

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

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This transcript has not been checked by Sangharakshita, and may contain mistakes and mishearings. Checked and reprinted copies of all seminars will be available as part of the [Complete Works Project](#).

MEETING SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

TAPE 1. SIDE A. TYPED BY:

TRANSCRIBED BY: Viramati & Anne Rowlands. Desmond FitzGerald

Sangharakshita: All right, then. We'll start off with 'Meeting Spiritual Friends' which is, of course, a chapter from sGam.po.pa's 'The Jewel Ornament of Liberation' and you can probably understand for yourselves without any explanation from me why we're starting off with this particular chapter, this particular subject, in fact. It is obviously because on retreat we are very much meeting with spiritual friends, the retreat is very much about that. I thought it would be a good idea to start off very much striking this particular note, the meeting with spiritual friends, which is exactly what we are doing in one way and another for 15 whole days.

You'll also notice as we go on through the study periods that we are covering quite a bit of ground. 'Meeting Spiritual Friends' is, of course, from a Tibetan text, by one of the great Kagyupa gurus, a disciple of Milarepa, which is therefore more Mahayana cum Vajrayana, especially Vajrayanic. And we shall also be studying a couple of chapters from the 'Perfection of Wisdom' which is, of course, from the Sanskrit Mahayana tradition. As well as that we'll be studying something from the Pali, a Sutra from the Majjhima- Nikaya, and some songs of Milarepa.

So we're covering material from Pali, from Sanskrit and material from Tibetan. You will also notice as we go on that the material deals more or less with the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha

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The (Aryapariesana?) Sutra, which is the Sutra we're taking from the Majjhima-Nikaya, is a sort of autobiographical discourse by the Buddha himself, describing his early struggles and eventual attainment of Enlightenment, and the 'Perfection of Wisdom' is, of course, the Dharma proper, as it were. The Perfection of Wisdom is the sixth of the Perfections: in a sense it is the only Perfection. So Wisdom is the Dharma, one can say. Prajna is the Dharma, so if we learn about the Perfection of Wisdom we are very much learning about the Dharma. We could hardly know more about the Dharma than if we were to know about the Perfection of Wisdom.

Then, of course, Sangha. Well Sangha, we've got Spiritual Friends which we are going to talk about today and also we're going to have some songs of Milarepa which illustrate his relationship with one of his disciples, but that also sheds light on our subject or our question of Sangha.

So this is how we will be proceeding, covering this material from Tibetan, Pali and Sanskrit, traversing not only the three 'yanas' but also the Three Jewels, the Buddha, the

Dharma and the Sangha. So this study should give us a fairly comprehensive picture though still highly selective of Buddhist spiritual literature and give us glimpses from different points of view into all of the three Jewels, all of the three yanās.

So what we're going to do, what we usually do, we'll start reading the text, we'll go round the circle, each person reading a paragraph at a time, and then we'll just stop and deal with any points in that paragraph that needs some kind of explanation or comment or discussion and if there is anything that isn't clear to anybody, please do ask. Also, I do suggest that when you make your question or comment you speak up. There are two microphones and if you whisper they won't pick your voice up even between them. When people come

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to transcribe tapes it's rather tantalising to hear people's voices just fading away, murmuring something which you can't quite catch. So please do speak up when you do have something to say.

(Text, p.30) 'Meeting Spiritual Friends I

'The Contributory cause are spiritual friends'.

'This means that although you may possess the most perfect working basis but are not urged on by spiritual friends as a contributory cause, it is difficult to set out on the path towards enlightenment, because of the power of inveterate propensities due to evil deeds committed repeatedly in former times. Therefore you have to meet spiritual friends. This necessity is outlined in the following index:

Five headings refer to the meeting with spiritual friends:

Reason, classification,

Primary characteristics of each group,

The method of meeting them and the benefits.'

S: So, let's go into that. The heading, 'The contributory cause are spiritual friends' refers us back, as the note says, to

Chapter One, page 2. So I have a copy of the whole text here. I'll

just look back and see what that says. It's the chapter, of course,

on the working basis: the working basis being the most precious human body. (Pause) If we go right back to the first chapter we find sGam.po.pa saying: 'The motive is the Tathagatagarbha; the working basis is the most precious human body; the contributory cause are spiritual friends . . . (p.2)

'The motive is the Tathagatagarbha' means that one's motive for making an effort in

the direction of Enlightenment ultimately consists simply in the fact that you are capable of attaining that Enlightenment. The seed of Enlightenment is already there within you. This is what's meant by the Tathagatagarbha, the womb, or if

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you like, the matrix of the Buddha, i.e. of the Enlightenment experience. So that is the motive. It is that which deeply motivates you: the fact that you are able to attain that, the fact that, in a sense, on another level, in another dimension, as it were, you are that; in eternity, as it were, you are that. Within time you are in process of becoming that. So the motive is the

Tathagatagarbha.

And the working basis is the most precious human body: the

body is your instrument. This is why the Tantric tradition

especially, the body is highly esteemed, the body is highly regarded,

because the body it is which is the vessel of Enlightenment.

It is

with your psycho-physical, even with your psycho-physical cum spiritual organism that you realise the truth of Enlightenment. So in the Vajrayana, the body is never depreciated, is never despised. It is the working basis, the well endowed human body equipped with the senses, all in perfect working order, equipped with a mind and intelligence, living at the right time, in the right place, in a suitable environment. So the human body is the working basis for the attainment of Enlightenment and 'the contributory cause are spiritual friends'.

So this is where we've come up to in the 'Jewel Ornament of Liberation'. I'm not going to go into those first two points. I will only mention them just to lead up to this third one: 'the contributory cause are spiritual friends'. You may have the potential for Enlightenment. You may have all the necessary equipment in the form of the well endowed human body, but unless you meet spiritual friends that potentiality for Enlightenment will never be actualised and your working basis will not be utilised, it will remain useless, and this is in fact what sGam.po.pa says. He says: 'This means that although you may possess the most perfect

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working basis, but are not urged on by spiritual friends as a contributory cause, it is difficult to set out on the path towards Enlightenment~'.

This is the first thing that we have to realise. We may possess the most perfect working basis, we may be healthy, we may be intelligent, we may have leisure, we may have all sorts of facilities but if we're not urged on by spiritual friends as a contributory cause, it is difficult to set out on the path towards Enlightenment.

The spiritual friends may, of course, speak to us through a book. It isn't necessary

that we meet them personally in the flesh, but the book of course was written by a human being and through the book we meet a human being. If it's a book about the Dharma, then through that book we meet a spiritual friend, and it's difficult to set out on the path towards Enlightenment without being urged on by spiritual friends as a contributory cause 'because of the power of inveterate propensities due to evil deeds committed repeatedly in former times'.

If one didn't want to refer to the doctrine of Karma or to former lives how do you think one could phrase this or how do you think one could express this point?

PETER COWEN: Bad genes.

S: Bad genes, yes: bad genes expressing themselves in what sort of way?

PETER COWEN: You wouldn't have a perfect working basis, would you? You wouldn't have a

S: Ah, no. The point here that sGam.po.pa is making is that you have the perfect working basis, your genes have been functioning well in that respect, but even if you have that perfect working basis, if you're not urged on by spiritual friends as a contributory cause 'it is difficult to set out on the path towards

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Enlightenment because of the power of inveterate propensities due to evil deeds'. So in a sense the genes have been looked after by the proper working basis. The good genes have given you a healthy body. They've given you intelligence but there is still something lacking, or rather there is still something present which the Spiritual Friends of the contributory cause will have to overcome before you can set out on the Spiritual Path. So what is that something?

Voice: Your conditioning.

S: Your conditioning, you could say, in a broad sense. Your psychological conditioning, cultural conditioning, social conditioning, but especially the psychological conditioning and that is very, very heavy, very, very strong, very, very powerful.

So what does meeting spiritual friends mean really? Does it mean just having a little chat? Does it mean just being given information about the Dharma? What does it really mean? What is a true meeting with spiritual friends?

IAN ANDERSON: Transformation.

S: Transformation ultimately, but before you even get to that point, what does the meeting with ipiritual friends represent?

DOHIMC KENNEDY: The Sangha.

S: Yes, but the spiritual friends may be the Sangha, but what happens to you when

you meet with spiritual friends'?

SAGARAMATI: You see something as it were which you can only say is higher, you see something more than you, as it were . . .

S: So putting it in very simple terms what happens to you spiritually and psychologically?

JOHN ROONEY: A chance to get out of an old rut.

S: Yes, yes. I was thinking in rather more positive terms

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than that. When you meet spiritual friends you get sparked off, you get inspired and this is what you really need. Otherwise you may have the basic capacity, the basic potential for spiritual development. You may even have the equipment, you may have the working basis, but nothing happens usually unless you come in contact with spiritual friends, unless you get sparked off, unless you get inspired by the personal contact with someone who is already himself on the Path. Usually one needs to have that contact personally.

