*', one of the two Lokapalas, *hiri* and *ottapa*, you may remember from *Mind in Buddhist Psychology*. But perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea if people pondered that particular passage where Carrithers gives his account of what constitutes lajja and try to see what is positive in it. He seems to see it as connected with repression, especially sexual repression. I don't think it is as simple a matter as that. Perhaps he confuses suppression and repression. For instance, modesty especially in the case of a monk with regard to the opposite sex. I mean in modern times we might think that if you weren't prepared to take off all your clothes in front of a member of the opposite sex on the slightest provocation, not to say opportunity, there was something wrong with you and you were sexually repressed! But Buddhist tradition obviously does not take that point of view, nor should that point of view be regarded as normal.

So I think the description he gives of what constitutes *lajja* is quite accurate but I think his evaluation of it goes somewhat astray, his evaluation of that particular quality. He sees it in a slightly jaundiced way. He mentions that women for instance do not approach *bhikkhus* unless they are wearing long skirts or saris I think he mentions. So I think we similarly should be encouraging women in our own Movement in the way of Order Members, *Mitras* and Friends when they come to the Centre not to dress or undress in a provocative manner. When I read my poem I couldn't help noticing that sitting next to one particular male Order Member, whom I know to be rather susceptible to these things anyway, was a lady, a young woman, the lower part of whose body was completely uncovered which is not the most suitable sight to be seen in a shrine room on such an occasion. Do you see what I mean? Some of you evidently saw her. *Devamitra* wouldn't (laughter) She was sitting very near to me, and I couldn't help noticing. You couldn't even say that her skirt was short, she hardly had a skirt.

Nagabodhi : I think she was wearing shorts if she was the one I was -thinking of, very brief shorts.

S: Yes well whatever she was wearing was extraordinary, we won't go into the exact details! (laughter).

Nagabodhi : It was extraordinary bad taste! (laughter)

S: It seems like unawareness, not being aware of the effect that that sort of thing might have and that it wasn't suitable or appropriate in the shrine room to say the least. So without being too heavy about it, perhaps people's attention, where necessary, should be gently drawn to this. Perhaps one can't do it with very new people because they may react, but when you win their confidence you could at least just touch upon this a little and try to point out certain things. Maybe it's best if one can do it through the women Order Members. I think the women Order Members on the whole are quite sensible about these things now; on the whole, maybe a little room for improvement still.

Devamitra : Another question from *Kamalasila* on a related matter.

Kamalasila : This is actually from a couple of days ago. The passage where we were talking about *Ratanapala*, and you said that you did not think that Sinhalese Buddhism creates irrational guilt generally speaking. You also thought that *Ratanapala's* guilt feelings were rational although somewhat overdone, and I thought that some of us were very surprised by your answer, and taking that do you think that our own confusion in this area of rational and irrational guilt prevents us from taking our own faults more seriously?

S: It could be, but let's go through the question bit by bit.

Kamalasila : You said that you did not think that Sinhalese Buddhism on the whole creates irrational guilt.

S: I think on the whole I would stick with that, or rather I think perhaps I was intending to say that *Carrithers* didn't produce any evidence for that generalisation. My own impression, without having made a close study of the subject or having done any research into it, was that it was probably untrue. Do you see what I mean? Basically I was questioning his generalisation, the validity of his generalisation, just because he produced no evidence at all, and it certainly didn't square with my own observation of and contact with well, certainly Sinhalese *bhikkhus*. They

certainly didn't strike me as guilt ridden, in the sort of way that he suggests.

But certainly there were certain things about which they felt or could feel guilty as was the case with Ratanapala, but I would consider that as rational guilt. As I said at the time, if you vow not to do something and then actually do it, then why should you not experience guilt? Maybe you take it too far, I mentioned that I thought Ratanapala did, but rational guilt is rational guilt, and I do detect nowadays, and perhaps even in the Friends sometimes, a tendency to think that nobody under any circumstances should ever be made to feel guilty or should have to feel guilty, which almost suggests the absence of any moral norm. Or that even if you break or disregard a particular moral norm or moral principle you shouldn't feel bad about it, you should quite blithely recognise that you have done something wrong and then try to put it right. But if you have as it were gone against your own belief, your own principles that you believe in and want to adhere to, but nonetheless, due to human weakness you are not able to observe that particular principle or precept, you feel bad and in a sense you feel guilty, but that is a quite rational feeling, it is a rational guilt, it is not neurotic. Even though yes, in certain cases due to certain influences, Christian conditioning and so on people may take it somewhat too far, and some may take it very much too far. But nonetheless there is such a thing as rational guilt which one not only feels when one as a Buddhist breaks the precepts, but should feel. If you don't feel guilty having broken the precepts, well there is some doubt as to how seriously you really take those precepts, so I hope that is really clear.

Kamalasila : So my question was really that this seems to be an area of confusion, perhaps due to Christian conditioning. So if it's an area of confusion does this mean that it is hard for us to take our faults very seriously?

S: If you are so keen to avoid the feeling of guilt that you can hardly admit that you have done something wrong, well then yes, you won't take your ethical behaviour or unethical behaviour very seriously.

Padmavajra : You are using the term "rational guilt", would you use that word in the same way as shame, as '*hiri*' let's say or do you think it's got another.....

S: No it seems to be more like *ottapa* because *hiri* refers to your feeling of shame when you realise that you have not lived up to the expectations, the rational, even the justifiable expectations of your spiritual friends, you have let them down, you have disappointed them. To some extent you have put yourself out of communication with them, that is shame. But *ottapa* is sort of self reproach. It's your consciousness of having let yourself down. It's the function of conscience in a way to exercise that particular faculty. So perhaps guilt is connected with that, with *ottapa* rather than with *hiri*.

Padmavajra : In this connection as well I was looking in a bookshop the other day and there has been a study of guilt, quite a long one recently published, have you come across that?

S: I seem to remember seeing it in a Bibliography somewhere yes.

Padmavajra : Because his argument is that it's a powerful creative force.

S: Ah, well it's a powerful force whether it's creative or not - there is no doubt about that, perhaps it could be creative, perhaps we don't see it's creative potential sufficiently. If you feel guilty it is not a very pleasant state to be in and some people just don't like to be in unpleasant states, but I think that rational guilt is really a quite positive and even perhaps we could say, skilful mental state to be in, provided you don't allow yourself to remain in it in the sense of wallowing in it, and proceed as quickly as possible to eliminate the feeling of guilt by healing whatever breach of moral precept has brought about that feeling of guilt, by confession and so on.

Dharmapriya : Another supplementary question. I think you are certainly right about saying there is a confusion in the Movement about guilt, or the idea that guilt is bad.

S: Well that guilt is invariably bad you mean?

Dharmapriya : Yes, yes and I have somehow the idea that it goes back in part to your lectures on *the Sutra of Golden Light*, where I believe you use the word guilt primarily in a negative sense and talk of remorse in perhaps the way you are talking about positive guilt now.

S: That could be, and also of course I must have emphasised that the sense of guilt is to be removed. It is not to be clung on to but it is removed by genuine confession, repentance, restitution, rectification of one's conduct and so on.

Kulamitra : What you said is very clear but I think there may be something inherently confusing on an emotional level in practice, if one has a mixture of rational and irrational guilt. I think my own experience has been when that's happened, that when in a sense partly out of quite good motivation I have tried to give something up, if there was the irrational guilt, I didn't feel that it had been my decision. It was only when the irrational guilt cleared that this sort of action became clear itself, would you agree with that?

S: Yes I think you have to sort out the two strands, the rational and the irrational and that may be quite difficult at first.

But going back to the lecture in *the Sutra of Golden Light* series, I can't remember exactly what I said, but I think when I was referring to guilt I was probably having in mind the mental state in which you, as it were, wallow in the feeling of guilt and hang on to it, hug it almost and don't take any steps to alleviate it through changing your course of action or your mental attitude, or simply exaggerating your guilt.

Devamitra : Now we have a question from Susiddhi on government intervention.

Susiddhi : Was it a tragic consequence of Nanananda's career that he could only realise his dream of an independent forest dwelling nikaya in Ceylon by playing off the government against the Siyama Nikaya and thereby giving the new administration the opportunity of establishing a precedent for interfering in Sangha affairs?

S: I don't think it was quite interference in Sangha affairs. Carrithers does refer to the ancient Indian tradition or convention that the King was the guardian and upholder of all corporations, do you remember that. Usually the corporations took a caste form, but one of the duties of the King according to ancient Indian ideas was to uphold the rules or the laws of each individual corporation, they made their own laws, they laid down their own conditions of membership and so on. And the King was to underwrite those, so that if anybody offended against them and the members of that corporation were not able to deal with the matter then, then in their interest the King could intervene. So that seems to have been the pattern for the Sangha, the Sangha eventually assumed the form of one of these corporations and if it became unable to govern its own affairs and if any of its members became disruptive, the majority of members appealed to the King to put things right and the King would do that. So it seems as though the Sangha fell eventually into the pattern of such a corporation but as I think I indicated also, there is a parallel to that in our case in as much as legally we are a corporation, we are a registered charity. So one takes advantage of that sort of arrangement in order to be able to function in certain respects in the secular world.

So I think it was unfortunate that in the case of Nanananda's Nikaya, that he couldn't set it up without the willing collaboration of the Siyama Nikaya, that was quite unfortunate. So in a way if Nanananda was to be able to function in the way that he wanted and in the sense that he had a right to function, he could only do it by invoking governmental influence. So that was unfortunate but it was necessary only because there had already been a breach within the wider Sangha which was demonstrated by the fact that the Siyama Nikaya bhikkhus could not behave sensibly in the situation, and make it possible for the forest monks to be properly ordained according to their own likes.

So again it illustrates the point I made the other day, that if the Sangha does not conduct its own affairs properly and in the Sangha here I include both the village monks and the forest monks, then inevitably the government will intervene or will be asked to intervene by one side or the other. So yes it was unfortunate but I think the blame attaches not to Nanananda but to the Siyama Nikaya bhikkhus. He wanted to ensure the purity of his particular Sangha and that was the only way he could do it on account of the uncooperative attitude of the Siyama Nikaya bhikkhus. I think you appreciate the situation, what actually happened. Carrithers does describe it, when for instance these comparatively well trained young men who wanted to be forest bhikkhus, when they get their ordination which obviously means a great deal to them, instead of having their own trusted teachers, there is a motley crew of some ten or maybe twenty village bhikkhus, some of whom they know are of ill repute, not observing the Vinaya, leading a very worldly life, gathered together to give them the ordination. So what an undermining effect that could have.

So one cannot blame Nanananda for wanting to set up his own separate Nikaya which could conduct its own ordinations. So that young men could receive their ordinations from the bhikkhus who had trained them and who they respected and not as I said from this motley crew of village monks for whom they had no respect and who they did not in fact regard as being really monks at all, and in many cases weren't really monks at all!

[End of tape 17 Tape 18]

Devamitra : The next question comes from Achala and concerns the question of public image.

Achala : On page 190, the text infers that public success is for Nanananda much more important than his personal spiritual drama. In my

experience this phenomena of people focusing on trying to be a public success rather than obtaining self mastery is more the rule than the exception. Do you agree, and if so do you think that in most cases the desire for public success in one field or another, could be seen simply as a sublimated animal desire to get to the top of the pecking order?

S: Let's take it bit by bit.

Achala : Right, on page 190 the text infers that public success is for Nanananda much more important than his personal spiritual drama.

S: I think one has to say in that connection that probably he himself would not have made that sort of distinction. I think it's a valid distinction, I think it's valid from the Buddhist point of view, but I don't think it's a distinction that he would have made. I think that in the East or perhaps in any 'traditional society', single inverted commas, one tends to be one's role in that society. For instance let me just give you an example. Supposing you went to a Buddhist country as, from their point of view, a layman, and supposing they offered you a meal in the evening and supposing you refused it because you were just wanting to limit your consumption of food, you wanted to bring your craving for food let us say, under control. They would almost certainly say to you : "Why should you not take food in the evening, you're not a monk". The fact that though you are not a monk and you are doing that just for the sake of your personal spiritual development, because you thought it would be good, I think they would have very great difficulty in understanding. Because they can't imagine you, as a layman, having any needs or desires or aspirations, apart from your status as a layman. Not eating food after twelve o' clock is not expected of the layman, do you see what I mean? So I think they see the monk also as exercising a sort of role, and he is his role, he is fully identified with that. I think Nanananda must have felt something like that, so one can't in a way accuse them of insincerity, but the fact that they don't make that sort of distinction, and are unable to distinguish between one's role or what has become one's role, and what one actually is or how one is actually living, I think that is a great defect, a great lack from the Buddhist point of view, from the spiritual point of view. Do you see what I am getting at?

Achala : Yes.

S: So he would not have posed the question in those terms at all. He would not have seen himself as a good monk working for the glory of Buddhism, working for the glory of the Sasana. He would have seen that as requiring a public role inasmuch as he sees the Sangha itself, he sees Buddhism itself as having a public role. This can lead to all sorts of anomalies to which people in the East are often quite blind.

Achala : It seems a very stereotype thing really.

S: Well yes it is, it is and that's the pity of it, but anyway what were the other points in your question?

Achala : In my experience the phenomena of people focusing on trying to be a public success rather than obtaining self mastery, is more the rule than the exception.

S: Well probably this would apply more to those who are capable of making the distinction. Or who do in fact make it at least in theory, but are

unable to live up to it in practice.

Achala : So the first part of the question is; do you agree that it is more the rule than the exception, in that the people would be focusing on how other people see them in their success?

S: I think in this day and age we are very publicity conscious. I think there are lots of people around who think almost entirely in terms of their public image with results that their real self, to use that expression, suffers very badly, or is at least very badly neglected. I think if you are all the time whether consciously or unconsciously trying to live up a public image, or perhaps not even trying to live up to it but just trying to present it or produce that sort of impression in people's minds, in the long run it has quite a terrible effect upon you. I think one can see this in the case of certain public figures, especially perhaps people involved in the various media, perhaps TV and radio and films and so on. I think one can see lots of examples of that sort of thing in those areas, perhaps in public life and in politics too, and of course to a great extent in the religious field, but perhaps not so much in the religious field nowadays as in these other fields. So then?

Achala : The last part of the question is : Because if somebody sat down and thought about it they would probably get more happiness if they took account of their private life in a way, the question is:...