As I mentioned, you can have it through the medium of the written word, through books, but to be really sparked off, really inspired, you probably need, in almost all cases, the personal contact, so what does this suggest? It suggests that the power of our psychological conditioning is very, very strong indeed. It is not overcome, and unless we meet people who really shake us out of it, who really galvanise it, not much is likely to happen. We've got the abstract possibility of gaining Enlightenment, we've even got the concrete equipment but we won't really do anything unless we get sparked off, unless we get inspired, and that means meeting with spiritual friends.

Therefore sGam.po.pa says, 'you have to meet with spiritual friends'.

Well, just think, supposing you'd all remained on your own, supposing you'd never even met one another, supposing you had just remained with your capacity for gaining Enlightenment: you know, just living at home, working at your ordinary job. You'd have your working basis, your well endowed working basis, your human body complete with healthy, well functioning senses, complete with intelligence, but nothing very much would have happened. It's only when one comes into contact with spiritual friends, then things really do start happening or, in a word, when one comes in contact with the

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Sangha.

So sGam.po.pa emphasises that, 'therefore you have to meet ~itualfriends' and this necessity is outlined in the following verse:

(p30) 'Five headings refer to the meeting with spiritual friends: Reason, classification,

Primary characteristics of each group,

The method of meeting them and the benefits'.

This sounds a bit scholastic, I know, sGam.po.pa is a little bit like that but it is not really so, as we shall see.

All right then, let's carry on.

ALAN ANGEL: Can I just ask if sparking off necessarily has to be positive, you asking . .

S: I'd said sparking off always was positive, if it's sparking off, it's positive.

ALAN ANGEL: Right.

S: What did you have in mind - like someone making you angry?

ALAN ANGEL: Someone making a point, but it not really getting through. I mean, they are correct but it's not an inspiration. What they're saying is right, but it's not inspiring.

S: Well, this also depends on their skilful means, if they really want to help you, usually they will find the right way of doing that. They will be able to say something to you which will spark you off, which will inspire you. At least, i~ they can't do that, they can irritate you, which itself can be very positive. They might be getting at you about your slothful, rut-ridden state and say: 'Why don't you get out of it? What's wrong with you? You're not being like a human being; you're not realising your spiritual potential, you're not using your equipment, so why don't you do this?' A spiritual friend may get at you this way. Re may not succeed in sparking you off directly on the spot but he may get under your skin. (Laughter) That's a very good beginning, at least some sort of contact with you has been established, some energy has been got going, even though it does fall short of an actual sparking off in a spiritual sense, but something positive has happened. He's made some impression on you, even if you start justifying yourself to him, as often may happen. You're still communicating, you're still in touch with him and he's still in touch with you. This is all that matters. There has been a beginning and if this can be continued, then sooner or later, if the spiritual friend is sufficiently skilful you will be sparked off, too. So even that initial irritation or getting under your skin by the spiritual friend, even though it doesn't represent an actual sparking off it can be very positive, it can lead to the sparking off. So that, too, has its place. All right, let's carry on then.

(Text.p30) 'There are three reasons for meeting them, scriptural authority, necessity and simile.~

Scriptural authority~ is found in the . .

S: Just read the Sanskrit. (Laughter)

(Text. p.30) Prajnaparamitasamcayagatha. (Laughter)

S: This, by the way, is the text we shall be studying later on. It is the Precious . . . , it is the verses on the Accumulation of Precious Qualities, that particular Perfection of Wisdom text. So what does that say?

(Text. p.30) 'Virtuous disciples having respect for the Guru

Should always be in touch with wise Gurus

Because from them the virtues of a wise man spring'.

S: So here sGam.po.pa is giving what he calls scriptural authority for his statement about the necessity of meeting with spiritual friends. First of all, maybe we should go a little bit

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Because from them the virtues of a wise man spring'.

Perhaps one could not have thought of this oneself. But when it is propounded to one, when one hears it, then there is a sort of intuitive acceptance of it as true: a recognition of the truth and a sort of emotional response to it as such at the same time. So when those two things happen, then one is taking off, one is accepting of that particular verse as what is here called a scriptural authority.

VESSANTARA: Surely in a way then there are two separate responses, if you like. There's . . . sGam.po.pa could simply have stated what's put there, without stating its source if you like, perhaps without even mentioning it is from the Scriptures and you'd have a response to it just per se. But then there's also the fact that he says that it has scriptural authority and even quotes the Scriptures which one also has a response to something which comes from the Scriptures, which is in a way separate. It's based, that seems to be based much more on faith than one's natural response to the verse.

S: Well, if you invoke the Scriptures, or if you say that this particular verse comes from the Scriptures then you're bringing in the Buddha, as was said, because the verse represents the utterance of the Buddha, and presumably if you already are a Buddhist, you've got some idea about Buddhahood, some idea about the nature of Enlightenment and some conviction, however shaky, that Gautama the Buddha was an Enlightened Being and that whatever he said, the sayings that we now have in the Scriptures or as the Scriptures, did issue from his Enlightened Consciousness, so when the name of the Buddha is invoked, as it were, as the author of the verse or the ultimate sanction for the verse then all one's feelings about the Buddha and about Buddhahood, etc., are activated. So one understands and

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into this whole question of spiritual authority. You notice that the translator puts it in single inverted commas. What exactly is the place of scriptural authority in Buddhism? What particular force has it when you clinch a statement with a quotation from the Scriptures?

ALAN ANGEL: It came from the Thuddha.

S: It came from the Buddha originally. So what sort of force does that give it?

ALAN ANGEL: Force of reality.

S: Force of reality.

PETER COWEN: Experience.

S: Experience, but at this stage does one know that the Buddha was the Buddha, does one really know that or not?

GRAHAM STEVEN: The phrase would help you to see that.

S: Yes, but in what sort of way is the scriptural, or scriptural quotation, an authoritative one?

SAGARAMATI: Well, it would hardly be an authority if you hadn't the faith.

S: It would only be an authority if you had the faith. Yes, it presupposes faith. But faith in what sort of way, in what sort of sense?

PETER COWEN?: Reasonableness of it.

S: But is that faith?

PETER COWEN?: Confidence.

S: Confidence.

VOICE: Intuitive belief, isn't it?

S: Intuitive belief. It's a sort of . . . it's a response to it. For instance, one has this particular verse:

'Virtuous disciples have respect for the Guru

Should always be in touch with wise Gurus

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appreciates, and responds to this particular verse within the context of one's overall feeling for or of the Buddha, the Buddhist tradition, the spiritual life and so on. So this is what is meant by a sort of appeal to scriptural authority, yes?

In other words, in a sense, you are not taking the verse simply on its own merits. If you're to do that, then what's the point of saying it's a scriptural verse?

VESSANTARA: That's really the point I was making.

SAGARAMATI: But isn't it by . . . that you have to have faith in the teacher who is quoting the scriptures.

S: That, too. You have faith really therefore in the whole tradition which goes back to the Buddha and guarantees at least a substantial authenticity of the teaching. May not be able to guarantee every colon and semi-colon and the dotting of every 'i' and the crossing of every ~t~, but certainly can guarantee the substantial authenticity, so how can that substantial authenticity be guaranteed? I mean, how is this done?

PETER COWEN: By a succession, as it were, of disciples and Gurus.

S: But what does that imply? I mean, does it imply just words being handed down? Does it imply just teachings being handed down or books being handed down? What does it imply?

ALAN ANGEL: The lineage.

S: The lineage, but the lineage of what?

PEL~R COWEN: Experience.

S: Experience, yes. So you can feel some sort of conviction about the authenticity of the tradition when there is some sort of agreement between the life of the latest disciple and the life of the first Guru. Do you see this? Only then can you have some sort of

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confidence ~n it. For instance, you know about sGam.po.pa. sGam.po.pa was a great teacher. You can read about his life story. You can read about his Guru, D~ilarepa. And we know that sGam.po.pa had disciples, you know, we know that those disciples had disciples again and in this way it comes down to the present. So you can be sure that the Buddha had whatever the Buddha did have because the teachers who say that the Buddha had it show themselves some slight trace, at least, of what they say the Buddha had. (Laughter) This is what it really amounts to. So this is what is meant, in a way, by scriptural authority, not that someone produces a book and says, the Buddha wrote this book or the Buddha spoke the words contained in this book and his own life, as it were, has no relevance whatever to the contents of the book. On the contrary, you can see in his life something of what you read about in the book, and you also have the confidence that if you associate with him and practise according to his directions then you will be able to recreate within yourself, experience for yourself, not only what he tells you but what is in the book that has come down to him, and also ultimately what was in the Buddha's own original experience.