S: Yes but they are not really after happiness, because it seems as though they are just in an unhealthy mental state, even one might say a neurotic state, where to present a certain image in the minds or to thousands, tens of thousands, millions of other people, is far more important to them, in a neurotic sort of way and more satisfying even though it makes them very unhappy, than their own real genuine happiness. We know that this is the sort of state that a lot of people are in, it is a very unhealthy one, but they would rather have that sort of what one could in Buddhistic terms call an ego satisfaction, than genuine happiness. But what was the further question?

Achala : Well given this lack of perspective they have, do you think that this lack of perspective is in most cases, or could be seen as a sublimated animal desire to get to the top of the pecking order?

S: I rather doubt it, this is something quite different, because I think that the animals desire to get to the top of the pecking order is on its own level a quite healthy one. It's bound up with the survival of that individual, it's bound up with the survival of that particular species. So to the extent that human competitiveness is a continuation of that sort of animal competitiveness, I think it's relatively healthy even though it has its limitations. But I think the sort of thing that we are talking about where someone lives in his own image, and for the sake of that image and sacrifices everything to the preservation of that image which is an unreal thing! The animal's superiority in the pecking order is a real superiority, he has actually beaten the other animals. But the superiority that is achieved through the creation of an image which is really and largely a false and empty image, is not a real achievement at all. So I don't think it can be regarded as a sublimation of that original animal instinct. If one spoke of it in those terms at all, it could only be as a complete perversion of it, because there's nothing healthy in it at all, I think. Whereas in the case of the animal's instinct to get to the top of the pecking order, it is healthy on its own level. But this I think is not healthy in any sense being based usually on, to a very large extent if not totally on unreality, on illusion.

So in a way it's worse, it's worse than being a sublimation of the animal instinct to get to the top of the pecking order. I think really it is quite a dreadful thing. I think if you go all out to be top in your particular field, genuinely top, well that is another matter that is still relatively healthy and could perhaps be regarded as a sublimation of the original animal instinct but as I said the sort of thing we are talking about is a quite different phenomenon and but worse.

I mean we have all heard of people who are well known for being well known, people who really don't exist apart from the TV screen. I was reading recently about someone who was I think a comic, and wherever he goes, even to a party, a private party he has to make the sort of impression that is expected that he will make, he has got to behave in the way that people see him behaving on the TV screen, he has got to keep it up where ever he is he can't not be like that. He can never drop his mask so in the end his mask becomes stuck to his face and he doesn't even know it, he thinks it's his face.

Achala : Does he not think though that the gain in getting to the top of the pecking order is just scoring social points? Does he not see the business of survival in that sort of way perhaps?

S: He may, but I think when what you actually gain is so remote, so alienated from your real human interests, that it can't be regarded as success in any sense. I mean only in the most external sense which is not at all meaningful to you as a human being and sometimes of course people do get a glimpse of this but it is only a glimpse and after that they just try to close their eyes again and carry on as before. Of course it does destroy them, they become alcoholics or they become dependent on drugs to keep going. Perhaps I am painting a rather black picture. I am giving extreme examples but these extreme examples do exist and there are obviously varying degrees of seriousness of the same kind of thing and maybe you do get a mixture sometimes of the more, or the comparatively more normal sublimated animal instinct to get to the top of the tree, get to the top of the pecking order, together with this more neurotic mask preserving aspect.

But it is very tempting to want to keep up appearances and create an image of oneself for other people's benefit in the wrong sort of way. Or perhaps one can't do it ever in the right sort of way, it's always in the wrong sort of way if the image differs from what you really are, so far as that is observable by other people. You can very rarely project yourself really as you are, even to those who are very close to you. At least you shouldn't connive at any false presentation of yourself.

Devaraja : Can you say anything about the origins of the poem you wrote called "The Mask" which was dedicated I think to Trungpa Rimpoche. Does that have its origins in the same area?

S: No, no The Mask was not, another poem was dedicated to him. I remember where I wrote that poem. I can't remember why I wrote it. I wrote it when I was on retreat with Ananda years and years ago and I don't know what caused me to write that. If I gave it a lot of thought perhaps I could recall but I certainly don't recall at present. I remember very clearly writing it in that little cottage which was attached to, what was it called the other place, not Keffolds?

Several voices : Quartermaine.

S: Yes Quartermaine, but I must have had that sort of idea in my mind. What sparked it off I don't know, whether reading or observation, or my own situation at that time. But it is one of my more popular little poems. I used to enjoy reading it at poetry readings.

Devamitra : We move on to another topic. We have five questions remaining and the next one comes from Dhammaloka on meditation and scholarship.

Dhammaloka : In the Theravada and other Buddhist traditions, there has been occurring a general trend to emphasise scholarship at the cost of meditation practice. In Sri Lanka this tendency seems to have been supported by commentaries to the Buddhist scriptures as mentioned on page 195. This tendency may have been one of the factors leading to the decay of Buddhism. Why this trend? Does this split between scholarship and meditation find support in early Buddhism, in early Buddhist scriptures, and is there more to the devaluation of meditation than fear on the part of those who prefer the safe ground of mere intellectualising? I just can't understand this.

S: Yes it is difficult to understand, I'm not sure that I fully understand it myself, but let's go through your question.

Dhammaloka : In the Theravada and in other Buddhist traditions equally there seems to have been this current trend to emphasise scholarship at the cost of meditation.

S: That is true. It is certainly true in the case of the Theravada and perhaps other Buddhist traditions too.

Dhammaloka : In Sri Lanka this tendency seems to have been supported by commentaries to the Buddhist scriptures, this is mentioned on page 195. This tendency may have been one of the factors leading to the decay of Buddhism.

S: Yes I think that can't be denied except that I would perhaps have a caveat here about the nature of scholarship. I don't think that real scholarship could lead you astray, I don't think that real scholarship is necessarily incompatible with meditation, though it's incompatible with full time meditation for obvious reasons. But I really question the nature of much of this so-called scholarship. Because if you were deeply versed in say the Pali scriptures, especially in what seem to be the older portions of those scriptures, if you were a scholar in that sense you could not only realise the importance of meditation, but your scholarship itself would be a means, would be a instrument of spiritual development. You would be engaged in Dharma study in the way that we understand it.

So it would seem that it is not so much scholarship which is at fault, but perhaps scholarship of the wrong sort, not sufficiently deep and genuine scholarship, or scholarship that was not sufficiently deep and genuine, which was relatively superficial or one sided. Because real scholarship dealing with say Buddhist texts, Buddhist traditions, Buddhist scriptures, tries to get to grips in a quite existential sort of way with the principles that are really involved and that can be a source of spiritual inspiration, that can be an expression of one's spiritual quest, one's spiritual life itself. So I don't think we should underestimate or underrate scholarship understood in this sort of way, more deeply and more genuinely.

Apart from the writings of Buddhaghosa, what great works of scholarship have been produced in Theravada Ceylon, in so many centuries? Where are the great monuments of scholarship? Where is their equivalent to Gibbons' *Decline and Fall*, or Samuel Johnson's Dictionary and so on? There is hardly anything! Anyway that was as I said just a caveat, so let's go on.

Dhammaloka : To what extent can one find this tendency in other Buddhist, non-Theravada traditions as well?

S: There is some tendency of that sort I think in the Gelugpa School. I have gone into that just a little, or touched on it in my review of Geshe Rabten's autobiography where I find much to admire, but where I am a bit doubtful about this over-concentration on study.

Dhammaloka : So why this trend? Does it find support in very early Buddhism?

S: I have sometimes thought that it might be bound up with the fact that in the very early days, a lot of the Bhikkhus' energy was devoted and rightly devoted to the preservation of the oral tradition of the Buddha's teaching before it was committed to writing. Once it is committed to writing, you have got it all there in the books and you can get on with your meditation. But the preservation of that enormous mass of oral teaching must have been an incredible task, I think that for generations the bhikkhus were preoccupied mainly with this and had perhaps, many of them, very little time for meditation. This is one explanation that I thought of, so it is one could say that perhaps having been given that bias in that way from the start, that bias persisted even after the scriptures had actually been committed to writing, instead of then getting on with more meditation the monks continued to be absorbed in, as it were, literary pursuits or scholarly pursuits. There was also the fact that scholarship and education, educational activities were more obviously socially useful.

Therefore if you did find it difficult to be an individual and difficult to think in terms of the spiritual life, to think of the spiritual life in terms of individual development, if you wanted to be useful and respected member of society even though you were a monk, well you could very easily engage in education and even secular educational activities. You could teach children which was a very useful activity, but not specifically the task of the monk, not exclusively anyway.

So the cleric, the member of the clerisy as distinct from the member of the spiritual community has a more obvious social role, a more obvious role within the group, and to someone who was not sufficiently emancipated from the group, who wants to pursue the path of a purely individual spiritual development in a spiritual community, well the role of a member of the clerisy, the scholarly monk, would have been highly attractive. I think that probably just about sums it up though it may well be an over simplification and there may be a lot of other factors at work.

I mean I think there is always a pressure from the society, from the group in one form or another on the monk to do what is socially useful, what is useful to the group on the group's own terms or in the group's own terms. Perhaps the group would only be able to see meditation or the life of meditation as useful if they led to the development of supernormal powers, which would then be used for the protection of society. I once said years and years ago that enlightenment is unemployable, enlightenment isn't very useful in a way on the ordinary mundane level, whereas psychic powers are very useful, they are employable and so is scholarship of a sort.

Dhammaloka : Would you see the Chairmen's tendency not to have solitaries in this respect as well?

S: Well you would have to ask them, there are plenty of them present, there is no point in asking me!

Dhammaloka : Well!

S: Well, it's a possibility, but you would have to consult them and hope that they could give you a completely honest reply. I did refer to the fact that some years ago, there was a bit of, well I was joking in a sense about Chairman's withdrawal symptoms, that when someone resigned as a Chairman, or withdrew or was replaced as a Chairman, he did experience what seemed to be withdrawal symptoms. He just didn't know what to do, he felt at a loss, felt uncomfortable not to be functioning in that particular way. I doubt if it happens now but it certainly happened then.

Padmaraja : A sort of related question Bhante, I once had the privilege of seeing you read Matthew Arnold's poem "The Scholar Gipsy" at a poetry reading in Brighton. You seemed to read the poem with much conviction and deep understanding and I wondered at that time and since, whether in fact perhaps you identified with that figure. I just wondered to what extent you saw the figure of the Scholar Gipsy as a part of your own personal myth?

S : I must say I doubt very much whether it struck me in that way at the time, I can't recollect, but who knows. I would have to re-read the poem and see what I think and what I feel. I never thought of myself as a Gipsy (laughter). I might have ventured, no, I don't think I think of myself as scholar on purely technical grounds, I am widely read or even well read, but I am not a scholar in the technical sense as that word is generally understood in academic circles. So I don't really think of myself as a scholar, nor do I consciously think of myself as a gypsy. But there might be something in what you say in some slightly different sense. I will have to think about it and as I say re-read that poem. I do remember enjoying reading it very much, I can't remember which particular passages, but I seem to remember feeling at the time once I had started reading it aloud, and I think Devamitra heard me read it aloud beforehand and gave me some useful hints about certain things I should do and certain things I definitely shouldn't do (Laughter), so the reading owed something at least to him. But I remember thinking or feeling that the emotional content of the poem actually, was far greater than I had supposed simply by reading it to myself, I think that did quite strike me, the emotional content, even the emotional force of the poem which needed to be read aloud before that was brought out. That was quite a few years ago wasn't it? Yes, well I'm afraid I have not read much Matthew Arnold since, but yes maybe when I am in Tuscany I will read that poem and see what I think, see if I can empathise with or even identify myself with the Scholar Gypsy. I don't know if I would be permitted to go off wandering on my own now anyway.

A voice : In a red caravan, there are plenty in the garden!

S: Oh that would be cheating! One had of course the wandering scholars of the Middle Ages, didn't one. Anyway...

Devamitra : The next question comes from Achala, concerning communication and animals.

Achala : On page 181 the text describes how Nanananda directed metta to a snake and thereby rendered it harmless. I have heard similar stories about animals that have been subdued in this way as when the Buddha encountered a wild elephant. Assuming this type of phenomena does in fact occur from time to time, could you please comment how it is that animals which presumably have not even begun the path of the higher evolution could be so receptive, or at least influenced by positive thoughts emanating from human beings?

S: Well first of all to go back to the story about Nanananda, I doubt really whether he rendered it harmless. That suggests it was harmful to begin with. I'd rather doubt that. I doubt whether the snake had any bad intentions at all. So it wasn't that the snake was there in a terribly angry sort of state and it was calmed down and made harmless by Nanananda's metta. I don't think really that it what happened. Everybody was sitting there quite quietly listening to the talk, listening to the lecture, so really there was nothing to disturb the snake and he just came wandering in and wandered around, I don't think that he had any aggressive intentions that needed to become counteracted with metta. He just needed to be left alone, and I think snakes are usually like that. As soon as they hear the sound of a footstep their first instinct is to slither away as quickly as they can and they only turn on you if you tread on them or trap them in some way. So I think there was really nothing remarkable about this. I doubt very much whether it was a case of the snake being affected by Nanananda's mental attitude, by his metta. Nonetheless, I think that it is possible to affect animals by your mental state, especially if you have regular contact with them. I think animals are very sensitive, we know they are sensitive in lots of ways that we are not sensitive, or sensitive to an extent that we are not sensitive. We know that dogs can hear sounds that we cannot hear, that bats can hear sounds that we cannot hear and so on. We also know that dogs have a sort of telepathic capacity, that there are many instances of dogs who have known that their masters have died and who have suddenly started howling just at the time when their masters did, in some distant place, die. There are many such stories, many such instances.

So I think I have said before that I believe there is a subtle network of communication or contact between all living things. I don't really think it's surprising that an animal, especially perhaps one closely associated with human beings, can pick up what is coming from a human being certainly on the lower mental level, I don't think this is at all surprising. I don't think it argues or suggests a high development in the animal, but only that perhaps we have a lot more in common with the animals than we usually think or care to think.

I think animals are easily frightened, and I think they can pick up on our aggressive intentions, whether as it were telepathically or just through our subtle movements, and they will react accordingly. I think if we stay very still we are much less likely to be attacked by an animal, I think usually an animal will only attack if it's frightened. I don't think there are many animals which will attack the human being just for the sake of doing it, I think very few. There are some animals which are more aggressive than others generally, that will charge some other animal or some other object, like wild boars, perhaps rogue elephants. Lions are supposed to be quite harmless really. I was reading a travel book not so long ago where the authoress, I think it was, said that at a certain period in her travels she got quite used to seeing the lions come down to the river to drink in the evening, and they didn't take any notice of her, and she learned not to take any notice of them and they just came and went. This was in Africa somewhere.

Buddhadasa : Bhante I have a supplementary to that. I am curious why the Sinhalese have such an irrational fear of animals and the forest as it seems to be from the account. I would have thought that two thousand years of Buddhism, however diluted, would have made the Sinhalese more at home with his environment. Have you any comments?

S: Well it has been pointed out that in the West, nature, the forest wherever it existed, was always regarded with dread. It is only in quite recent years, recent centuries that we have begun to romanticise the forest and the mountains. In the Middle Ages still, for most people they were regarded with almost feelings of horror. The forest was the abode of not only wild animals but of all sorts of demons and giants and horrible monsters. It's almost as though in popular parlance people projected things onto the forest, and perhaps the Sinhalese had traditionally done that down to comparatively recent times. The more your forest shrinks the less you do it, but if you are surrounded by forest perhaps you feel yourself surrounded by the unknown and you react accordingly. Just as even quite civilised people, town dwelling people nowadays, perhaps if they wander out in the garden just a few hundred yards away from the house all on their own in the dark in the middle of the night, they might feel frightened or at least there will be a passing spasm of fear. So in what way is it surprising that the ignorant Sinhalese villager feels that way still despite Buddhism, especially as the Buddhist scriptures are full of stories about tree spirits and things that go bump in the night and all the rest of it. It's really not surprising. It's also interesting that monks are not expected to be afraid, it shows that there is still some remnant of the spiritual tradition, something higher, something more, something better, is expected of the monk, he is not expected to be afraid. He is supposed to possess the capacity to resist or counteract at least, the animals and the demons and the ghosts and the spirits, and the hobgoblins.

Dharmapriya : In the same light I have often wondered on this question of Buddhadasa's whether it had anything to do with the historical events that the Sinhalese uncovers in the invading Europeans, presumably with agriculture already, down from the north and had initially driven the aboriginal people further into the hills in Sri Lanka and then merged with them, in a sense had never gone through an aboriginal or forest dwelling stage in that island, perhaps so distant in the past they were a bit like say, Europeans going to a jungle.

S: Well we have all lived in the jungle in the past haven't we? But nonetheless after living in cities we learn to fear the jungle, but our ancestors must have lived in it, where else was there for them to live? I don't read that the Greeks were afraid of the jungle because they did not have any, they had bare rocks and a bit of grass and a few trees, not dense jungles in historical times as far as I remember. Anyway let's press on with our questions.

Devamitra : The next question comes again from Achala concerning the magical power of visualisation.

Achala : Carrithers presents Nanananda's Movement as trying to follow the model of Mahakassapa's reform of the twelfth century. Could you please comment more generally on the process of constructing models or ideals in our minds eyes of what we want to happen, try to visualise this more clearly, and engaging our volitions with the image as a means of helping bring about the desired result. For example, I have heard that in cases where seriously ill people have experienced a sudden remission, they frequently report that they visualise themselves as healthy just before the remission occurred. Similarly I have heard it said that athletes who win important races frequently visualise themselves as winning the race before it occurs. Is this in essence the same mechanism that we employ in Yidam visualisation practices, albeit on an immeasurably loftier level?

S: In the case of the athletes is it suggested that they were visualising their future success as a sort of exercise to bring it about, or that they sort of had a precognitive vision of it?

Achala : Actually as far as I remember it, it was more like the precognitive vision.

S: So that would be a different thing wouldn't it ?

Achala : Yes they did not create it as an image.

S: So I think that precognitive vision would be quite a different thing from deliberately visualising yourself in a certain situation so as to bring about that situation. But I think one can do that both individually and as it were collectively, perhaps with quite positive results.

Let's give a concrete example, suppose you are very nervous, and you are very nervous of addressing a public gathering, well you could perhaps practise visualising yourself giving your talk and the talk being very successful and yourself being very confident, and your talk being met with great appreciation and in that way you could strengthen your self confidence, it would help. I'm quite sure also that if people who were a bit hypochondriacal were to visualise themselves as glowing with health, I am sure it would have a beneficial effect. Not that it would necessarily cure all illnesses that they might have, some of them might be beyond that but I am sure it would have a tonic effect, that visualisation of themselves as glowing with health at least to some extent. Then again if a number of people are working together to achieve, to concretise a certain vision that they shared, for instance creating the Pure Land or the Happy Land, I am sure it would help if they all had a strong and vivid picture, a vision of what it was and what the state of affairs was, what the state of society was that they wanted to bring about.

I think it is in a way perhaps an almost recognised psychological cum spiritual technique. And I think it does apply also to the visualisation, because when you are visualising a Bodhisattva, you are visualising what you hope to be. This is what you aspire to be in essence. So yes it can help, it can make more vivid to you what it is you are actually aspiring after. Perhaps when in the context of the Convention we think of the Order as being the eleven headed, thousand armed Avalokitesvara, and we think of ourselves or even try to visualise ourselves as one individual arm, one individual hand, one individual function, this can be quite inspiring and quite galvanising. So yes I think it's a useful technique if one can use that term to describe it.

Nagabodhi : Can I just ask on that theme of the eleven headed, thousand armed Avalokitesvara. It occurred to me the other day that perhaps there is a danger of people envisaging themselves as just one arm, when is it not appropriate that we should individually be aspiring toward the ideal of the eleven headed, thousand armed Avalokitesvara as well as using that as a symbol for the whole Order?

S: Oh yes, but I think that might be premature to think of yourself as actually the thousand armed, eleven headed Avalokitesvara. Perhaps in the case of the more gifted, perhaps in the case of Chairmen for instance, they could think of themselves as three or four arms or hands, not just one. But I think it would be good if you were to think of the other Order Members as also being arms and hands, I think that would give you a greater sense of solidarity. I think it would be premature to think of yourself as having a thousand arms, or a thousand hands. But you could think that we are all connected with the same body, the same eleven headed body, I'm an arm, he's an arm and in that way realise your unity with all other Order Members. Of course you realise that you are all aspiring together to be the thousand armed Avalokitesvara. Not that it's just you who are

going to have all those thousand arms.

Nagabodhi : My fear was that people might think that they can only have one of them, and a tendency toward specialisation : "This is going to be my little enclave of activity and"

S: Well perhaps there is always one faculty that predominates. I very nearly took part in that particular puja and I was wanting to take part, so I was thinking well when it comes to making offerings, what should I offer? And then I thought it is quite clear what I should offer, I should offer a pen! And no doubt there are several other things that I could offer too, but I felt the pen would be the most characteristic thing, the implement that I'm actually wielding or would like to wield most at present. Do you see what I mean? So I think in the case of every person there is one implement which is especially appropriate. Whether it's a flower or a knife and fork (laughter), or a pocket calculator, or a stethoscope. Anyway is that all the questions?

Devamitra : Yes.

Vessantara : Bhante could I ask a follow up to Achala's question? To the extent that visualising and seeing and creating a picture in your minds eye does seem to have quite a strong effect, is this just an additional reason why one has to go beyond, not just unskilfulness but also skilfulness opposed to unskilfulness. Because even if you are thinking in terms of doing the good thing and not doing the bad thing

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you are very often at the same time conjuring up a mental picture of the bad thing that you are not going to do. And even that seems to have a certain negative effect, the very fact that you are dwelling at all in that realm.

S: Yes if you were to conjure up the picture of yourself doing say the good thing, there would be no need to conjure up a picture so to speak of yourself not doing the bad thing. Maybe some people do tend to take it that way, if they do I think it is unfortunate, because I think it is already preferable to think in terms of the positive rather than the negative.

For instance, if you are thinking in terms of purification, don't concentrate so much on all the dirt of which you are purifying yourself so that in fact there is no feeling of purification at all, because you are totally absorbed in the dirt, and we need not go into details, but we have been hearing about these things in the course of the last few days.

Buddhadasa: Bhante, a supplementary to the question Achala has asked. I have heard in New Zealand that some people actually encourage visualisation of material objects. It is not done with any sense of aspiration but in order to, as it were, gravitate towards one, what ever one desires, and it has been put forward as quite an authentic, if you like system of.....

S: I think it could work, and I think therefore that one should be very careful about what one visualises and what one desires, what one wants. I

have heard it recommended in another way, I have actually done this, someone once suggested that for instance you could visualise an orange, and then absorb that visualised orange and that this will give you a feeling of satisfaction and well being almost as though you had eaten an orange. I tried this and it does actually work at least to a small extent. So the technique, the method if you like is sort of universally applicable. So therefore you have to be very careful what you think about, because sometimes you just sort of lie there and you day-dream imagining yourself, Walter Mitty fashion, in all sorts of situations, interesting situations, fascinating situations, flattering situations, grossly indulgent situations. So I think one must be very careful how you visualise or how you day dream, because day dreaming is a sort of mild visualising isn't it?

Achala : Do you think there is a merit in people just reflecting a lot on what they really want in that sense and therefore having a much clearer visualisation?

S: Well certainly I think in the case of those who are spiritually inclined, they should ask themselves what they really want, so that they aren't almost accidentally side tracked into putting a lot of mental energy into the visualisation for instance of something that really they don't want. Sometimes you can find people putting a lot of time, energy, trouble into doing something, producing something, making something, or making something possible but before they are really half way through it dawns on them that they don't really want it after all. So I think it is good if we clarify our own minds in this respect, and decide what it is we really want, what is our true aspiration, what is really best for us, what is really ideal and then go after that. Sometimes people dream about what they would do if they were suddenly given a million pounds and spend a happy half hour dreaming and visualising just what they would do if they had that million pounds. How they would spend their time, where they would live, what they would eat, what they would drink, what they would wear, what sort of house, wife, TV everything. You can get lost in this sort of dream and it can have a sort of effect upon you. I think that most people in moments of weakness indulge in daydreams of this sort, especially when the present isn't very satisfying or very stimulating.

Sona : Can I ask a supplementary? It seems sometimes quite easy to say that one should decide what it is that one really wants. Sometimes it seems to me, that that is the hardest thing to do to actually decide what one wants, actually getting it seems relatively.....

S: It really means integrating one's wants because usually one has got lots of little wants and no really very big wants so one doesn't really get very far. So really it is a question of integrating your wants before you can really know, before you can really tell what it is you want in that sort of sense. Sometimes you are very easily distracted, so we haven't got a sort of dominant want, we just happen to want in a mild sort of way the thing that happens to cross our path in the particular moment.

I think this is one of the ways in which solitary retreats are helpful, because we are cut off from many of the usual stimulations and distractions, and perhaps our deeper needs our deeper wants can come welling up from within, regardless of what they happen to be, and I think we can then more easily identify them. I think some people have found that going on solitary retreat, when they have been confronted with various possibilities, various alternatives as to what they could do. After they have been on solitary retreat for a while they say it becomes quite obvious, what it is out of those various alternatives that they really want to do. It just clarifies the mud which is in the mind which just sinks to the bottom of the pool as it were and the water is clear, you can see what is there you can see what you want. It doesn't always happen, but I know that it

has happened in a number of cases.

Devamitra : the last question comes from Devaraja and concerns, "being oneself with ones clothes on."

S: Well this grows out of a particular passage in the book doesn't it yes.

Devaraja : In commenting on Nanananda's dream page 190, Carrithers says : "It is a general characteristic of traditional societies, such as Ceylon's that people are regarded as most truly themselves with their clothes on". Is this because people are identified by the particular uniform (this covers some of what you have talked about already).

S: Yes about roles and all that, yes.

Devaraja : Does this mean that everyone lives an emblematic life? How does the institution, for want of a better word, of naked asceticism fit into this? And surely the *Vajrakula* as described by you in *Creative Symbols of the Tantric Path to Enlightenment*, contradicts this idea.

S: Because nakedness can be a uniform. If you are naked in a non-naked society, it can very easily become a uniform as with the naked sadhus in India. You see a naked sadhu, you think "ah yes, there is a naked sadhu" and you know all sorts of things about him because his nakedness is emblematic of certain values.

Devaraja : How does that,as you talked about the *Vajrakula* in your lecture series, where you talked about nakedness as a sort of indicating a complete exposure, I think you did refer to it almost like a tantric.

S: Yes but that is not to say that a naked person is necessarily telling you more about himself than you would know if he was dressed. Because for instance, at least in the superficial sense, from a person's clothes you can infer perhaps their social position to some extent, their taste, their colour sense and so on, but if they are naked you are no longer able to know or to tell those things about them.

I'm just saying that we must beware of thinking that a naked person is automatically telling all about himself, revealing himself to you, no because people also communicate through their clothes. The clothes that they wear are a sort of language that they are using, so when they divest themselves of those clothes, they are not necessarily telling you more about themselves, the chances are that they are telling you less. Just as if someone renounces speech he's not necessarily telling you more about himself than he would be telling if he was speaking. Speech also is an artificial acquirement after all. But I think we should be careful of superficial thinking in this sort of area. It may be that under certain circumstances or in the case of certain persons, nakedness is expressive, perhaps more than not being naked is expressive. But I don't think we can jump to the conclusion that if you take all your clothes off you are automatically being more honest and open and all the rest of it where other people are concerned. It may be a form of disguise as in the case of some of the encounter groups that one reads about. I remember reading one particular episode about a naked kind of encounter group, I think it was something to do with the Rajneesh Movement and really it was so gross and so lacking in mutual sensitivity and all that, that it was almost as that people were naked because they wanted to hide from one

another, that was the impression that one got. So I think one should beware of confusing the emblematic value at least of the concept of nakedness, with actual openness in the case of an individual naked human being.

Kulamitra : Bhante, we once had a very ordinary sort of chap coming along to the LBC, he in fact worked for British Rail and on one occasion he told us that he counted the number of times that in different FWBO publications, he'd seen depictions of naked men, or perhaps naked angels or whatever, and he was very unimpressed.

S: Well somebody told me that he had counted the number of issues in which penises were depicted.

Kulamitra : Possibly that yes, so the emblem failed to strike him positively.