IVIKE CHIVERS: I think you can follow the example of the person ~iving you the scriptural authority.

S: Yes. You can say to some extent your reliance upon the scriptural authority or the reliability of the scriptural authority depends upon the reliability of the person who, as it were, guarantees the scriptural authority. A book doesn't guarantee itself. For instance, in the case of say, Christianity, there is the question of who guarantees the truth of the Bible?

How do we know that the Bible is the true record of the life of Christ? The Catholic reply is that it's guaranteed by the church. The Bible has been preserved in the church and handed down in the church from generation to generation.

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So the church guarantees the Bible. Protestants do not believe that. So, in a sense, Protestants have got nothing to fall back upon except the sort of individual faith in the sense of belief of the individual believer, or the voice of God speaking to them in their own hearts and saying well, yes, this is the Bible, you can accept this as the Bible, but that's very different from the Buddhist position, because Buddhism starts, as it were, from the Buddha's own original experience, the experience of Enlightenment. He taught. His disciples experienced at least something of that for themselves. They in turn taught. They in turn, as it were, handed something on, though one mustn't take that expression 'handed on' too literally. Their disciples again experienced something.

So you come, generation by generation, right down to the people with whom you are personally in contact and who are affiliated to that tradition. You see in them some reflection, at least, of what they say Buddhism is all about and what they say the Buddha experienced in its plenitude. And because you see something of it in them you can believe and you are quite justified in believing that everything of it was there in the case of the Buddha and that there is that living connection between them, because what they tell you about Him seems, at least to some extent, borne out in their own lives and by your experience of them. So in this sort of way the scriptural authority is established.

VESSANTARA: In what sense are we to understand that say a text like the Prajnaparamitasamcayagatha is the word of the Buddha? Because, I mean, you could say it was composed, you can say it was composed - you may not know by whom, but somebody within the Mahayana tradition of a certain date, so -

S: Well, there are several questions here. One is, of course, the question of the form of the work and the content. Did the Buddha

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deliver a particular discourse exactly as it has come down to us? The chances are that he didn't in the case of some discourses. But what is the basic teaching of the discourse? What is the discourse fundamentally about? Fundamentally it is about a certain kind of experience and that experience is traceable back to the Buddha. In that sense the discourse, the particular teaching itself, goes back to the Buddha. The words do not necessarily go back to the Buddha. Even the ideas do not necessarily go back to the Buddha, but the spirit goes back to the Buddha and, of course, the words 'to go back to the Buddha' may be not in those particular combinations but what we may call the key-terms or the leading ideas, even though not in that particular permutation, 'go back to the Buddha' - and the spirit certainly goes back to the Buddha. (Pause)

VESSANTARA: I did think there was no distinction made in Buddhism between, or,

it seems very unclear regarding the Scriptures, what is actually - there seems very little interest in historicity, I suppose.

S: Well, no interest in historicity at all.

VESSANTARA: Yes.

S: In a sense the ancient Indians had no idea of historicity. They didn't wish to have. They were only concerned about Enlightenment here and now. That was their main preoccupation.

VESSANTARA: But in the tradition, in the most spiritual traditions, or some spiritual traditions that have come down to us, there's a distinction between words which are actually said by the founder of that tradition, and they're very carefully cordoned off, and things composed later by followers of that tradition . . .

S: No, because there were even disagreements by different bodies of people as to where to draw that line. For instance, in the early days of Christianity there were scores, if not hundreds

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of gospels in circulation. Well what became the Catholic Church subsequently drew a line after the four gospels that are now bound up in the Bible and said everything else which comes after that line is not to be accepted, is not genuine. Now, on what basis they drew that line nobody really knows. I mean, other churches which didn't survive in most cases, they drew the line quite differently and included all sorts of works which are not included by the Catholic Church. So there is still the question of where does one draw that particular line. The Buddhists, broadly speaking, especially the Mahayanists, decided to accept everything. (Laughter) And they weren't very much bothered with questions like 'Did the Buddha really say that?' or 'Did the Buddha not say that?' which, from our point of view, this is quite unsatisfactory. I mean, we tend to want to know that the Buddha did actually say it but the Buddhist, or the traditional Buddhist, would say that the important thing is whether or not a certain saying or certain teaching does issue from an Enlightened mind or whether it does not. And whether it can help you also to develop that same Enlightened mind, or not. The traditional Buddhist, I think, would be quite content to leave it there. Otherwise, one can spend one's whole life as many scholars have done, debating whether the Buddha said this, and whether the Buddha said that or not and not practising the teaching at all, never getting around to that.

And even so, the question of historicity still can tell us only the words and the thoughts. It doesn't touch the spiritual essence. It doesn't touch the Enlightenment experience. It's this that Buddhism is basically all about.

VESSANTARA: But when you get a text composed say in the 3rd century A.D). Then you know nothing about the person who composed it except from the text itself.

S: But there's another point also. You say when you get a text composed in the 3rd century B.C., well, who says it was composed in the 3rd century B.C.? Some scholars say that. Others might say the 1st century A.D. Buddhists say it comes down from the Buddha.

So why does one accept the 1st rather than the 2nd?

VESSANTARA: Well, certainly the form in which it's presented, it seems unlikely that it is so.

S: Well, does one even know that, or is one taking it on trust from the scholars?

VESSANTARA: Well, one's taking it on a certain amount of trust from the scholars because it seems, you can see, working from more recent times with other texts that it clearly has happened, therefore it seems logical.

S: Well, the Buddhist would say, why not take it on trust from the Buddhists, that it goes back to the Buddha, at least in essence and in spirit?

VESSANTARA: Yes, but I'm (not?) talking about form.

S: Yes, but then why does one bother about the form? (Pause) I mean is it necessary to bother or is it only a certain kind of mind that bothers?

VESSANTARA: The question surely is, from an unEnlightened viewpoint, that the text should come from somebody who has deeply participated in the spirit . . .

S: Yes.

VESSANTARA: . . . and the essence of the teaching.

S: Ah, but can one know that on purely historical grounds?

VESSANTARA: Well, if one knew for instance that it came from the Buddha and one had faith in the Enlightenment of the Buddha, then that would be . . .

S: But where would one get that faith in the Enlightenment of the Buddha from? - that the Enlightenment of the Buddha was a real, living thing? One would only get that through contact with real, living disciples who reflected something of that spirit in their lives. I mean, you might be able to prove to your complete satisfaction that a certain document can be traced back to something which the historical person, Gautama, did say but that wouldn't

bring you into contact with his experience. You'll only prove that

he said those things. In order to get into contact with that spirit

or have some sort of feeling for that spirit, you'd have to be in contact with those who were,

as it were, in lineal descendance spiritually. So that would be the most important thing, from the spiritual point of view.

So if that was, you could therefore if you so wished, well, just drop the consideration of historicity, because in a way the lives of the disciples guarantee the Enlightenment of the Buddha.

VESSANTARA: One could also then drop the idea of something being the word of the Buddha?

S: You could accept that the disciples with whom you are in contact refer to their teachers. They say for instance that 'Yes, I've experienced, or I have realised a measure of what I say, and I got this from my teacher who had realised much more than I, personally, have realised, and he said that he got it from his teacher. So if you developed a degree of confidence in the person that you're in contact with personally, through your personal contact, then you can begin to feel that what he says about his teacher, and his teacher's experience, can also be accepted, that's reliable and so on. But no amount of evaluation of historical sources and evidence will ever bring you to that point of actual living contact with whatever the Buddha had written and experienced, and faith in it. So if one is

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concerned with the actual living of the Buddhist life, the actual attaining of Enlightenment, you can proceed upon purely traditional assumptions. This is possible. Whereas if you proceed upon purely scholarly and historical assumptions, you won't get anywhere at all. So sooner or later, either with or without the historical emphasis, you have to come back to at least a modified version of the traditional attitude.

So this all adds up to the fact that in the Buddhist Scriptures we don't really have anything amounting to a Bible. You've got an account of the teachings of the Buddha, records of the experience of the Buddha, which is reflected to some extent in the lives of the good friends with whom you're personally in contact and to which you feel some sort of response in yourself of a deeper sort and which gives you a sort of confidence both in the good friends themselves and in the tradition to which they belong and the scriptures which they quote. There seems to be a sort of family likeness amongst them all. Do you see this? (Pause)

So, spiritual authority, let's look at the verse itself.

(Text p30) 'Virtuous disciples having respect for the Guru

Should always be in touch with wise Gurus

Because from them the virtues of a wise man spring.

This verse refers to the spiritual friend in the form of a Guru, but as we shall see, not all spiritual friends are Gurus. But the importance of 'Should always be in touch with . . .' is emphasised. And there are reasons given. 'Because from them the virtues of a wise man spring~'.