S: Perhaps it was not clear what it was supposed to be an emblem of. I think some particular person, possibly the designer at that time or group of designers had a 'thing' about that sort of thing. (Laughter) Perhaps it was just as simple as that. I don't think naked figures or images are necessarily appropriate, and they don't necessarily automatically convey one single unambiguous spiritual message. People may rather wonder why they are there, what you are trying to say which may not be obvious at all. Maybe you are simply saying "Yah-boo" to society, maybe it's your slightly more refined and cultured version of a sort of Buddhist graffiti. Maybe you are doing no more than little boys do when they scribble rude words on a wall (laughter). You are just out to give more conventional Buddhists a mild shock, perhaps.

Nagabodhi : It used to surprise us, sometimes we'd think "Oh gosh, we've got another naked....." you know we would actually chose the image. Perhaps sometimes there was an element of what you might be getting at, but sometimes we would chose an image like Adam and Eve being expelled from the Garden, or there was a Greek, the 'winged god' carrying off somebody, and we'd think, "Oh no, it's another naked.... " But it wasn't always like that I can assure you.

But we must have a record of how many penises we got onto one page, (Laughter). There's a vast bunch of naked ascetics for one of your book reviews (loud laughter), and maybe about fifty penises! (laughter).

S: Oh I think you are grossly exaggerating because I happened to see this particular issue only yesterday.

Nagabodhi : Ah, I saw you count! (laughter)

S: Yes because Subhuti gave me a whole stack of photocopies of book reviews, perhaps they are being made into a book. But I would say that there certainly weren't fifty! (laughter) I think considerably less. (laughter) But maybe some people do find it all very liberating, perhaps the designers and other people involved shouldn't be working out their personal salvation in that way in the pages of *the Newsletter*, and going about it with great diligence.

Nagabodhi : It's been a while since we've had any.....

S: Yes, under recent more sober auspices I think there has been a certain amount of restraint exercised and modesty.

Buddhadasa : Yes what they do now Bhante is they put a naked man on the front cover of the programme and they then cut his penis off.

S: Well, perhaps that has a certain significance too.

Buddhadasa : Quite a Truscan image.

Padmaraja : Did they remove the penis from that image?

S: Oh yes ! It's been widely commented upon.

____: Which programme?

____: Victorianism creeping in

____: Which programme?

____: Padmaloka.

S: I even did hear an explanation of why it was done, I think somebody just felt that there had just too many of them going around recently and he got rather tired of them, and thought perhaps other people had got rather tired of them, and so proceeded to eliminate it in this particular instance. But anyway what I was saying originally was that we must not get into the habit of taking nakedness as a sort of cliché, and think that automatically if you as a human individual are naked you are necessarily being more open and it's communicating something very special. I mean if you are not much of a physical specimen, then what you may be communicating may not be very pleasant at all and it might quite obscure any underlying spiritual significance.

Padmavajra : The loathsomeness of the human body!

S: Yes indeed. Also if you have a naked figure illustrating say, it may not convey the same message, so to speak, to everybody. To some it just may not convey any message at all, instead they rather wonder why you have bothered to include that particular kind of figure, they might find it just rather odd.

Anyway that was the last question wasn't it? Well what was the actual point of the question? (laughter)

Devaraja : Well I was just.....

S: When I say point of the question, I am not trying to be funny! (laughter)

Devaraja : Well I was just curious why there seemed to be a contrast between what Carrithers was saying about people being more themselves with their clothes on, and then the Vajrakula as you described it in that lecture series. I think it is becoming clearer as it is symbolic.

S: I think in the case of that particular Buddhist symbolism, the nudity did represent an absence of all attributes, an absence of all as it were particularisation and therefore universality. That is definitely the significance it has in that particular context. It is a quite special context, and I think you don't necessarily convey that particular meaning if you just slap a naked figure onto the page or even exhibit one in real life.

Devaraja : Yes I wasn't referring to that, I was just curious about the difference.

S: But I think perhaps we shouldn't assume that clothes conceal and nakedness reveals, that is the cliché or standardised way of thinking I was getting at. You do communicate through your clothes. Your clothes don't necessarily just conceal you, they conceal you in a certain sense but they also reveal you. Your physical body doesn't necessarily tell anybody very much about you. I mean does it really tell anything about you for instance just because you have hair on your chest, or that you have broad or narrow shoulders, does it really tell anything about you? Maybe it does in a peripheral sort of way, because you are influenced by the body that you have got, but perhaps those sorts of things tell less about you, than do the clothes that you wear. I am just as it were giving the other side of the picture, or the other side of the argument so that people don't take things for granted or get into the way of looking of things in a sort of habit oriented kind of way.

Devaraja : I suppose that the body is something you wear, but in a way with your clothes you're actually consciously making a statement about yourself, where with the body your kind of ...

S: Your body is inherited; your clothes you chose, so clothes in a way are more individual than body. Anyway in a sense you choose your body, that was the old you of the last life you might say. But it's the present you in this very existence, this very moment, that is choosing the clothes that you are wearing.

Dharmapriya : But what you do with your body in a sense is your choice, and in the most narcissistic sense, people talk of sculpting their bodies, but without going to that extreme. Even if one is oblivious of the body one does affect its shape and especially its movement which says a lot about one's mental states.

S: Well one should, if one is thinking in terms of sculpting one's body, but if one does decide to 'sculpt' ones body, one had better be a sculptor first, because I have seen some young men engaged in body building with really quite ugly results, they overdo it. Bulging muscles are very often not aesthetically very appealing.

Is that all?

Devamitra : Seems to be, unless you have any points arising out of the chapter.

S: I think very likely not, or very little.

Yes, I don't mean to say that nakedness has no value, I'm merely saying it doesn't necessarily automatically reveal one in the way that some people seem to think. But nudity may have its value as a sort of exercise or practice or discipline for certain individuals, but that is quite a different matter from the question of communication of themselves.

Devaraja : Bhante, can you just say a bit more about the absence of all attributes, can you be a bit more specific than that?

S: Well I think at the back of my mind I had the Indian term (*Nirguna*). If something is good, what is an attribute? You recognise something by its resemblance to some other thing, if you say for instance that the absolute is good, well where have you defined, where have you derived that? The concept of good is from your mundane experience, so whatever concept you form you have formed it as a result of your mundane experience, using mundane words to express that. How can all that really be applied to the ultimate or to the absolute? So it is qualityless which is Nirguna it has no attributes, because whatever attributes you name are derived from your mundane experience. I have gone into this I think in *The Three Jewels* haven't I? (Pause)

Yes, that last paragraph on page 195; "One of the difficulties to which Nanananda's movement was prey was his own reading of his historical precedents. He took them as a collection of images, or tableaux, to be re-enacted. More successful monks took them to exemplify solutions to problems resembling present problems, to be solved by appealing to underlying principles". This is what we try to do. So Carrithers makes that distinction very clearly, very precisely.

Yes, that was all. All right you had better go and have your dreams.

[End of tape 18]

[Tape 19]

The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka Seminar

Questions And Answers on Chapter Ten

14th August 1985

S: All ready? Someone raised a question with regard to Upasaka Ordination. I was talking about the fact that now that we have styled ourselves as Dharmacharis, we can't really be considered either as Upasaka or Bhikkhu. But none the less, we started off in a way as a sort of lay Order and were talking of ourselves as Upasakas. But the point I want to make is that in the Ordination ceremony the word which we still use is Upasaka. I gave some thought to this last year in Tuscany when we decided that that should be changed and upgraded as it were, but I still have to work out the precise wording. I had hoped to do it last year but I shall try to do it this year so that that too is brought into line with our present way of thinking and present usage. That was the point yes.

Devamitra : This evening we have thirteen questions for you. In fact the first question which was not originally going to be the first question, but I suggest that it is, is from Devaraja because it refers in fact to that subject as far as I am aware.

Devaraja : Well there were two questions one which refers to....

Devamitra : The laity.

Devaraja : The laity, oh right OK. On page 217 of the book Jinavamsa is referred to as educating laymen in what they might expect of a reformed Sangha. On the basis of my experience at a recent day event at the LBC for Angulimala, the Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy Service, which was attended in the main by British Buddhists from outside FWBO circles, we need to educate the wider Buddhist Movement into firstly; what the Sangha is and isn't and secondly, what our Order Members are.

S: Yes I think that this is quite important, these two things.

Devaraja : Do you think that we should produce some sort of booklet from the points you have made so far on this seminar, showing that we are a Nikaya, and dealing with issues raised with the fact that Nikayas don't recognise each other, that there is no actual central Sangha authority or central definition of what a member of the Sangha is.

S: I think something like that is needed. In fact we have been talking, myself and Subhuti and one or two others about the need for a small publication, a small illustrated publication on the Western Buddhist Order. Not just the FWBO, to make such things clear and to project not exactly an image of ourselves, as it were an impression of ourselves, much more clearly and much more vividly.

I think that probably the time has come for that to enable people to have a better understanding of the real nature of the order and to see where it stands with regard to these sort of issues. I think this would be very desirable. Perhaps nicely illustrated with pictures of a puja, an ordination ceremony, a retreat, a meditation class, but with the emphasis on the Order, it would be about the Order.

We also of course need a booklet about the FWBO, a small illustrated book, rather like the one we had about the co-ops, I think that was very well done. But yes I think the time has come to clarify these issues. What particular point did you notice on that particular occasion?

Devaraja : Well what I noticed was that people coming didn't know how to relate to Ratnadakini and myself. They did not know whether we were members of the Sangha or whether we were just sort of lay helpers or.....

S: Were you wearing your kesas?

Devaraja : Oh yeah, most definitely.

S: Yes so we have also been talking this afternoon about the transformation of our newsletter into a magazine, and as I think I mentioned a few evenings ago, my personal feeling is that *the Newsletter*, when transformed into a magazine should be a means of educating people within the Order, and within the FWBO and outside it, about the fundamental FWBO principles and attitudes and this could well be one of the things included. I think it probably is quite important both in the West and for the information of people in the East. Was that the only point?

Devaraja : Yeah.

S: Let's go into that a bit more. They didn't know how to treat you?

Devaraja: I noticed it particularly in..... a particular kind of familiarity which could only really come from them not seeing us as members of the Sangha. No problem obviously with Khemadhammo, or his sammanera Dhammananda, but it was just like for instance I could see that they didn't actually take our names very seriously.

In a way I think they sort of, well they could take Khemmadhammo's name seriously because he was clearly identified as a Buddhist monk. And, not that I'm against familiarity, but there was a kind of inappropriate lack of, I can't find quite the right word, but it was almost like a lack of deference.

S: How did they behave among themselves, because for instance, (Vajirah) was there and she has some kind of Zen Ordination.

Devaraja : Yeah, I think it was partly to do with the fact that they were from a sort of well, typical British Buddhist circle, where the idea of the Sangha is someone with an orange robe or a Tibetan robe or whatever. So they just didn't know quite how to actually interact, so they didn't actually view us as voices with some sort of weight or authority behind.

S: But presumably that will come as they get to know us better, just as it has developed in the case of Khemmadhammo?

Devaraja : Probably, but I think we could do a lot more in terms of explaining where we fit and what we are, and also clarifying what Sangha is on the lines that you....

S: Yes I think that would help yes, and in this connection, for instance, one of the things that Subhuti and I noticed in *The Middle Way*, is that there is a section headed, "News from the Sangha" which means news from the Chithurst bhikkhus. This is something that we could comment on. Nagabodhi should make a note of this because we are going to have a comment column, a page in the magazine as it will be, for commenting on things like this and making clear our own view. Because this sort of heading, "News from the Sangha", just perpetuates that idea, that it's only the bhikkhus which constitute the Sangha and where does that leave everybody else? Well, really nowhere just in the position of the supporters of the Sangha in that sense and not very much more.

Also some of those people know among themselves that there are very varying degrees of involvement with Buddhism and they might just not have known where you stood, whether you were quite seriously involved or whether you had a quite superficial interest as many of them or at least as many of their friends have.

But yes we need to make our position known, the position of the Order known as it were officially and publicly.

Devaraja : I mean, to this effect I've written to Khemadhammo because the next meeting is at the Birmingham Vihara and I said Ratnadakini and I, on any event in the shrine room, should be placed on the platform again because I made the point that people did not actually know how to relate to us. So I thought it was important to be clear on that.

Padmaraja : Did you sit on the platform?

Devaraja : Well no, in a way we followed the classic FWBO procedure. The person leading the particular event sits up with the bell and the little table which Khemadhammo did. But I noticed that his disciple, the sammanera sat at his feet facing the rest of the event which in a way

S: It aligned him with the leader, yes.

Devaraja : Yes, so it didn't really occur to me, I wasn't entirely happy about that, but afterwards it occurred to me that I should really have got Ratnadakini and me to sit up there facing as well you know.

Padmaraja : Yes, better still you should have led the sit, you're hosting if it's at the LBC.

Devaraja: No, no the LBC supplied the facilities, it was Khemadhammo's pigeon.

S: Yes we simply supplied the premises, that was very clear.

Devaraja : Yes and I think that they did a perfectly good job of it, I was quite happy with that.

Devamitra : Can I just chip in here, I had a similar though different experience at the beginning of the year when I went up to Newcastle to speak to the Newcastle Buddhist Group. Because the person who organised the visit, my visit, or originally it was Vessantara's visit, clearly did not know how to relate to me. He did want to show some kind of deference, because he felt that I had a Buddhist ordination which he should recognise, but he didn't know how to do it because he couldn't behave towards me in the way that he was used to behaving towards the bhikkhus. But he didn't want to behave towards me in the way that he would behave say towards other people attending his group which was quite interesting.

Buddhadasa : Bhante, did you want to say something.

S: It did just occurred to me that I did notice similar difficulties in India when Buddhist monks and sometimes as it were priests of schools other than the Theravada attended Mahabodhi Society functions. Originally the Theravadin bhikkhus were very, very rigid, they wouldn't allow anybody who was not a Theravada bhikkhu to sit on the same level with them.

But I saw over the years that they did loosen up. In fact in a way they were obliged to. I remember that I was present when some Tibetan monks, gelongs, in other words really bhikkhus, were in the Mulagandhakuta Vihara, and they were given a place in the body of the hall with the laity, while the Sinhalese bhikkhus sat up on the platform. So a friend of mine, I think it was at my instigation actually, a Sikhimese Buddhist, intervened and spoke to Sangharatana I think it was and said that this was really quite inappropriate and that they were monks also should be invited to sit up on the platform. So in the end they were.