It is a bit like the sparking off as I called it earlier on. You can be sparked off by a spiritual friend. So contact with a spiritual friend who has developed his own positive qualities, you can develop your positive qualities too, and then there's another

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quotation - let's go on with that.

(Text p30) 'And in the Astasahasrika-prajnaparamita 1 .

S: That's the one in 8,000 lines.

'. . . Thus a Bodhisattva Mahasattva who wishes to attain unsurpassable enlightenment must first approach, then meet and honour spiritual friends'.

S: This quotation tells us just a little more. It speaks - especially the Bodhisattva, one who wishes to attain unsurpassable enlightenment, it speaks of him first of all approaching, then meeting and then honouring.

So do you think that these words are used with a definite meaning: approaching, meeting, honouring? What does one mean by approaching? Approaching obviously means 'coming near to', but what is the difference between approaching and meeting?

(End of Tape 1, Side A)

MEETING SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

TRANSCRIBED BY: Anne Rowlands. TYPED BY: Desmond FitzGerald.

TAPE 1 SIDE B.

PETER COWEN: . . . even presumably its communication between people.

S: Yes, communication. And what about honouring?

IAN ANDERSON: Seeing the real qualities of the Dharma.

S: Seeing the real qualities. You approach, you see them first of all from a distance, there's something that attracts you so you move towards them. You approach. You come near and having come near, you set up some kind of communication. You talk. You have a discussion, maybe you get to know each other quite well, so there's some sort of exchange and as a result of that communication, as a result of that exchange, you come to think that there's something very worthy, something very noble in that particular person, in that spiritual friend. So far from reacting against it or trying to denigrate it or depreciate it in any

way you really recognise it as something noble and you honour it. That is your spontaneous, natural reaction - to look up to it. So quite important stages are indicated here: you approach, having seen as it were in the distance, you meet, you get ready to know, you communicate, you recognise something very positive in the spiritual friend and you honour that.

So it suggests as it were that at each of these stages you can go wrong which means that you can fail to take the next step. For instance, you may see a spiritual friend in the distance, but you may not approach him. Or, you may approach him but you may not get into communication. Or you may even get into communication but you may

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not honour him, as a result of what you speak. Your reaction may in fact be a negative one. You may start feeling unworthy or you may start feeling very inferior and again you might start feeling resentful. So each of these stages is important. You approach, you meet and then you honour spiritual friends. ~Pause)

You notice that both of the quotations come from the Perfection of Wisdom literature. It is perhaps not without significance that, at least according to scholarly opinion, these are the two oldest, the two most primitive of the Perfection of Wisdom texts. Do you know about the Perfection of Wisdom texts'?

These are generally considered to be among the oldest of the Mahayana Sutras, they're devoted entirely to the Perfection of Wisdom. The Mahayana believed of course in the ideal of the Bodhisattva and one became a Bodhisattva by the practice of the six paramitas, the six perfections, the sixth of which of course was the Perfection of Wisdom and sometimes it was said that the Perfection of Wisdom was the only true perfection. The others became perfections only by virtue of their association with the Perfection of Wisdom. And the Perfection of Wisdom consists of especially in the realisation of Sunyata or an insight into the truth of Sunyata. So that, for instance, suppose that you practised dana, supposing you practise giving or generosity, but without wisdom, without prajna, without the understanding or realisation of Sunyata: if you practise dana in that way it would not be a paramita because it would be based upon a sense of ego, it would be you giving - the giving would not spring spontaneously from a realisation of non-ego. So dana, giving, dissociated from the experience of prajna, is not dana-paramita, it's just ordinary dana. So the Mahayana teaching is very much that all the different virtues, all the other perfections must be conjoined with the experience of Sunyata; only then can they be reckoned as paramitas, only then do they lead in any real sense, in the direction of perfect Enlightenment.

So the Mahayanists attach very, very great importance indeed to the Perfection of Wisdom and this is why probably the most important, certainly the earliest ~Y~O~p of Mahayana scriptures, is devoted almost exclusively to this theme, prajna-paramita, Perfection of Wisdom, or 'transcendental Wisdom as it is sometimes translated. And Dr. Conze has translated practically all of these, if not all of these. There are about thirty of them. He's translated all of them into English. Some are more important than others and these two which are quoted from here, the Perfection of Wisdom which is the Gathas, the verse on the Accumulation of Virtuous Qualities and the Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 lines: these are considered by modern scholars, including Dr. Conze, as the two most ancient among

all these Perfection of Wisdom texts. Whether sGam.po.pa saw things in this way we don't know because modern scholars just didn't exist in those days. But these are two very highly authoritative works. kPause)

Both of these works, by the way, are very much studied in Tibet and very much commented upon by followers of all schools. So these two quotations make it clear that some of the most important, some of the most basic Mahayana scriptures, that is to say the perfection of Wisdom emphasise the importance of being in contact with spiritual friends. So SGam.po.pa, don't forget, is giving reasons for meeting spiritual friends. So here he's given reasons from 'Scriptural Authority'. Obviously the people that he's writing for or speaking to already accept the Buddhist scriptures, perhaps they especially accept these particular works.

All right, let's carry on then.

(Text p30) fl~ece5sity~ means that you who have the quality of being an individual able to attain omniscience, must meet with spiritual friends, because you yourself do not know how to accumulate merits and how to tear the two veils of conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality."

S: Mmm . . . there's a word or two to be said here. 'Necessity' means that you who have the quality of being an individual able to attain omniscience . . . ~ll What is this omniscience? How, literally, are we to take this?

SAGARAMATI: Not literally.

S: Well, what is omniscience? I mean let's understand what it is first before trying to understand whether we're to take it literally or not.

VESSANTARA: Literally. It's knowing everything.

S: Literally, it's knowing everything. So if you take it in that sense, knowing everything, absolutely everything, I mean is this identical with Enlightenment or Buddhahood? Or how do we know that?

SAGARAMATI: I don't know where I've heard it - I don't know if its scriptural authority - it's said that whatever the Enlightened mind comes into contact with it knows, but it's not in contact with everything all at once.

S: But of course this raises the question again of what one means by 'knows'. I mean there are different kinds of knowledge; there's factual knowledge, etc., etc.

No. Originally this goes back to the Buddha himself as far as we can tell from the Pali scriptures. It goes back to what the Buddha said about himself or claimed about himself in contrast to the (jina?), that is to say Mahavira, the founder of Jainism. According to the testimony of the Pali scriptures Mahavira claimed to know

everything, or perhaps we can say that the disciples of Mahavira at that time claimed that he

knew everything. And they especially mentioned it, for instance, that he would know exactly how many leaves there were on any given tree. So it's quite clear, the sort of omniscience that they had in mind, or that the Buddha had in mind when he spoke about omniscience.

So omniscience in this sense is complete factual knowledge. So the Buddha said, again in contra-distinction to the claim or alleged claim of Nahavira that he did not possess this kind of omniscience. But he said, a certain kind of omniscience he did claim to possess. He claimed to know, from his own experience, all about Ultimate Reality. He claimed to know the way leading to that and what were the obstructions on that path. He said his omniscience extended so far. He did not profess omniscience with regard to all worldly matters. So the Buddha's omniscience is not a factual omniscience. He wasn't so completely well-versed in all mundane matters. It was a knowledge of the Transcendental and the path leading thereto in which his omniscience consisted.

In Mahayana Buddhism though, in the Perfection of Wisdom literature especially, there is another term which is sometimes translated as omniscience, sometimes as all knowledge. It's (sarvakarajñana?) - knowledge of all the modes. Are you familiar with this?

SAGARAMATI: I've heard of it.

S: This means, this refers to a knowledge of all the different spiritual paths and their respective attainments and so on, like for instance the path of the Arahant, the path of the Pratyekabuddha, the path of the bodhisattva and so on. This is knowledge of all the modes, all the spiritual stages of spiritual development and so on. The Buddha clearly knows these, too. This is perhaps a

but they then get very disappointed when for some reason, seems to forget or seems to not quite understand very mundane things, because they do expect them to know everything, everything without exception.

S: Well, of course, there are certain things even of a more worldly nature that a Bodhisattva as a Bodhisattva might be expected to know. For instance, other people's minds. If one does claim to be, or profess to be, a Bodhisattva then some insight into other people's minds or the workings of other people's minds is to be expected. Sometimes it does seem that Tibetan Lamas are unable to transcend cultural barriers. Well then one may be forgiven for doubting whether there is any sort of transcendental insight there. Whereas if that transcendental insight was there surely the cultural barriers could be transcended.