But the Theravada bhikkhus automatic tendency was to relegate them to the same level as the laity. The same thing happened with Japanese priests. But in the end, they usually had the Japanese priest, even those who were married, which represents quite a big concession on the part of the Theravadins sitting on the same platform with them when they were wearing their robes. Admittedly from the Theravada point of view it was a bit disconcerting sometimes in the case of the Japanese, because sometimes you would see him wearing his full robes, full canonicals, sometimes he would be wearing a kesa and sometimes he would be wearing a lounge suit without any kesa. And sometimes they were under the impression that somebody was a monk because he came on pilgrimage, but the next time he came he brought his grown-up sons with him. So admittedly from their point of view it was a bit difficult sometimes.

But I think that most of the different Buddhist schools, for centuries have been cut off from one another, and it's therefore taking time for them to adjust these things, but I think it is happening. Theravadins abroad say in India and in the West are not nearly as rigid as they probably would be back home, but I suspect that back home they are still very rigid. I think if you were to go to Thailand, and were to insist on any kind of different treatment, you would be given very short shrift indeed. They just wouldn't agree unless perhaps when it was say a meeting of *The World Fellowship of Buddhists* or something like that. But on their home wicket as it were, they would insist on things being done their way, and you

would either have to accept the position of an upasaka or you would just have to leave so far as they were concerned, you would not be conceded any other status. So I think it is important that we do make our position clear and explain the whole basis of our position, our whole attitude to Going for Refuge and what ordination really means, and make explicit our disagreement with formalism.

Buddhadasa : Bhante, I can see how we can behave towards bhikkhus on their territory so to speak, and I can see how to behave towards bhikkhus on our territory, I am not quite sure about neutral territory.

S: Well then you just behave in a friendly fashion. I mean this is one of the reasons why I asked further questions to Devaraja, because I think if there is a strong fellow feeling, you will know how to behave. You shouldn't just be thinking in terms of what is the correct etiquette to apply, as if to say you know such and such things you do when you meet a bhikkhu, such and such things when you meet an upasaka, so what are the things that you automatically do when you meet somebody of another category?

Buddhadasa : Well I can accept being friendly, but in my case I got dressed down by Khantipalo for calling him Khantipalo.

S: Well that's because Khantipalo not only takes the rigid Theravada view, but he doesn't to that extent know his own scriptures.

Buddhadasa : But he seemed to rebuff my friendliness actually. But I am talking more about the formal situation that you can get into, for instance in Sydney there was recently Sydney Buddhist organisation, an umbrella organisation at which representatives from all the Buddhist groups meet during which there are a number of bhikkhus present. So how does one sort out the table? How can you

S: Well you can't expect other groups to follow the ideas or precedence of one particular group. So therefore I think you have just got to fall back on general friendliness. I'd like to give you another example, I might have mentioned this before, when I was going round with Dhardo Rimpoche visiting the holy places there were quite a few Theravada bhikkhus present, and when we used to get on to the bus taking us to our destination from the train, the bhikkhus always expect that they would get on first and sit in front, and the Tibetans, including the Tibetan monks, were much more polite and would often say "after you" and all that sort of thing. So what usually happened was that the bhikkhus were all sitting at the front and the Tibetan monks at the back, and the bhikkhus thought this entirely right and proper. I obviously sat with Dhardo Rimpoche at the back. So one of them in particular used to call out to me in Hindi, "Come on" he said, "Come and sit at the front, you're a bhikkhu too." As if I was sort of letting them down, letting the side down, because after all I was wearing a yellow robe by sitting at the back with the red robed people.

This is the sort of thing that one is cropping up against.

But I think where they do meet regularly from time to time they are having to adjust to these things. But I think for instance when we meet together with say Theravadins, you must not allow yourself to accept the view that because they think that bhikkhus ought to be given precedence, everybody else has to think the same. Otherwise we might say that we believe that Order Members ought to be given precedence and bhikkhus come nowhere, we can't maintain that point of view. There clearly has to be some sort of compromise when people meet together. We can't impose our as it were hierarchy on them, because they are bhikkhus they just come as Friends, but they can't impose their hierarchy on

us. Therefore there has to be a sort of give and take and you just all behave as though you are Buddhists and you don't think too much in terms of precedence and seniority, who should sit at the top and who should sit at the bottom and all that kind of thing.

I think for instance if it is a meeting, then let the speakers sit on the platform, whether they are monks or nuns, or upasakas or members of the Western Buddhist Order or Lamas, let the speakers be on the platform. The others regardless of whether they are bhikkhus, or upasakas, or Lamas, or laymen, sit in the body of the hall. Otherwise I've been in some ridiculous situations.

I remember one in Kalimpong where I had arranged a public meeting, a lecture for the visiting Nadathathera who was a great stickler for orthodoxy and belonged to the Amarapura Nikaya. My arrangement was that he as the speaker should be on the platform and myself as the chairman, I was introducing him. There were quite a few bhikkhus and others visiting Kalimpong, down in the body of the hall. So he insisted on them all being brought up onto the platform and chairs being brought for them which really disrupted the proceedings and looked really ridiculous. I could see people in the audience laughing at him for this, and the platform was quite tiny and everybody was huddled together, it looked really ridiculous. (Laughter) Then after we had done all this, and got all the yellow robed people onto the platform all squeezed together round Nadathathera, he was just about to start, and he spotted right at the back of the hall, another yellow robe! It was in fact a young sammanera, one of Anandakausulyana's disciples called Sumedha, the famous Sumedha, he had just come in late and sat at the back, and he thought nothing of that. So Nadatha spotted him, "Come on, come along to the front," he said, so he was a rather uncouth specimen, he certainly was in those days which was thirty years ago, he shouted out : "I'm OK Bhante, it's all right, I'm OK here." (laughter) But Nadatha insisted that he was dragged forward and another chair was brought and somehow another chair was crammed onto the platform and there was Sumedha looking a bit embarrassed. And then Nadatha turned to the audience and he said very blandly : "I am happy to see that you know how to respect the Sangha." I was quite annoyed about this and I treasured it up in my memory.

Padmavajra : Did you speak to him, Nadatha?

S: No I knew it was useless.

Dharmapriya : Did you ever invite him again?

S: Well I didn't invite him, he came to Kalimpong and I was asked to arrange something for him as a distinguished bhikkhu. I remember that my friends in Kalimpong were quite disappointed because I told them he was a very distinguished bhikkhu from Sri Lanka and a very good speaker, but they said afterwards : "I thought you said he was a very good speaker, he is not nearly as good as some of the people that we know in Kalimpong itself." They were really quite disappointed and he didn't give a particularly good talk. He certainly got all the bhikkhus and sammaneras onto the platform. I have had so much experience of this sort of thing.

As for Khantipalo, in many ways he is well meaning but if you allow those sorts of considerations to override human feelings and friendliness, well what sort of mess have you got yourself into?

Anyway better not dwell on that too much but yes, we should have I think a suitable publication, making clear these things, our attitudes.

Devaraja : I thought that part of it was, or a very important part of it was making those points that you have made earlier on in the seminar, about

even the nikayas not recognising each other.

S: Yes indeed yes.

Devaraja : And demolishing that idea of a central conception of what the Sangha is, a central authority, demolishing that completely.

S: Yes.

Devamitra : The next question comes from Buddhadasa and concerns social servants and service.

Buddhadasa : On page 214 Bhante, there is a little quote : "Every novice, before he is ordained, must spend some time, however short, as a temple servant (abittaya), partially to test his suitability, partially to begin his training". Accepting that in the modern West the idea of service is still generally regarded as demeaning, do you think that we should perhaps emphasise the positive aspect of service more, and encourage Friends, Mitras, young Order Members, and even Chairmen to cultivate this quality of service more conscientiously?

S: I think that is true, I think that some of our own sammaneras or even Friends who come to a place like Kalimpong, they fulfil that sort of function in many ways. It's part of their initiation you might say. The word 'servant' is not a popular one nowadays. You call a domestic operative or something of that sort, 'home help', yes home help. But yes I think that there needs to be more and more emphasis placed on service and especially personal service, not this impersonal service of the institution but service of those who are, as it were, senior to you and more experienced than you and to whom you could naturally look up and for whom you want to do things, quite naturally. I think that does happen to quite an extent, but no doubt it could be encouraged more.

But I think it doesn't come easily to people in the West. For instance I remember that on the first or second of the Tuscanys, one of the Mitras who had not been ordained yet, came and asked me if I had any washing to be done, but he was the only one. And I think that most people wouldn't even think in those terms, I don't know why he did particularly but he was quite happy to do that. Whereas most people in the West, they don't think in that sort of way. Do you see what I mean? They don't mind doing things for the Movement, or for the organisation in an impersonal sort of way, but doing things for people of a personal nature, it doesn't come so easily. Whereas, it does come quite easily to people in India, they think quite naturally in those terms and it is part of the Buddhist monastic tradition or Buddhist tradition generally. It is not thought to be anything demeaning, because you serve your elder brother or you serve your parents in the same sort of way, you serve your uncle or you serve your grandfather or you serve your teacher.

But personal service is considered an integral part of the whole educative process, part of one's spiritual training. It is perhaps or could be in the West an antidote to people of individualistic tendencies.

Padmavajra : Do you think that, speaking about service of a personal nature, do you think that we could emphasise that aspect of a willingness to help out in one of the criteria for a Mitra? Not just that you are helping out the Movement as an institution but as it were people personally?

S: Well I do often mention when I speak of the four requirements for the Mitra, of helping, helping around the Centre and helping the Order Members.

Devamitra : A question in a similar vein from Sona, concerning the development of a 'journeyman' system,.

Sona : Bhante. In Europe up until a century or so ago there was the tradition of the journeyman. After finishing an apprenticeship with the master, the ex-apprentice was then expected to leave his master and travel to different locations earning his keep, and gaining experience in different aspects of his profession. In some traditions he was not expected to stay in one place for more than a defined period. Upon completion of this time travelling as a journeyman, he then became a master. Would it be valid if we tried to develop such a tradition where Order Members, say after leaving Tuscany became journeymen, travelling for a period of two or three years to different centres for a defined period of say three months? This would ensure that everyone had a good overall view of the Movement, and of course there would be the case such as married Order Members who may not be able to?

S: I do remember an article by a certain woman Order Member, entitled : "Going Forth and Taking the Children With You". (laughter) Apparently it was not meant to be taken too literally. Just a couple of points here. I believe that etymologically speaking the word 'journeyman' does not mean the man who journeys, it's the man who works for daily wages. But someone who had completed his apprenticeship and was travelling from place to place would no doubt be sometimes stop, work a few days and be paid on a daily basis. So to some extent it comes to the same thing. I think in the case of the newly Ordained Order Member, say the Order Member who has gone to Tuscany and been ordained then, it wouldn't be a good idea to go wandering in that way immediately. I think I would prefer to see him go back either to his original centre or community or place of origin, or to some other more or less familiar situation, where he could consolidate himself as an Order Member. I think that is quite important. I think that the period after ordination is in a way no less important than the period before ordination, so the year after ordination is no less important than the year before ordination. It is not as though, when you are ordained that's that, and you can start functioning as an Order Member. Quite a lot of psychological and spiritual adjustment is required. You need to get into the way of being an Order Member, relating to fellow Order Members, relating to Mitras and Friends, just consolidating your commitment, establishing it on a firmer and deeper basis.

So I would like to see that done in a relatively stable situation for a year or so first. But after that I think there is a lot to be said for someone travelling from Centre to Centre on a sort of pilgrimage. If they went to India, they could actually go on a pilgrimage in the sense of going to the traditional Buddhist holy places. I think it would be a very good thing if they got that wider view, that wider vision of the Movement. Because it's very unlikely that all Order Members are ever going to be able to all meet together on the same spot because they do come from so many countries and some of them have family commitments and so on. So I think some Order Members will need to travel, and perhaps they'll never lose that vision of the wider Movement. They will make personal friends wherever they go, friends in Scandinavia, friends in continental Europe, friends in New Zealand, friends in Australia, in India, maybe one day in Africa and so on.

So even though after that, they are confining themselves to a particular Centre, a particular community, it will be hardly be possible for them to

forget the broader context of the Movement within which they operate, within which they function. I am not quite sure how they would finance this, whether they would save up money beforehand, stop and work in different places as possible or perhaps lead retreats and be supported for a while in different Centres or communities which they visit. But yes in principle, I think it is a very good idea.

Devamitra : Another question from Padmavajra about fidelity to one's first teacher.

Padmavajra : The text tells us that Jinavamsa stayed with his teacher for twenty years and lived in obedience to him while he was alive. Yet it seems that even while his teacher was alive, Jinavamsa was not satisfied. Jinavamsa didn't voice that dissatisfaction publicly until after his teacher's death. Obviously Jinavamsa was following tradition, but do you think there was more to it than this? Is there a value in remaining faithful to somebody even though your own ideals are compromised?

S: I am not so sure that Jinavamsa was clear in his own mind what he wanted at that stage, we are not given very much information. Also we are not told exactly in what the fidelity consisted. It may have simply consisted in remaining with his teacher and serving him and waiting upon him, looking after him, because Sinhalese monks, and this is one of their more pleasant and positive features, are really very loyal and very devoted to their teachers, there is no doubt about this even if it is just on an ordinary human level. Even if there isn't any distinctively spiritual element in it, they really do consider themselves obliged to do all that they can for their teacher in his old age especially. It is not an obligation in a legalistic sort of sense, they feel like doing it, it is the natural thing from their point of view. So I don't think that Jinavamsa's fidelity in that sense would signify any compromise with any ideals that he might by that time have developed. One might even say that as he was naturally rather an independent sort of personality, it wasn't a bad thing for him personally that he should of developed or expressed that sort of fidelity to his teacher and not gone off on his own until after his teacher's death. Perhaps in a way it was part of his training one might say, part of his preparation for what later on he did.

One doesn't really know but it is possible that during those years with his teacher he was thinking things over and he was gradually maturing his plans and clarifying his ideas, and perhaps it was a good thing that he had that quite stable and positive relationship with his teacher while he was doing that. This is the relationship on the ordinary personal level, even though his teacher couldn't give him any guidance from a purely religious or personal point of view. So what I am saying is that during that period it wasn't just a lost period or Jinavamsa being as it were held back by his fidelity to his teacher, it was I am sure a period of consolidation for him, a period of personal consolidation.

Devamitra : The next question comes from Buddhadasa concerning Buddha Jayanti.

Buddhadasa : Bhante. In 1956 the Buddha Jayanti celebrations were obviously a turning point in Sinhalese Buddhism, was this true of international Buddhism generally? As you participated yourself in these celebrations, could you give a brief critical appraisal based on your experiences and say how effective you thought these celebrations were?

S: Actually only the other day I was just trying to think back, I was in India and India wasn't and isn't a Buddhist country, but I was conscious of a great sense of excitement because apparently Nehru took a personal interest in the Buddha Jayanti and it had official or semi-official support in

India and I was very aware of all the excitement that was being created in Buddhist countries, especially perhaps in Sri Lanka. And a lot did happen in India at that time. There were lots of new publications on Buddhism.

All the newspapers brought out special Buddha Jayanti supplements I think every one of them, certainly the English ones that I saw. Even Communist weeklies brought out Buddhist supplements praising Buddhism lavishly. I wrote for several of these newspaper supplements and all the magazines featured articles. It was very, very much in the air, I think almost everybody knew about it.

Of course the government of India took the opportunity to renovate many of the Buddhist holy places and archaeological sites, the Pali Tipitika was brought out in nagari characters. Buddhist encyclopedias were published, there were lots of things of that sort done. Lots of things happened on the crest of that particular wave. I'm sure to an even greater extent in the Buddhist countries of Asia. The Dalai Lama of course and the Panchen Lama came to India at that time, that aroused a great deal of excitement, and of course there was the mass conversion of Dr. Ambedkar and his followers in that same year. So it was a time of great excitement.

But I think or I might even say, there were certain permanent effects, but they were not nearly as great as they might have been. I think it would be quite a good sort of research project for some well equipped scholar to do a proper study of the Buddha Jayanti year and its significance for the Buddhist world, it would be a very interesting project. I certainly do believe that proper advantage was not taken of that, as indeed proper advantage was not taken at all of the very great excitement and enthusiasm generated a few years earlier by the receptions accorded to the relics of Sariputra and Moggallana in India as well as in Buddhist countries. A case in point is of the ex-untouchables themselves when they were converted to Buddhism. They considered themselves Buddhists, hundreds and thousands of them, even millions of them and Dr. Ambedkar passed away, but what advantage did the Buddhist world take of that? Did they send well equipped teachers to help the untouchables as the untouchables had expected? No, hardly anything was done at all, there was no follow up. So I think that great though the enthusiasm was, that was aroused by the Buddha Jayanti, and though it left certain permanent traces, there was no proper follow up to it and therefore the best use was not made of that very great opportunity.

Nagabodhi : Apart from more well trained Dharma workers in India, what kinds of follow up would you have in mind?

S: Well in India I was thinking mainly of that, I view that really as the most substantial result of the Buddha Jayanti Year or at least the most important single event to have occurred in the course of the Buddha Jayanti year was that mass conversion of Ambedkar and his followers, but there was no follow up. In fact one might say that in every other respect, on every other front there was no follow up. Maybe there was a bit of archaeological follow up. Yes, the government of India continued to improve the holy places, improve the facilities for pilgrims, more books continued to be published, but there was no real spiritual follow up except to a very limited extent and perhaps much later as when people like Goenka went around teaching meditation which certainly did constitute some kind of follow up at least to a limited extent.

Though perhaps it happened too long afterwards to be regarded as really a follow up to the Buddha Jayanti itself.

I was rather interested reading this particular chapter that we have been doing today. I think that Jinavamsa wrote an article in the late forties about the right way to celebrate Wesak. I was doing exactly the same thing in the *Mahabodhi Journal* a few years later. I was appalled by the way Wesak was celebrated, the unspiritual sort of way, I was appalled that it was celebrated in a very social way with lots of social junketings and nothing of any spiritual significance. I wrote exactly along the same lines. It is quite clear that from my own little outpost of Buddhism in

Kalimpong, I was thinking in some ways along the same sort of lines as Jinavamsa must have been thinking. After all I published in the early sixties those two short articles ; *Wanted - A New Type of Bhikkhu*, and *Wanted - A New Type of Upasaka*. And I was a little surprised when they proved so popular and were reprinted again and again in Sri Lanka, but now having read this book I can understand why, because they were not exactly an isolated phenomenon. Perhaps they were in English Buddhist journals, but not certainly in the vernacular in Sinhalese journals, in Sinhalese literature.

It must have for some people, struck a slightly familiar note, they had heard that sort of thing to some extent from perhaps people like Jinavamsa. I can see it all in better context now, perhaps I was not quite so alone in the world as I thought, because my only contacts as regards the Sinhalese Sangha were with Siyama Nikaya bhikkhus whom I met in Calcutta and in Saranath and in other places, they were the ones who had the money for tours and coming on pilgrimage. I don't remember that I met any of the other kind of bhikkhus. Yes I met some from the Amarapura Nikaya, but they by that time had become one might say, village bhikkhus. They just prided themselves on their somewhat greater strictness and that was really the only difference, one couldn't see any other difference.

[End of side one side two]

Nagabodhi : Bhante, one of those silly questions. Had you known that you weren't alone in the world and that there were kindred spirits down in Sri Lanka, do you think that your life might have turned out differently?

S: I don't think so. There were kindred spirits to some extent and they were very much part and parcel of the Sri Lankan scene. I can't see myself as having been able to fit into that, I would have had to go to Sri Lanka, learned Sinhalese and thrown my lot in with them completely. I think I would have found their conception of Buddhism and the spiritual life, though it did agree with my own view to some extent, on the whole quite narrow and limiting. Perhaps I would have liked to, and perhaps I would have enjoyed, spending a few months with them, or perhaps even a year or two. But I can't imagine myself doing anything more than that, I think I was probably better off in Kalimpong.

Devamitra : Another question from Devaraja, this time concerning uniformity and innovation.

Devaraja : On page 210 Carrithers refers to Jinvamsa's wish to standardise meditation and worship practices at hermitages throughout the island. In our own case we have found it desirable to standardise the practices taught at our Centres. However being open to new approaches and being able to change and modify what we do would seem to be a healthy thing. What criteria therefore should we bring to bear on an innovation when assessing whether it is valuable or not and how should the introduction of it into the Movement take place?

S: It depends how important or significant the innovation is. We have had a few innovations, for instance there was changing the style of upasaka for that of Dharmachari. So after thinking this over, I canvassed the Order and got feedback from people and it met with a quite enthusiastic response. I don't think anyone objected, and we thereupon adopted it. Recently a change was suggested in the wording of the ten positive precepts, I get the feeling that that has been generally accepted, we haven't formally ratified it in any way - perhaps it isn't necessary and it will just spread. Do you see what I mean? With regards to other things. Well, another thing that we decided in that sort of way was when

we changed from the Dharmachakra on the kesa to the three jewels emblem. So I think where things are of general significance and importance, changes can be made in that way, innovations can be made in that way. But there might be other things. For instance there is the question of say things like yoga classes and Tai Chi classes and I think one or another Centre in such cases will decide, they are going to include within the general FWBO framework or structure, such and such practice, such and such technique we will integrate with our overall approach. And if it is successful and doesn't require the modification of the overall FWBO structure, a particular Centre is quite entitled to introduce that particular innovation without necessarily consulting all the other Centres. Do you see what I mean? Perhaps consulting me, but not consulting all the different Centres because an introduction of that sort of element, or that sort of innovation wouldn't require any more modification of our existing structure or existing approach. Do you see what I'm getting at?

Devaraja : There is a supplementary question to that. Are there any innovations which you have heard of which you are unhappy with and would like to see

S: Well certainly there aren't any general ones because I don't think by the very nature of the situation they could have taken place. They would have been quite local innovations. I think I have heard of one or two in the past I can't think of them now. Yes there was an odd one, someone introduced a way of doing the metta bhavana including trees and stones, and we don't usually do this. There is not reason why we shouldn't in a way, but I think it would be confusing if we were to teach directing of metta to stones, though in principle there is not reason why we shouldn't. It would be a natural and logical development one might say, but I think it wouldn't be very appropriate actually to do this in the formal practice as we teach it. Other innovations?

Achala : I remember in New Zealand we got to impromptu mantras at one stage, so that after the seventh verse anybody could just produce any mantra. That was quite an innovation.

S: Yes that was an innovation. (delayed laughter) Does anyone know of any other innovations anywhere?

Buddhadasa : Yes the chanting of the Tara mantra for walking and chanting.

S: That's right that is an innovation.

Buddhadasa : And you don't agree with it, or ... ?

S: I don't like to be absolutely categorical but I would think probably not, certainly not with new people. It could just confuse them, or they might take the mantra rather lightly.

Padmavajra : Nudity in the newsletter is an innovation.

S: Well I don't know whether that could be classified as an innovation in that sense. It was there right from the beginning to some extent. I'm sure there were lots of minor innovations, most of which have probably died out after a while.

Suvajra : A different way of sitting in the shrine room.

S: Yes that's true. That was a positive innovation, that's true. I don't know if everybody knows how that originated, but I think that some people are under the impression that I myself deliberately introduced it in Tuscany but I didn't. In the course of conversation in a question and answer session I just happened to mention that in Buddhist countries they often sat in that way, I think I mentioned the Tibetans and the Zen people, I might have even said that I thought that looked better. A few days later I was slightly surprised to see the shrine room being rearranged and I believe, though I am not certain about this, that Khemapala took the lead in this particular matter and everybody liked that new way of sitting. I think it has spread a bit. On the women's convention they quite naturally sat in two lines and the room we were using as a shrine room was quite big enough to be able to do that. They had caught on to it and seemed quite happy with it and it was as though they had been doing it all the time. So I sometimes think that things catch on like this because they are just so obviously improvements and one doesn't need a sort of formal ratification. I take it that everybody broadly speaking has been happy with that new arrangement?

Buddhadasa : How does one achieve ratification if somebody wants to introduce something?

S: I think at present it would be wise to come and have a talk with me about it and if I thought it was a good idea, I would probably circularize the chapters through the chapter convenors. I think that would be the procedure now. I would rather that people didn't circularize the chapter convenors off their own bats. That would be undesirable and in some cases could lead to chapters having to spend time discussing suggestions which obviously perhaps were impracticable.

Devamitra : A question from Nagabodhi concerning Jinavamsa's urgency.

Nagabodhi : Jinavamsa seems to have been in a definite hurry to get his Sangha established. Do you think that this was because he was determined to capitalise on the enthusiasm generated by the Buddha Jayanti celebrations, or because he was moved by a sense of urgency with which all Buddhist Dharma workers would be imbued. Do you think that we are operating with a sufficient sense of urgency in the Western Buddhist Order, and which aspects of our work can you see scope for the improvement of?

S: So let's take that bit by bit.

Nagabodhi : Jinavamsa seems to have been in a definite hurry to get his Sangha established. Do you think that this was because he was determined to capitalise on the enthusiasm generated by the Buddha Jayanti celebrations, or because he was moved by a sense of urgency with which all Buddhist Dharma workers should be imbued?

S: I think it was both. I think there was an element of both. I think there was probably a third factor too. You mustn't forget that Carrithers tells

us that he was quite ill or at least didn't enjoy very good health practically all his life and he might well have felt that he didn't have all that long to live. I didn't calculate how old he was when he died, did anyone do that? He is still alive isn't he? Yes he is still alive. But it seems that all his adult life at least, he has suffered from quite serious stomach trouble, or something of that sort. I think Carrithers mentions a possibility of amoebic dysentery which must have been very depleting. So he may well have had doubts about survival, and that could well have given a greater sense of urgency to all his activities.

Nagabodhi : Do you feel that we are operating with a sufficient sense of urgency in the Western Buddhist Order?

S: Well it depends what you mean by "we". (laughter) I think that personally I have a sense of urgency, I don't think everybody in the Order has unfortunately. I think that those who are working more closely with me have a sense of urgency, but I think it's probably rather lacking perhaps in the greater part of the Order.

I think people have it by fits and starts, but I think they find it quite difficult to sustain a sense of urgency. I think that probably only a minority of Order Members have a real sense of urgency. I think it is something that needs to be cultivated and developed.

Nagabodhi : In which aspect of our work can you see scope for improvement particularly?

S: Well obviously all of them! People should meditate with a greater sense of urgency, publicise the Movement with a greater sense of urgency, go out to other Buddhist groups with a greater sense of urgency, write books and articles with a greater sense of urgency and so on.

Kamalasila : I was thinking that a sense of urgency isn't a state of panic, as one might think! It's presumably a quite self contained state. I wonder if there is anything you can say about how we could develop that sense of urgency?

S: I think you need to concentrate and to realise more vividly, the conditions, or the circumstances that naturally give rise to that sense of urgency. That is to say, see for yourself more clearly, how greatly the Dharma is needed by so many people and how greatly the world needs the Dharma. More perhaps than it ever has done in the past. Think of the parlous condition of the world without the Dharma, just see and realise more vividly how people are wasting their lives. I think there is no method or technique, I think one has to realise these things and see these things much more vividly than one usually does. Perhaps it also means developing a stronger sense of appreciation of the Dharma and of the Movement in particular, realising what a wonderful thing one has been entrusted with and therefore how great a responsibility one has to share it with as many people as possible as quickly as possible, otherwise you're like someone who is just sitting on an enormous heap of grain. You have this heap of grain and are not sharing it with the multitudes who are starving. Also perhaps a realisation of the shortness of human life including one's own life, and the realisation of the fact that you may not perhaps contrary to your expectation have very much longer to live. So that one should make the best possible use of every day, not waste a single day, if possible not waste a single hour.

I feel a bit disappointed sometimes when I meet Order Members and after a while I say : "What have you been doing the last few months?" and they say : "Oh, I don't really know, I don't think I have really been doing very much". That seems almost criminal in an Order Member. Especially when other Order Members, fellow Order Members, are doing so much, and in some cases are actually overworked one might say.

Devamitra : Sona now has a question on the use of the term 'work'.

Sona : In Jinavamsa's hermitage, members refer to their duties including meditation as their work. Often I personally, and I suspect others think of their work as being those activities specifically connected with the area of responsibility, for example as a Chairman running Centres, meeting people, bank managers etc. As regarding meditation, attending retreats including solitary retreats, study and communication and so on all of which are enjoyable activities and therefore not usually thought of as part of one's work. Would it not be useful if we thought more like Jinavamsa's pupils in terms of our work to cover all activities concerned with our spiritual development?