So when we encounter references to 'facts', in a spiritual text which is dealing, say, with Ultimate Reality, then we may take it that those particular facts are not being cited for their face value, nor is any view being advanced as to the precise nature of those facts as facts. But the Enlightened mind which is trying to communicate, using those facts, is just taking as it were anything which is handy as medium for communication, but it's not pronouncing thereby on the truth or otherwise of those facts on their own level, but is only using them, as I said, as a means of communication, as a medium of communication. Like if someone says to you, 'Well, meet me at 8 o'clock', well, the purpose of that statement is just to get the two of you together. It's not necessarily making any statement about time as such.

So all of the references which we get, not only the words but the thoughts in the Buddhist scriptures to things of a mundane nature,

much more detailed explanation of what I mentioned earlier on, simply the knowledge of Reality and the way thereto, and the obstacles thereto. So I think it's quite important to be able to distinguish between a purely spiritual knowledge and a sort of factual, maybe historical, maybe scientific, maybe literary sort of knowledge and not confuse these two. So a Buddha may make mistakes in history or geography. So when a Buddha's Enlightened mind comes into contact with a mundane object his knowledge of it is a knowledge according to Ultimate Reality. This is the important thing to understand here. Do you see what I mean?

For instance, if a Buddha's Enlightened mind comes into contact with a camera. His Enlightened mind knows that this camera is impermanent. Yes? He does not necessarily understand all the workings of the camera as a camera. Do you see the difference? So he may in fact have a mistaken knowledge about the workings of the camera but a perfect knowledge of the reality of the camera. So it's very important that we don't discount the latter on account of the former.

I mean the Buddha's geography may be all wrong but he may know the world. His astronomy may be all wrong, but he may know the Universe. And I think, therefore, it's a great mistake on the part of some modern Buddhists to try to infer the Buddha's Enlightenment from an alleged anticipation of certain modern scientific discoveries or facts, or alleged facts, we should say. So knowledge of a thing according to Reality is quite different from knowledge of a thing from a scientific, or historical or literary point of view. We have to distinguish these.

\mt?~SANTARA: Very often this seems to come up with people who are sort of [~uru hopping and the people who come in contact with Tibetans expecting them to be Enlightened and they may or may not be,

are to be taken as adding up simply to a medium of communication, for something which transcends them. And we shouldn't allow our attention to be diverted to these things for their own sakes. (Pause)

So all this discussion springs out of the consideration of 'omniscience'.

(Text p30)t~~Nece55ity~ means that you who have the quality of being an individual able to attain omniscience, must meet with spiritual friends, because you yourself do not know how to accumulate merits and how to tear the two veils of conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality".

In other words, we need instruction. We don't know how to accumulate merits'.

What about this accumulation of merits? Perhaps I should say a little about Mahayana thought. Here, merits is 'punya' and the Mahayana generally speaks of Enlightenment or Buddhahood in terms of an accumulation of merits conjoined with an accumulation of wisdom, of jnana. Guenther always translates this as awareness, by the way - jnana. (Pause) So what is this accumulation of merits?

MARK BARRET: The standing series of having done things which are conducive to Enlightenment.

S: Yes. It's all skilful actions, but skilful actions which are still fettered to the ego-sense. So the accumulation of merits means the accumulation of all positive, mundane qualities. strictly speaking, the first five paramitas, that is dana, sila, kshanti, virya, samadhi are said to bring about the accumulation of merits and only the Perfection of Wisdom is said to bring about the accumulation of jnana or awareness. So one has in the Mahayana Enlightenment as consisting of these two accumulations of merits which, when you become a Buddha, give you Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya, and jnana or awareness, sometimes translated as knowledge which gives you your Dharmakaya.

So the accumulation of merits in a way means the Perfection of the mundane and the accumulation of wisdom or knowledge is the Perfection of the purely spiritual in the sense of the Transcendental. So Enlightenment is, as it were, these two together. So one can say that the accumulation of merits is simply the accumulation of all possible, positive qualities of the mundane order. This is very, very important indeed, to speak of it very generally one can say that it consists in the cultivation of the positive emotions, like metta, karuna, mudita or upekha. It also consists in the cultivation of the dhyanas, the states of higher consciousness which are still mundane. So Buddhism attaches great importance to the perfecting, one might say, to the refinement of the mundane itself, because this provides a basis for the experience and the realisation of the Trans- endental, thus giving rise to jnana or awareness or knowledge or wisdom.

So we get the same thing more specifically within the context of meditation when we speak in terms of Samatha and Vipassana. Samatha, meaning the calming down, the pacification or experience of the four dhyana states and Vipassana meaning the clear or direct vision into Reality itself. Dhyana by itself, Samatha by itself doesn't give you Enlightenment. Only the Vipassana can do that. Only the Insight, only the Wisdom. But Insight and Wisdom on the basis of your calm and concentrated and integrated and very, very positive mind. So the mundane in its highest possible development is of importance in the Mahayana as a basis for the realisation of the Transendental. Therefore the mundane mustn't be sort of weakened or mustn't be crippled, but it must be developed and refined and purified and raised to that point where it can provide a basis for the realis- ation of the Transendental. Do you see that? Hence the Mahayana speaks not simply about the accumulation of knowledge but also about

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the accumulation of merits.

Sometimes it may happen that you have sort of flashes of insight. You may get them in connection with meditation or some other kind of experience but you can't sustain them. And why can't you sustain them? Because your total being is out of harmony with them. It's as though your total being rejects them. It's like a very rich food. You're so unaccustomed to rich food perhaps, that when you swallow it down, your stomach just can't take it. You vomit it up. So it's just the same with regard to your insight experience. If it's too much out of harmony with your total experience, your total experience cannot as it were assimilate it, though one mustn't take this word 'assimilation' too literally. So because it can't be assimilated it isn't able to get a hold on your conditioned being and to start transforming it. So the conditioned being itself has to be quite highly developed and quite subtle and refined and that subtlety and refinement must be well established so that when the flashes of insight do take place they can be received, assimilated and incorporated and in that way gradually transform the whole being.

So a coarse mundane being cannot receive and assimilate insight even if it's such that it wants to be developed at all, but you need as it were that more refined level, that more positive level first before the insight can be received and taken in. And that is represented by . . . punya, merits, the accumulation of merits.

So this is why the accumulation of merits is considered so important and also why Samatha is considered so important in relation to Vipassana. (Pause)

So ' . . . must meet with spiritual friends, because you yourself do not know how to accumulate merits'. You don't know how

to refine yourself, you don't know how to get into that more positive mood, more positive mental state. You don't know how to practise

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meditation and attain the Dhyanas, so to learn these things, to experience these things, you need contact with spiritual friends. (Pause)

And ' . . . how to tear the two veils of conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality

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What are these two veils? Does anyone know? These are the two *avaranas*, there's the *Klesavarana* and *jneyavarana*. *Klesavarana* - 'klesa' is defilement, 'avarana' is sort of covering, sometimes translated as a hindrance or obscuration. So this is the veil or covering of the passions. And then 'jneya' is things which can be known. So the veil or covering of knowable self. I'll explain that in a minute. So you get the general idea: that potentially you are enlightened, potentially you are the Buddha, which means, in a certain sense that you are that here and now though obviously this isn't something just to be taken rationally or intellectually. You are that here and now out of time, but why do you not realise it? Well, it's obscured, it's covered, it is veiled. So there are two veils, two coverings, two obscurations, one of passions, that is to say your craving, your anger, your fear, your jealousy; that is your veil or covering of the *klesas*, and then the veil or covering of the knowables. So what is this? How are knowables a veil or covering? What do we mean by saying something is knowable? That it can be an object of knowledge. An object of knowledge to whom or to

what? - well, obviously the knower. So you've got a knower and you've got an object of knowledge which is knowable. In other words, what have you got? You've got a subject/object division. So subject/object division according to Buddhist teaching distorts reality, because in reality there is no subject, there is no object. So, so long as you think in terms of subject and object. As long as you experience in terms of subject and object, as long as there are things out there

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able to be known, there is a veil, there is a covering and an obscuration.

So, the Mahayana further speaks in terms of overcoming that veil, that covering, that obscuration of the knowable, with the truth of the realisation of Sunyata, or the realisation of the truth of Sunyata and this of course has got its two forms, one Hinayanic, one Mahayanic, the realisation of the emptiness of the self, and the emptiness of (Dharmas?) or things, phenomena in general. Perhaps we need not go into that at the moment.

So obviously this represents something very difficult to do, something very abstruse, something very demanding. So you are able to do these two things, to tear the veil of conflicting emotions, that is Guenther's translation of klesa or defilement, and primitive beliefs about reality; that is his translation of jneya, or the knowable. You can only tear asunder these two veils with the help of spiritual friends. You need spiritual friends, and this 5fl~am.po.pa says 'is indisputable'.

(Text p.30) 'In general, the Buddhas of the past, present and future make it clear why friends are necessary, while the Pratyekabuddhas illustrate the fact that without friends the ultimately real remains unattainable'.

Who are these Pratyekabuddhas?

i~iARK BARRET: The people who have attained Enlightenment but haven't, as it were, taught anybody about it because that's spreading the teachings . .

S: Well, why have they not told anybody about it?

ALAN ANGEL: They haven't fully realised compassion. They've realised wisdom.

S: Ah, yes. One could say that, one could also say that wisdom and compassion are inseparable, so where there is no compassion there is no wisdom, not real wisdom. So therefore one could take the view that the Pratyekabuddhas are not fully Enlightened. This is, in fact, the view that the Mahayana does take, the view that sGam.po.pa takes. Sometimes, or even very often, in Mahayana literature the Pratyekabuddha, in a sense, isn't a Buddha at all. He's just a spiritual individualist. Whether there were ever any such beings as Pratyekabuddhas, it's difficult to say. Some scholars believe that the Pratyekabuddhas represent a sort of Buddhist version of the old individualistic rishi who just went off to the forest to meditate by himself without caring for others. The typically Buddhist attitude very clearly is gaining Enlightenment for the sake of all: of experiencing wisdom and also compassion, of not keeping, not being able to keep anything to yourself, spontaneously sharing whatever you had experienced or realised of a higher order, I mean, light can't keep

itself to itself and like that it communicates itself. The spiritual life is like that, so the Nahayana generally takes the figure of the Pratyekabuddha as symbolising spiritual individualism. So therefore sGam.po.pa refers to the Pratyekabuddhas in this way and he says that they just illustrate the fact that without spiritual friends, you can't realise the goal, not the ultimate goal. He's saying that the Pratyekabuddhas have gone a very long way, and they have by the way neither teachers nor disciples. They go it alone. They get a very long way, but the ultimately real eludes them. Right? No contact with spiritual friends. So this is, as it were, just to reinforce his argument.

VESSANTARA: How does this argument apply to the Buddhas? - as regards the teachers?

S: In what way?

VESSANTARA: Well, although Gautama had Alara Kalama and various other people, essentially he discovered the truth for himself.

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S: Yes.

VESSANTARA: Well that seems to, if the Buddha's somebody who discovers the truth o~his own bat, that seems to be against what sGam.po.pa's saying rather than for it.

S: No. Well, there are two things that can be said here. One is within the context of Buddhist tradition which is that the Buddha was not without spiritual friends in his previous lives as a Bodhisattva and that in his previous lives as a Bodhisattva, he determined to be a Buddha which would imply that he would equip himself in such a way that even though he found himself at a time and place where the Dharma was not known, he would be able to continue by his own momentum. Yes? On the other hand, if one ignores that traditional context altogether, one can say that yes, that the Buddha so far as this life is concerned gained Enlightenment without the help of spiritual friends. Yes. So one can, therefore, taking the Buddha as an example, say without the help of spiritual friends, yes, Enlightenment without the help of spiritual friends, yes, Enlighten- ment can be attained.

But the Buddha wasn't a Pratyekabuddha. He was a Samyaksam- buddha, so after his Enlightenment he became a teacher, he shared his experience with others, but at the same time one must say, the Buddha was a very, very exceptional human being, that this sort of attain- ment is very rare indeed. Yes, in principle, it is possible, but for who? For how many people? So the vast generality it still holds true, that no b'nlightenment without help from spiritual friends. Only the most exceptionally endowed can attain Enlightenment in this way. And also there's no need for us to. I mean, why should we make it unnecessarily difficult for ourselves? So therefore sGam.po.pa goes on to say they

~Text p.30-31) ' . . . illustrate the fact that without friends

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the ultimately real remains unattainable. And so for people like ourselves who intend to attain perfect Buddhahood it is necessary to accumulate all those merits which are subsumed under merit proper and spiritual awareness, but the means of accumulating them depends on spiritual friends; and it is equally necessary to tear the two veils of conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality, but the means of doing so again depends on these friends'.

S: So he's speaking about people like ourselves, and we know it's difficult enough to attain even a measure of spiritual development even with the help of spiritual friends, not to speak of doing without them altogether. Yes, in principle you can if you're a very exceptional human being with absolutely exceptional determination, energy, perseverance, will-power and all the rest of it. But for ordinary human beings it isn't possible and luckily for us at present it isn't necessary, otherwise I don't know how we'd get on. (laughter)

I mean, briefly you reflect well, how would we have started meditating if we hadn't learnt about it from others? We wouldn't have had a clue as to how to start, not to speak of gaining Enlightenment.

ALAN ANGEL: In the Suddhamapundika the Buddha's explaining that, is it the Sravaka and the Pratyekabuddha are just skilful means he's using to . .

S: Yes, don't forget that within the context of the Sutta you are dealing with Buddhist tradition. These ideals are found in the Buddhist scriptures. These scriptures are attributed to the Buddha so the author of the Saddharma-Pundarika Sutra or compiler of it or whatever one likes to call it, has got to take this fact into account. He's got to somehow reconcile what seem to be, in fact, contradictory

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teachings which he can't attribute, as we can, to different centuries of development later on, because they come down to him as all words of the Buddha, so he thinks that quite literally, but he's got to introduce some sort of harmony somehow, so that is the way that he does it. We don't have those difficulties. I mean, maybe we have difficulties of another kind.

ALAN ANGEL: So you shouldn't approach a Buddha and a Sravaka as, in a sense, stages of the Path?

S: In a sense, one can surely, because spiritual individualism very often does come first. You think only of yourself. You may have a problem which you may want to solve.

ALAN MUEL: So in a sense you start out on the Hinayana?

S: So in a sense you may start out on the Hinayana. There's very few people I think who are attracted by the ideal of the Bodhi-sattva right from the beginning. Some are, but many people just can't afford to think in those terms. They're so desperate. They can only think of getting out of it, getting out of the mire, making some small measure of spiritual progress for themselves. You know, they just can't think about other people or helping other people. But later on, that may come, and in that way you make the transition in a sense from the Hinayana to the Mahayana attitude. One can't even say Hinayana attitude if one means by Hinayana the attitude of the Pali texts because there it's very clear that what later came to be called the Bodhisattva Ideal is also mentioned in there and accepted. It's regarded as the Ideal. But one usually thinks of oneself first, saving oneself, as it were. One develops to some degree, then when you feel a bit better, in a more positive mood, then you naturally start thinking about other people and then you adopt more what we've come to call the Mahayana sort of outlook, Mahayana sort of attitude even. You can't afford to do it before.

All right, let's go on to the similes.

(Text p.31) 'The 'similes' are that spiritual friends are like a guide when we travel in unknown territory, an escort when we pass through dangerous regions and a ferryman when we cross a great river'.

S: So here clear with the help of similes,

but let's look at these similes in turn.

(Text p. 31) 'As to the first, when we travel guideless in unknown territory there is the danger of going stray and getting lost. But if we go with a guide then there is no such danger, and without missing a single step we reach the desired place. So also, when we have set out on the path towards unsurpassable enlightenment and are going towards the spiritual level of the Samyaksambuddha, if there is no spiritual friend belonging to the Mahayana way of life to act as our guide, then there is danger of losing our way in paths of the Non-Buddhists, of going astray in the way of life of the Sravakas, and of getting lost on the paths of the Pratyekabuddhas. But if we walk with a spiritual friend as our guide, then there is no danger and we arrive at the city of the Omniscient One'.

S: Nmm.1 'Going astray in the way of life of the Sravakas'

from the point of view of the Mahayana means accepting the teaching of the Buddha, but using it only for our own benefit and never getting beyond that attitude and ... getting lost in the paths of the Pratyekabuddhas' means not even being willing to accept the teaching of the Buddha and going it alone, maybe making some progress but never thinking about other people.

ALAN ANGEL: Getting stuck in a certain stage of the Path.

S: Yes, I mean the Mahayana would regard the life of the Sravaka and the life of

the Pratyekabuddhas as, at best, a stage, not

as carrying on the whole distance. As a stage, it's all right. All right. Let's look at the next simile. These don't

require much in the way of explanation.

(Text p.31) 'Spiritual friends are like guides, because they set us on the path of the perfections.

In the second simile dangerous regions are haunted by thieves and robbers, wild beasts and other noxious animals. When we go there without an escort, there is the danger of losing our body, life or property; but when we have a strong escort we reach the desired place without loss. So also, when we have set out on the path towards enlightenment, accumulated merits and spiritual awareness and are about to go to the city of the Omniscient One, if there is no spiritual friend to act as an escort, there is danger of losing our stock of merits either from within ourselves, by preconceived ideas and emotional instability, or from outside by demons, wrong guides and other treacherous people, and there is also the danger that we may be robbed of our life which is approaching pleasurable forms of existence'.