S: Well in a way yes. Work means something into which you put energy, but I think one should also be equally prepared to think of everything as play, provided so to speak one plays hard! I think the term work does have certain slightly negative connotations in the West. I think it is perhaps good to use it more than we do just to emphasis or to underline the fact that the various activities that we engage in under the auspices of the FWBO are all things into which we really put energy. We treat them seriously, and treat them in the way that most people treat their work, what they do as it were. We don't regard them as just recreation, or as hobbies or as side issues, they are work, and all equally work, they are all equally things into which we put energy for the sake of our own development and in order if possible to help others to develop too. It also suggests a rather business like way, practical down to earth way of going about things like meditation. You could perhaps try it out. It does also occur to me that Gurdjieff's followers used to speak of "The Work", by which they meant all the different aspects of whatever it was they used to do taken collectively. They spoke of working on oneself.

Sona : The next part of my question was : I am not sure that all Order Members would answer the question : "What do you do for a living?" from a member of the general public by saying : "I am a Buddhist, or Buddhist teacher or professional meditator" etc. How would you feel about us referring to ourselves on such occasions, as a Buddhist Minister or Priest?

S: I think those words have got all sorts of connotations that we would probably wish to avoid, especially 'priest'. But it is a difficult situation because you want to communicate something of what you are, you need some kind of nomenclature. But I think we have to be very careful about putting ourselves into any existing category.

Sona : I was thinking particularly here of for instance when one fills out a passport application and there is a question of occupation, and if one writes Buddhist teacher it doesn't really say very much.

S: Ah, but then Subhuti went into this for me recently because I renewed or rather changed my passport. Formerly they put your occupation on the passport, but they don't do this now, not on British passports. It's been dropped. So I had formerly, Minister of Buddhist Religion, so I thought they would be putting that on my new passport and I wanted to change that because I was thinking of going to India and I was wanting just to be very careful. So I formerly had my English name which is my legal name, followed by "Also known as Sangharakshita," but I have changed all that now. I have now a passport with only my English name on it, and of course there is no occupation.

Sona : This would only apply to British passports?

S: Yes I don't know what this practice is in other countries, but in Britain one has not any longer to bother about that for that particular purpose. But nonetheless, people will often ask you what you do for a living. It depends how serious the question is and how much time one has got to go into things. Perhaps you should query the whole idea of a living and say, "Well I don't do anything for a living, I have got certain things in which I am very interested and I am just concerned to follow up those interests, I want to devote myself to them. And there are certain things I do just to earn money, and they may vary from time to time."

Do you see what I mean? Just question the whole idea of working for a 'living' because you are not working for a living, you are working for the sake of an ideal and you are maintaining yourself as best as you can, and devoting in a way as little time as you can to earning your 'living' so that you can work for the things in which you really believe. I think there should be some way of conveying that in relatively few words. If you are supported, you could say that: "I work for the realisation of certain ideals, and I am supported by a charitable organisation to enable me to do that."

Buddhadasa : When I have been asked about this question, I have just been saying: Ordained Buddhist Teacher. That seems general enough to satisfy most people.

S: s, but if they ask you what you do for a 'living', that would not be a correct reply, because you don't do it for the sake of a living.

Buddhadasa : No, that's true.

S: I mean it may even be your full time occupation, but you don't do it, as it were, for the sake of the remuneration so that you can support a wife and family.

Buddhadasa : I was thinking of those particular forms where occupation is asked for.

S: I think if one is asked by some government department or official body, if you had to fill in a form and there was a space for occupation, I think one could well put, Ordained Buddhist Teacher. Yes, because one does teach almost invariably if one is an Order Member, at least one is available to teach on occasion and one is avoiding the word "Minister" or "Clergyman" or "Priest" or "Monk". It's a fairly accurate description of what most Order Members do at least to some extent.

One is ordained, one is a Buddhist and one does teach. So if anyone asks you point blank what do you do for a living, the answer is really, "I don't do anything for a living". But then you can just follow up quite quickly with a few words of explanation and clarification. Have people come up against that particular difficulty and if so how have you dealt with it, if in any different way from what has already been mentioned?

Dharmapriya : All the time, I mean probably because we have a slightly different situation usually, meeting people who aren't connected with the Friends. A lot depends on the form of the question and the circumstances, and it's obvious that the question is very superficial and they just want

to know how I earn money, and I just say "yoga teacher" in Germany. But if say someone young picking me up when I'm hitch-hiking, well I can just tell them what I really do.

S: Yes, I was having a haircut in the barbers the other week, and the barber asked me in a chatty sort of way whether I had had my annual holiday yet (laughter). So I said I never have a holiday (laughter), so in a way that silenced him. So as my haircut was nearly finished I thought there was no point in going into it all now. But he clearly meant it as a conversational opening.

Suvajra : If he had asked you earlier, how would you have dealt with that then?

S: Well perhaps I would have told him about Tuscany, but made it clear that is wasn't a holiday and why I was going there, and what I was doing. I think one can do that nowadays, even with the barber.

Dharmapriya : Bhante didn't you answer the question once according to one of your poems, you wrote poetry to the barber?

S: That's true. Yes, I had forgotten that, yes I did, and he appreciated the answer immensely, that was based on an actual incident in Highgate.

Sona : I was recently in a situation where I was asked what I did quite late at night. I did not want to go into everything (laughter), but I replied that I was unemployed. But I was told afterwards it was rather shocking, because you shouldn't tell people in Sweden that you are unemployed. I think in England you would probably get away with it.

S: What did they think in Sweden, that you were just a layabout?

Sona : Yes, It was to a bank manager (laughter), at a dinner party.

S: Well you might have had to meet him in a professional capacity so perhaps that was rather a blunder on your part.

Sona : Yes.

S: Anyway, any other similar experiences?

Suvajra : I quite often say that I run Manchester Buddhist Centre. That gives them a whole number of questions, they ask what is involved in running the Centre.

S: Yes and : "What is Buddhism, what is a Buddhist Centre?"

Suvajra : Who comes along? All sorts of things like that.

S: How long have you been doing it? Yes.

Devamitra : My usual response is that I work for a Buddhist Movement.

Vessantara : I tend to start off by saying that I teach meditation because that is quite a general thing that is in the air, and I can work out from their response to that how far to go into things.

Devamitra : Kamalasila has a question on establishing Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Kamalasila : I was thinking about approaches we might take if we wanted to start activities in Sri Lanka. I wondered whether there were any Buddhist magazines that would take articles on the Dharma by Order Members?

S: I'm sure there definitely are. I've been suggesting that we regularly send articles to Buddhist magazines in the East for years. I have recently been sending myself, I haven't had time to write articles, but I have been sending edited transcripts of some of the lectures I have given in India. I have sent two off I think to Singapore recently. I was asked for them. But yes I'm sure magazines in Sri Lanka would be quite happy to take articles about the FWBO, about even our approach to Buddhism, just general Dharma type articles, I'm sure there would be no difficulty.

Kamalasila : Following on from that I also wondered how you think Jinavamsa and Nanarama would perceive the FWBO?

S: I think there might be a little initial difficulty if they didn't see people in robes. Jinavamsa seems not to know English. One would need a sympathetic interpreter. But I think if someone was to go and spend some time with him and talk with him quite a bit, I'm pretty certain from what I have read about him in Carrithers' book that he would be quite sympathetic towards what we were trying to do. Whether he would agree that a non-bhikkhu, non lay kind of ordination and status was the best thing to do is difficult to say. He might still be thinking to some extent in terms of his own cultural context. He might be very well aware that the majority of the people in Ceylon were only interested in Buddhism in a very formal sort of way. It might be difficult for him to imagine being a serious Buddhist and not going off to the forest and being a forest monk. In a way it would be natural for him in that sort of situation, given his antecedents to think in that sort of way. But I am quite sure that if one did spend some time with him, I think he could appreciate what we were trying to do in the West, even though he might not feel it was really appropriate to the East or Sri Lanka. In other words I am saying that with the help of a sympathetic interpreter, I'm sure some real contact could be made, and some real communication could take place. But it might require a bit of time and a bit of energy.

I think probably the best sort of person to enter into that sort of discussion with him would obviously be an Anagarika in robes. I think that would make things much easier, because they are just not accustomed to seeing a really serious Buddhist who is just a layman. There is the odd devout elderly layman who takes the eight precepts and keeps them the whole time, but even he usually serves the monks or just does a bit of meditation. Do you see what I mean? But I think a Dharmachari Anagarika, approaching someone like Jinavamsa could probably establish a

quite sympathetic communication with him. I certainly think that it would be worth trying, because it is quite interesting, not only reading about him, but studying the photographs. If you see for instance the picture of Jinavamsa just sort of explaining, just study his face, it's clearly a very interesting sort of face, it's a very intelligent face and a quite sensitive face, and I think one can imagine the possibility of some genuine communication with that person. That's the impression I certainly get.

So if anybody was ever out there, and in a position to approach him, I think it would be a very valuable thing to do, even if it didn't lead to anything, even if it simply resulted in a warm and friendly feeling between the persons concerned, and resulted perhaps in him having some sympathetic understanding of what we were about, even that would be quite worthwhile. I did by the way yesterday ask your friend what she thought of the forest hermitage that she visited, she couldn't remember the name of it, but thought she might be able to find out. She was very impressed with the whole set up perhaps in a slightly romantic sort of way.

Dharmapriya : Bhante, following on from the first part of your answer, how useful do you think it is for us, not just in the East but in the West to send articles to other Buddhist journals to try to get them published?

S: Well we are sometimes invited. For instance I've been invited to contribute to *Spring Wind*. They've got a series called, My life and Practice, and they want me to contribute to it, I am quite willing to but I don't have time at present. So Subhuti has let them know that I won't be able to write just yet, but I will get round sooner or later get round to doing that for them. Nagabodhi has written an article for them, a quite lengthy article. I read it just a few days ago. What was it called?

Nagabodhi : I think it is called : *Working for the Dharma Revolution*.

S: About the Movement in India and this background, and they published this quite lengthy article. And didn't somebody else have one in Trungpa's newspaper?

Devamitra : Vajraketu.

S: Yes Vajraketu had a quite good article there. So I think that we mustn't assume that other Buddhist groups are not willing to publish articles from us in their magazines, some of them are very willing. I know that *The Middle Way* is a little bit standoffish, but I think we mustn't let that mislead us. Other Buddhist groups are not all like that by any means and some of them welcome contributions from us or would do so. Clearly we need to study the nature of the publication and send in something that is interesting and well written and suitable for that particular magazine or paper.

Devaraja : There was an article in *The Middle Way* by an Order Member.

S: By Dhammadinna.

Devaraja : I was very disappointed in that, I thought it was actually quite inaccurate. She made statements in that which were patently not accurate. She said that the Order included people from every nationality and race. That's just not the case, that is an inaccuracy.

S: Oh ! Did she say that, oh dear perhaps she didn't mean it to be taken literally.

Devaraja : Well I took it literally, and just took it as not the facts!

S: I remember it was a very short article, they only wanted a couple of thousand words.

Devaraja: Perhaps those things should be actually vetted before they are sent out.

S: Yes, it shouldn't be necessary but perhaps it is necessary, if not by me, then by Subhuti, or Nagabodhi, but I'm sure we could do more in this way. I'm sure book reviews from us would be accepted by Buddhist journals. Perhaps sometimes it is good to write and enquire whether a particular article on a particular subject would be acceptable if one puts a lot of time and energy into producing it. But we are in friendly contact with several Buddhist magazines and papers.

I'm sure that this is another field where we could do very much more than we do. Years and years ago I was asking people to write articles for the Mahabodhi Journal and I'm sure they would be accepted. I'm quite sure that many of the talks given on Men's Events, especially those that have been written out beforehand could be sent for publication to Buddhist journals, editing out passages which were of purely, as it were, local interest or references to purely local FWBO affairs.

Suvajra : What about *The Wheel* Series and *Bodhi Leaves*. Do you think that they would take things?

S: I'm not sure about them, because they do tend to be quite narrowly Theravadin. They don't usually stray very far from that. They occasionally publish very questionable material, pseudo-scientific and that sort of thing, but generally it is pretty solidly Theravadin. Though sometimes the material is quite good, especially translations from the Pali Canonical Texts. They did of course publish my life of Dharmapala but it is interesting that they have never invited me to contribute to the series apart from that. They did not even ask my permission to reprint that in fact. They have never reprinted anything else of mine which is perhaps significant.

Buddhadasa : Bhante, can you please comment on the idea of Centres producing their own individual newsletter?

S: I think it's inevitable. Because we are going to turn the Newsletter into a magazine, and I think as individual Centres get bigger, I think that they will need at least a News-sheet. I think the LBC has an idea of that sort, and I think that would be quite useful, because detailed news about the LBC's activities is really only of interest to the immediate supporters of the LBC. You don't want to send that sort of news out all over the world six months later, do you see what I mean? So I think as the Newsletter, the present Newsletter becomes more of a magazine, though it will

still include news highlights from all around the Movement. As it becomes more of a magazine there will be a natural tendency for Centres to produce their own news-sheets just for more limited circulation. I don't think it would be advisable at this stage for anyone in the Movement at any Centre anywhere to try to produce a full scale magazine, I don't think that would be practicable.

Though they might produce something of another nature, for instance I know down in Croydon they are thinking of an Arts Magazine. That would be fulfilling a completely different purpose. So that could be something that could well be done if resources were available, by some of the Centres.

Padmaraja : When does the Newsletter actually become a magazine?

S: Well we were only talking about it this afternoon actually. Perhaps I should let the editor speak if he feels he should say anything at this particular moment.

Nagabodhi : To answer that, we are going to launch its new title, whatever new format, whatever new design style, and the first move in the new direction in time for Wesak, so it will be the April edition next year.

Padmaraja : Do you have a title for the magazine yet?

Nagabodhi : Yes. Shall we announce it?

S: If you want to (laughter).

Nagabodhi : Bhante has finally prevailed it is to be the *Golden Drum* (loud applause).

S: I couldn't think of anything better.

Nagabodhi : It's been in the air for five years and no-one has thought of anything better, so it's good.

S: I think we should snap it up before some other enterprising Buddhist Journal nobbles it!

Buddhadasa : Just a thought on this point. Maybe Centre's news-sheets or local news-letters could all be called the same thing, but given the name of the town to which they are associated. It could be the : The Golden Echo - Manchester. (loud laughter)

S: Well if we used that term "Echo" we would lay ourselves open to a lot of at least leg pulling, and at the most serious criticism.