S: That's quite an interesting idea of the spiritual friends as an escort. Do you see that? The escort, what is the function of the escort - to travel with you and protect you. You're all travelling together so the escort is like your sort of bodyguard who goes with you on the way. And without an escort there is a danger of losing our body, life and property. 'But when we have a strong escort we reach the desired place without loss'.

If there is no spiritual friend to act as an escort there is

danger of losing our stock of merits either from within ourselves, by preconceived ideas and emotional instability, or from outside, by demons, wrong guides and other treacherous people and there is also

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the danger that we may be robbed of our life which is approaching pleasurable forms of existence'.

S: There is this idea of our merits as a sort of treasure of which we can be robbed. I mentioned before the accumulation of merits and accumulation of wisdom or jñāna or awareness. The great point here is that without Insight, skilful mental states we are never stable, are never permanent. Have you realised this? - or have you seen this before? You know there are always ups and downs in the spiritual life. Sometimes your state of mind may be very skilful, you may be full of, you know, thoughts of metta. Other times it may be very unskilful. How are you to permanently fix it in the skilful? Can it be permanently fixed in the skilful? This is the great point, the great question.

(End of Tape 1, ~ide B.)

MEETING SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

Tape 2. Side A. ~:DesmondFitzGerald

2: It's a great point. This is the great question. What about your meditation? Sometimes a very good meditation, sometimes no meditation at all. So how are you to be sure that you never slip back, that you never lose everything that you've gained? Only by developing insight. And insight meaning insight into the nature of existence, insight into reality: seeing things as they really are. No amount of good meditation, no amount of emotional positive-ness is going to remain permanent, however high the peak that you reach, without insight. And insight not only enables you to penetrate into Reality. It fixes the positive and makes the positive, too, permanent, ~BLW~BTh'~ R%~OOR~ING, C)OW }ETRIN\$ ABOUT '~KILFUt')

So until you've developed your insight, you're always in d&nger of losing your positive emotional state, always in danger of losing your skilful mental state, always in danger of slipping and losing your meditation, meditation in the sense of Dhyana experience.

TY~iTKE OHIVERS: But this insight is a product of meditation, though.

S: Pardon.

NIKE CHIVERS: This insight is a product of meditation.

S: It's not a product. I used the word a little while ago - based on. The insight develops on the basis of the meditation. it's not the product of it, but it certainly doesn't develop out of the meditation. So unless you develop the insight, you're very, very vulnerable. You can go right back. You can slip right down. Only when the insight has been really powerfully developed and you become a stream-entrant is there no longer any danger of relapse. krause)

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'If there is no spiritual friend to act as an escort, there is danger of losing our stock of merits . . . ' You see the idea? You're travelling on the spiritual path, but if you're travelling on your own, just like a person travelling with a valuable property you may be robbed on the way. Your spiritual friend is like the escort, travelling with you to prevent you being robbed. That's the force of the simile.

So who are the robbers? Where do the robbers come from? They come 'from within ourselves'. We are our own robbers. 'By pre- conceived ideas and emotional instability'. What is this emotional instability, do you think? Well, we emotional

impulses, sometimes emotionally positive, sometimes emotionally negative. So, you know, spiritual friends are to prevent you being like that. They keep you up to a certain point, a certain level all the time to prevent, therefore, your merits from being dissipated. It's really very important because at the beginning especially, (VERY FAINT) . . . all the time you need contact with people who can keep us above a certain level and unless we can maintain ourselves pretty steadily above that level, then we'll never be able to develop insight because we won't have a basis for the development of insight. (PAUSE)

Or the robbers may come from outside 'by demons' disturbing our meditation - a traditional Buddhist idea. We'll be saying something about that later on as we go through some songs of Milarepa, 'wrong guides and other treacherous people, and there is also the danger that we may be robbed of our life which is approaching pleasurable forms of existence'. In other words being reborn in pleasurable states: that is to say, heavenly states where we don't have the same incentive for practising the Dharma.

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So here there is this conception of spiritual friends as an escort. Spiritual friends who help you to conserve whatever merits you already possess, who help you to avoid your levels being dissipated or lost or stolen. This is very important. In other words, there is the danger all the time of your slipping down, always the danger of your losing your merits. So your spiritual friends are those thanks to contact with whom you keep up the level of your merits all the time. Left to our own resources, left to our own devices, we simply sink down. Do you see this? So this is why constant contact with your spiritual friend is very important. This is why the retreat situation is very valuable. This is why the community is very valuable, the spiritual community. Because your spiritual friends are keeping you up to a certain level all the time. You may not even want to be kept up sometimes. You may even resent having to be so positive but they'll get you over that, too. (PAUSE)

So 'if there is no spiritual friend to act as an escort, there is danger of losing our stock of merit'. So one should think of one's stock of merits as something which is easily lost. It's some

thing you've got to be keeping up all the time. If you don't, in a insensibly, your stock of merits will dwindle, and you'll be less and

less positive and Dhyana-like state of mind. Do you think in these

sort of terms? Or do you feel in these sort of terms? Or are you

aware of this? (SOME MUMBLINGS FOLLOWED BY SOME LAUGHTER)

So the spiritual friend is an escort. (PAUSE) All right, let's go on, then.

(Text p.31-32) 'If we have spiritual friends to escort us, we do not suffer the loss of our stock of the good and wholesome, are not robbed of our lives that are approaching pleasurable forms of existence, and we arrive at the city of the Omniscient One. This is affirmed in the (HESITATION OVER NAME OF A SUTTA)

S: This is the Gandavyuha Sutra.

(Text p.32) 'All the merits of the Bodhisattva are guarded by spiritual friends and in the (LONG PAUSE AM) HESITATION). . . spiritual friends are like an escort, because they conduct us to the city of the Omniscient One'.

S: All right. So that's the second simile. So now for the third one.

(Text p.32) 'Finally in the third simile when we cross a great river, if we have boarded a boat without a boatman, we are either drowned or carried away by the current and do not reach the other shore; but if there is a boatman we land safely by his efforts. So also when we cross the ocean of Samsara, if there are no spiritual friends to act as boatmen, though we have boarded the ship of the Noble Doctrine, we are either drowned in Samsara or carried away by its current. As has been said:

One does not reach the other shore without an oarsman in the boat; Although one may have all qualities complete, without a Guru one does not arrive at the end of the world'.

S: Carry one 'til the end of that.

(Text p.32) 'Therefore when we are in touch with spiritual friends who are like boatmen, we reach the dry shore of Nirvana, the other side of Samsara. This is expressed in the Gandavyuhasutra, Spiritual friends are like a boatman, because they make us cross the great river of Samsara.

And so we must meet with spiritual friends who are like a guide, an escort and a boatman'.

S: You see there is this sentence: 'If there are no spiritual friends to act as boatmen, though we have boarded the ship of the Noble Doctrine, we are either drowned in Samsara or carried away by

its current'.

What do you think is meant by, 'have boarded the ship of the Noble Doctrine'?

IAN ANDERSON: Well, we're trying to practise the Buddhist way.

S: Yes, trying to practise the Buddhist way or at least coming into contact with it or at least studying or reading about it. But if one doesn't have the contact with the spiritual friend, even that having boarded the ship of the Dharma, or boat of the Dharma, becomes virtually useless.

So there are these three similes: one of the guide, one of the escort and one of the boatman. Do you think that they, in a way, illustrate different aspects of the need for spiritual friends, or different aspects of their functioning?

ALAN ANGEL: A guide infers that they find the way and you do it, yeah? An escort, you do it together. A boatman, in a way, seems to do it for you.

S: Yes, that's true. It's also as though the guide shows you to the path, that is to say the actual method, the way to do things. The escort helps you to conserve what you have gained by following the path and the boatman seems to point you in the right direction. There's that sort of difference, too. (PAUSE)

ALAN ANGE~: Through the text he seems to mention spiritual friends, spiritual friends, Gurus, Gurus, spiritual friends, Gurus and spiritual friends again.

S: Well, the term Guru is used in the texts, the scriptures from which he quotes, though quite clearly he regards the Guru as a spiritual friend or one particular kind of spiritual friend. I think he is going to have something to say about that very shortly: that the spiritual friend isn't necessarily a Guru in the strict sense. All right, let's go on from that then.

(Text p.32) 'The classification of these friends is fourfold: (i) in the form of an ordinary human being, (ii) as a Bodhisattva living on a high level of spirituality, (iii) the Nirmanakaya, and (iv) Sambhogakaya of the Buddha. These four types are related to our spiritual standing in life'.

S: All right, let's carry on with the next paragraph.

(Text p 32-33) 'Since at the beginning of our career it is impossible to be in touch with the Buddhas or with Bodhisattvas living on a high level of spirituality, we have to meet with ordinary human beings as spiritual friends'.