Nagabodhi : The Golden Egg! (laughter)

S: What about the Golden Handshake? (loud laughter)

[End of tape 19 Tape 20]

Devamitra : This question from Dharmapriya concerns the emphasis on selectivity via lifestyle for the ordination groups. Obscure question. (laughter)

Dharmapriya : On page 213 Carrithers discusses Jinavamsa's method of recruiting and admitting forest monks. Quote : "It represented a very firm decision taken by Jinavamsa and Nanarama to choose only those candidates who had a matured vocation for the hermitage life". This is the first indication in the book that any of the teaching monks selects candidates for ordination on grounds other than caste.

S: That is quite a big point isn't it?

Dharmapriya : Nevertheless it is still a selectivity for a lifestyle, the hermitage life, though admittedly seen clearly as a means to an end. Can we compare this at all with our selectivity of people wanting to go for refuge in the Order, and if so in which ways?

S: We can compare and clearly at least in principle, we don't select people on the basis of their aptitude for a particular lifestyle. Though except within certain parameters, because certain lifestyles are of course excluding on account of their general unskilfulness, or the fact that they are inconsistent say with right livelihood. So, yes I think we can say our principle of selection is commitment, it's not lifestyle. Though one must say in fairness to Jinavamsa, that for him that particular lifestyle was virtually identical with what we would regard as commitment and certainly one cannot deny that commitment often expressed itself through that particular lifestyle. At the same time perhaps one should also recognise that in Sri Lankan society it would be very difficult to conceive of someone who was spiritually committed in our sense, but whose commitment found expression in a lifestyle other than that of the monk, especially other than that of the forest monk. I don't know whether they would be able to develop that sort of approach out of their own resources, their own spiritual resources, and I think that perhaps they would require help from outside, ie. from the Western Buddhist Order.

They don't have the precedents of Mahayana Buddhism, they don't have the precedents of the Bodhisattva ordination, nor have they had for hundreds and hundreds of years any real emphasis on the Going for Refuge. The whole tradition from the very beginning has been a tradition of monk and layman. Even though the forest monks dissociate themselves from the village monks and establish themselves independently, they are still dependent on the support of the lay people, there is nothing like a right livelihood project or anything of that sort. Perhaps it is very difficult for them to think in those terms, for the forest monks to think in those terms, because they think in terms of a solitary life, a reasonably solitary life, devotion to meditation, chanting, teaching and so on.

I think that a lot of that support is forthcoming from the laity and so they feel no need to develop these other aspects of the spiritual life in the way that we have done. But maybe if someone was able to put across our way of looking at things sympathetically to Jinavamsa he might be able to understand. I think that he would probably think that it was very difficult to introduce those sort of things, that sort of set up into Sri

Lanka. But I am not unhopeful myself, because I know that there are so many Western educated people who to some extent are alienated from traditional Buddhism. He doesn't seem to be much in contact with them, he wasn't Western educated himself. So I think there would be perhaps a minority of lay people who would be able to understand what we were getting at, who perhaps personally feel the need of a middle way between a completely worldly lay life on the one hand, and the rather extreme ascetic way of life, that of the forest monk, on the other; assuming that for them the life of the village monk was not an option anyway. I am not unhopeful of the situation in Sri Lanka. If only I was young enough I would not mind spending a few years there myself and seeing what could be done. I feel much more hopeful about us being able to do something in Sri Lanka, after going through this book, quite definitely so. I get the impression that you need not bother with the village bhikkhus, that type of bhikkhu let's say, one could just ignore them, there are not that many of them compared with the total population, one could just set up quite independently. Maybe have just a bit of contact with the forest monks and with those lay people who were interested in meditation. Perhaps one could more or less ignore the bhikkhus unless there were certain individuals who were likely to be open minded and sympathetic.

Suvajra : If it were difficult for us to set up a support system that would act as middle ground between the lay and the traditional bhikkhu society, do you think we would actually have to go for an Order out there that would be an Anagarika order?

S: Well our friend Siri has set up this vegetarian restaurant, so something of that sort could function as a right livelihood project. He sees it in that way in fact, and also the fact that it was vegetarian would be making a point, because the Sinhalese Buddhists are very rarely vegetarian. I think we would just have to see what the possibilities were. It might even be possible to run a meditation centre as a right livelihood project, though probably many Sri Lankans would find it easier to bring gifts in kind, to bring rice and vegetables, and building materials rather than to pay for the weekend or whatever it was.

Do you see what I mean? One might have to adapt oneself in that sort of way. But I must say I am quite full of hope as regards the possibility of our doing something. After all there is a Swiss Buddhist Nun Adasasira Upasika Ayyakhema who has started up a retreat and Meditation Centre for women in Sri Lanka, and she seems to have done it without any trouble or difficulty, and one would be quite sure, unless one went out of one's way to disturb and affront people, I think one would get quite a bit of sympathy from the general Buddhist public.

What does seem clear is that the Buddhist situation, even the Sangha situation isn't quite as monolithic in Sri Lanka as it has seemed to be in India, or perhaps it was a bit more monolithic then than it is now. I would be quite glad to see someone going out there shortly. Meanwhile perhaps we should soften up the ground in advance by contributing articles, and by cultivating whatever personal contacts with Sri Lankans that we could.

Suvajra : What about going there and giving them a few public lectures, in the way that you have done for Malaysia.

S: Well I think that would also be possible, that would be appreciated, Sri Lankans like lectures. A lot of Sri Lankans understand and speak English quite well and I think certainly in the towns and cities it would be possible to arrange. We could perhaps even write in advance to all the associations like the YMBA in Colombo, saying that such and such Order Member is coming out and he would be very happy to give lectures if

they could be arranged. I think once someone got out there and it was discovered that he was a good speaker, he would get a lot of invitations. But perhaps especially if he were an Anagarika, I'm afraid they do have a weakness for the yellow robe, and I think probably anyone wearing it would find that his path was made much smoother by that.

Devaraja : Perhaps it would be a skilful thing to actually go out with one person as an Anagarika and one as a non-Anagarika.

S: Well that could work quite well, or if you could spare the people, one Dharmachari Anagarika and perhaps two or three others.

Devaraja : They would see the interaction between them and perhaps that would breakdown the old way of relating.

S: Yes, and that has happened in India too already yes. Yes it provides a model of interaction.

Devamitra : The last question coming up, from Dharmapriya.

Dharmapriya : On page 220 Carrithers attributes Jinavamsa's samsthava's success to four principles, namely a shared knowledge of a wide body of texts, a shared ordination tradition, a unanimously recognised authority structure and a shared disposition, or a common spirit. Do you agree with this assessment, ie. that their success was due to these four principles, and do you think that one can identify four similar FWBO principles guaranteeing the future spiritual health of the Movement to wit, instead of a shared knowledge of a wide body of texts in the FWBO, a grounding in basic Dharma as provided by the Mitra and Tuscany courses, instead of a shared ordination tradition in the FWBO, a common commitment to the Three Jewels. For a unanimously recognised authority structure, the principles of spiritual hierarchy and consensus, and the still to be worked out ways of coming to decisions. And lastly instead of a shared disposition or common spirit, in the Order - spiritual friendship.

S: That seems quite reasonable yes. Though I find it difficult to say whether Carrithers analysis of the reasons for the success of Jinavamsa's samsthava are complete. There may well have been other factors that he has not brought out in that way, there may have been other factors that he was not aware of or that are not mentioned even in the book. But so far as it goes, what he says seems quite reasonable. Your identification of parallel principles in the FWBO seems also quite reasonable. Has anyone got any comments on that? Catching Devamitra's eye first of course.

Dharmapriya : I actually had a supplementary question : It struck me going through the original list, and my equivalent list that nowhere did I have anything like meditation, and I wondered if with this sort of ground work, meditation would naturally follow.

S: They did meditate, and also I think Carrithers makes it clear that in a general way they followed the provisions of the Visuddhimagga. As in our case we have this general structure of those meditations which are antidotes to the five poisons, that's the basic structure for meditation so far, together with the visualisation practices. (Pause)

It does seem as we progress chapter by chapter and read about all these colourful characters, as though we seem to have more and more in common with certain of them, and perhaps most in common so far with Jinavamsa. That is quite interesting isn't it? As though the approximations to the FWBO are becoming closer and closer as we progress. That's what gives me great hope about our being able to do something in Sri Lanka. It is as though to some extent, the ground has been prepared for us. A few partial precedents have been set. I don't know how widely the forest monks are known, certainly they are known by reputation but how many Buddhists in Sri Lanka really understand what they are trying to do or have tried to do I just don't know. Because certainly in the fifties and sixties I was regularly reading the Sri Lankan Buddhist magazines, and I had no inkling from any of those as to what the forest monks were really up to. I doubt if there was any reference to them at all actually. I don't recollect any reference to them which is perhaps interesting. It was almost as though they were outside the pale.

I was reading in the English Buddhist magazines, there may well have been articles about them or by them in at least some of the Sinhalese Buddhist magazines.

Devamitra : It would seem from Jinavamsa's life that he was making radio broadcasts, and he does seem to have published quite a bit, so he himself doesn't seem to have been beyond the pale.

Padmavajra : That was in Buddha Jayanti though.

S: Also in Sri Lanka there is a large minority of English speaking rather Westernised Buddhists, and clearly they are the ones who run the English Buddhist magazines and contribute to them. I meant that perhaps he was outside the pale so far as they were concerned, because certainly they seem to have taken no notice of him. They might have thought of his sort of conception of forest monk life as really quite reactionary, old fashioned, one sided and so on, even though they may not have been very satisfied with the way of life of the village monks either.

Dharmapriya : Bhante, how much could this have had to do with the question of nikayas, specifically the Siyama Nikaya and caste? Because it sounds like from what you are saying, as it were the representatives of the Sinhalese Sangha in India were from this one group.....

S: Yes with one or two exceptions yes.

Dharmapriya : And could it be that in a sense their supporters effectively dominate, or are the representatives and mouthpieces of the English language?

S: That could well be the case, Carrithers mentions this in [name of magazine], The Sinhalese Buddhist magazine which contained virulent articles against not Jinavamsa, but some of the earlier reformers. That of course was founded by Anagarika Dharmapala, and was of course associated with the Mahabodhi Society in Sri Lanka and Dharmapala was ordained into the Siyama Nikaya himself. He was a Goyigama.

But I think the Mahabodhi Society bhikkhus, to the best of my knowledge when I was there with only one exception, were all from the Siyama Nikaya. I think a lot of the sort of 'globe trotting bhikkhus' that one meets are from the Siyama Nikaya. You know now their background. They are well to do, they have perhaps got incomes of their own, they have wealthy supporters, many of them nowadays have got academic qualifications, they teach in colleges, they like to see a bit of the world, they think of themselves as going abroad and propagating the Dharma but they can't do very much. They are not very convincing and now perhaps one can understand better why, because one now sees something of their background.

A forest bhikkhu might be able to communicate better but usually he doesn't know English, because he has followed a different way of life. There may be some now that do know English, that perhaps took up the life of a forest monk after receiving an English education but I haven't personally come across any as yet or heard of any. But this study was made nearly ten years ago and there could have been changes in the meantime, I don't know. So in other words, in the West we are likely to encounter only the globe trotting Siyama Nikaya bhikkhu, perhaps with a string of degrees. We are not likely to encounter a representative of the forest monk tradition.

Padmavajra : Coming back to our effect in Sri Lanka, do you think that Dharmapala's influence is still remembered in Sri Lanka?

S: Very much so yes.

Padmavajra : And how much did Dharmapala himself meditate?

S: He did, I went through his diaries, or many volumes of them, he meditated every morning. Every single day that I examined that particular diary page, he had meditated, he used to meditate very early in the morning. He seems in the middle part of his life, or towards the end of his life, to have done only the metta bhavana, he seems to have done that every morning without fail usually beginning at three o' clock in the morning. Yes, he was well into that despite his rather hot temper. I think in earlier life he did experiment with other methods, but he seems in the end just to have done the metta bhavana very early every morning before he did anything else.

Padmavajra : Didn't Dharmapala rediscover the meditation tradition in a way in Sri Lanka, do you think to some extent?

S: In a sense, because I think it was he who located or came across that yogachara's manual, that was afterwards translated by the Pali Text Society. It isn't a very helpful work, it seems to represent a rather degenerate form of meditation tradition, it's rather odd in fact. But he was searching desperately for a meditation teacher, he didn't find one, though it seems from this book that there were people practising meditation in Sri Lanka at this time, and they must have been very obscure indeed, perhaps hidden away in the forest. Because though he travelled the length and breadth of Sri Lanka visiting hundreds of villages and was always enquiring after monks practising meditation. He was never able to find one. So certainly they were very rare at that time. So he learned meditation in the end from a Burmese layman, whom he met I think on pilgrimage. But he seems in the end to have opted for metta bhavana as his regular favoured practice. I don't know the details of practice but he seems to have practised it for quite a long period, possibly up to a couple of hours every morning.

Yes, as I say I don't know how he practised. Well that's not quite correct because he mentions that he always included his parents and his benefactors in his metta, he especially included them. He seems to have been a fervent believer in the devas and often invoked the devas and the protection of the devas very fervently. I found that my old friend Sangharatana, he often used to refer to the 'punya devata'. I had never heard anybody else refer to it and it is not in the Pali dictionary, but he seemed to have a very firm belief that everyone had a sort of 'punya devata' almost like a guardian angel, and I often heard him use this expression. I wish now I had asked him exactly what he meant by that.

Padmavajra : A devata protecting your merit?

S: Yes, almost like a devata who was the embodiment or personification of your merit, yes. He again had a very fervent belief it would seem in that 'punya devata'.

Padmavajra : Have you ever thought further about this idea of a punya devata?

S: Not really because I am not quite sure what he meant by it. But perhaps if I do ever meet some of my old bhikkhu friends again I shall ask them; "Is there a generally recognised idea of 'punyadevata' in Sri Lanka." It is certainly not found in their to the best of my knowledge, and the term isn't in the Pali dictionary. Almost like your higher self in a way.

Padmavajra : There is a punyakaya isn't there?

S: Yes. (Pause) So is that all?

Devamitra : Yes unless you have any other points.

S: No. All right you can have an early cocoa tonight.

[End of Tape 20]