S: Mmm. 'Since at the beginning of our career it is impossible to be in touch with the Buddhas or with Bodhisattvas living on a high level of spirituality . . . ' Why is it impossible?

SAGI({AMATI: You wouldn't recognise them.

S: So, even if you were in touch, you wouldn't know that you were in touch. So for all practical purposes you just wouldn't be in touch. So 'we have to meet with ordinary human beings as spiritual friends'. What do you think is meant by ordinary human beings? We're not quite ordinary, if you see what I mean.

SAGARAMATI: Members of the Sangha.

S: Members of the Sa~ngha, yes. At least that. All right, carry on, then.

(Text p.32-33) 'Since at the beginning of our career it is impossible to be in touch with the

Buddhas or with Bodhisattvas living on a high level of spirituality, we have to meet with ordinary human beings as spiritual friends. As soon as the darkness caused by our deeds has lightened, we can find Bodhi-sattvas on a high level of spirituality. Then when we have risen above the Great Preparatory Path we can find the Nirman-akaya of the Buddha. Finally, as soon as we live on a high

5 spiritual level we can meet with the Sambho aka a as a spiritual friend'.

S: Mmm.

(Text p33) 'Should you ask, who among these four is our greatest benefactor, the reply is that in the beginning of our career when we are still living imprisoned by our deeds and emotions, we will not even see so much as the face of a superior spiritual friend. Instead we will have to seek an ordinary human being who can illumine the path we have to follow with the light of his counsel, whereafter we shall meet superior ones. Therefore the greatest benefactor is a spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being'.

S: Why is this do you think? Why is it that the greatest benefactor is the spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being?

ALAN ANGEL: Well, since he is the only person, the nearest person to, you know, the person in question, who can have any good effect on you.

S: In fact, practically speaking, he is the $\text{\pounds}A$ benefactor. Even the Buddhas can't help you. Even the Bodhisattvas can't help - by virtue of the fact that they are Buddhas and Jodhisattvas, strange to say. The Buddhas can help the Bodhisattvas, and the Bodhisattvas can help the spiritually advanced; the spiritually advanced can help the less spiritually advanced, and the less spiritually advanced can help us! This is what it really boils down to.

MARK BAR1~AT: I suppose that in another sense, somebody who was just starting out on his career, met a Buddha he would probably regard Him as an ordinary human being.

S: Yes. There is, though, also the point that even if you met a Thuddha, and knew He was a Buddha, or at least accepted He was

a Buddha, you might be so overwhelmed by the experience - that what He was was so beyond anything that you could be - that you might be discouraged. There is that, too. If you meet an ordinary human being, who is just a little bit more developed than you, that's quite encouraging because though he is more developed than you, it's not so totally beyond your capacities. But if you are, from the very beginning, confronted by very, very lofty ideals, you may feel so discouraged that you never even make the effort; but if you meet someone who is somewhat better than you, somewhat more positive, somewhat more spiritual, then that can be encouraging. You think, 'Well, I can attain that. I can be like that person', so then, when perhaps you have become like that person, well then you will be ready for contact with somebody more spiritually advanced, then you will begin to see that the ideal is bigger and

more demanding than you had originally supposed. But you will be ready for it then.

This is why some people have said that, had they realised at the very beginning what it would mean to be an Upasaka, they never would have got ordained. (LAUGHTER) But by the time they did realise it, it was too late! There they were in the Order, with all those demands being made upon them! Nowadays, of course, people who are thinking about becoming Upasakas have got a much better idea of what it is all about. But in the early days people had very little idea at all; in fact they didn't have any idea. They just took the plunge and gradually worked up to what was expected of them. So it is, in some ways, quite good to be in contact with a relatively limited ideal initially. If you're in contact with the ideal in all its uncompromisingness, in all its absoluteness, you may experience too much. But if you're just in contact with a somewhat modified form of the ideal, you can encourage, you can get encouragement, then gradually you can cope with ideal in its more and more complete form.

So for an ordinary person, contact with a spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary person, ordinary human being, is best.

That is why it's quite good, say, within the Friends, within the Movement, for instance the Nitras should have more contact with friends outside than Order Members should because, well, Order Members might put them off! (LAUGHTER) They might think, 'Well, how strict, how ascetic, how dedicated, how devoted, how committed! No, we can't possibly do that!' (LAUGHTER) But they meet these happy-go-lucky cheerful, friendly Nitras, they're not so strict or ascetic. They represent something more accessible, something that people can go along with much more easily and happily. Do you see the idea?

NARK BARI~AT: I sometimes see that, you know, in beginner's classes. Some people are scared to talk to somebody with a kesa round their neck.

S: Yes, but they're not scared to talk to someone who seems to know what's going on but who isn't wearing a kesa. But there's also this very important point.

'Instead we will have to seek an ordinary human being who can

illumine the path we have to follow with the light of his

counsel, whereafter we shall meet superior ones'.

Because he will be in contact with others I mean, the Nitra is in contact with the Order and the Order Members will be, as it were, in contact with the next level, so in that way you are led up and up all the time. This also points to the importance, in fact to the practical existence, of a sort of spiritual hierarchy.

In our terms, the Nitra, say, has contact with the friend and then having that contact with the Mitra he can begin to bear to have contact with the Order Member and so on, gradually up the scale, up the ladder, as it were. So it's a principle which holds good all the way.

VESSANTARA: What is actually meant by, 'As soon as the darkness caused by our deeds has lightened we can find Bodhisattvas on a high level of spirituality'?

S: Presumably as soon as we exhaust this sum of our bad karma, and are no longer enclosed by it, no longer the prisoners of our own bad deeds.

VESSANTARA: And then it's suggested that there is some sort of telepathic link?

S: Pardon.

VESSANTARA: Well, in what way, in what sense do we find Bodhisattvas on a high level of spirituality?

S: Well one can presumably find them in flesh and blood or in other ways, through meditation, in dream even. (PAUSE)

There is a quite interesting teaching by Gurdjieff(?) which I've

referred to before. I think he calls it the magnetic centre. Have you heard about this? The magnetic centre. He says, for instance, you're just living in the world and you're looking for something. So you get a bit of it from here, you get a bit of it from there. For instance, you read a book. You get something from that. It's as though you take something from that book, you contribute something to it, and maybe you get something from another book. That contributes something to you. So in that way you build a sort of centre within yourself. Or you might just have a conversation with a certain person and you get something from that. You might see a beautiful scene, beautiful landscape. You get something from that. So, in a way, from these different sources you're taking in what you need in a quite literal sort of way and building them all up into something solid which is a sort of hard ball or centre within you, and he calls it the magnetic. Because this centre, this ball as it were, has a

kind of nature of its own, sort of solid. It's as though you've taken in from here and there lots of different iron filings and now that they're sort of gathered into a ball, or grown into a ball. So this is your magnetic centre in the sense that you've got the thing now with which you can sort of oscillate along and start feeling yourself pulled by some magnet in the distance, and that is, of course, maybe a spiritual community, or maybe some spiritual friend and so on. That is how it all works, as it were, at the beginning. Do you see this? Very often this is in fact what happened to people at the start. They build up from these varying sources something within themselves which eventually becomes so strong, it pulls or draws them in the direction of something even bigger, more powerful which then . . . (PAUSE)

So also there is another point, that the ordinary human being himself must be very careful. That is to say the ordinary human being who is acting as a spiritual friend. He must be really careful. Anyone who is in contact with the Dharma, anyone who is a member of the Order, anyone who is a friend, anyone who is even a friend can be a spiritual friend for

somebody or other at some time or other. And their impressions about Buddhism will be derived from you, because you'll be the only one they're in contact with. Their impressions about the spiritual life will be derived from you.

I remember some time ago when I was living at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, someone came to see me and the door was opened by a young man who was then living at the Hampstead Vihara, who subsequently went to Japan, and he told me afterwards, this young man, that this visitor who came to see me had told him, after his talk with me, he said to this young man, 'Do you realise that when you opened the door, you were the first Buddhist that I had ever seen

in my life!' So this young man said to me, 'When he said that I felt such a responsibility'. He said, 'I was almost afraid to open the door because if I opened it I might be the first Buddhist somebody had ever seen!'. And Buddhists were rather rarer in England in those days than they are now, not that they're all that numerous even now.

So the ordinary human being who acts as a spiritual friend has got a really tremendous responsibility. In a way he's doing what the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas must do. He's making a connection between the Dharma and the spiritual life on the one hand and this particular person. And he is very important to that person's whole life. He is giving that particular person with whom he's coming into contact perhaps a permanent impression about Buddhism. He's either permanently switching him on or permanently turning him off; either really attracting and really drawing him in or scaring him away. So one has to be so careful. You know, here's this poor, ordinary human being with this tremendous responsibility having to do something which even the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas can't do. So it means one must be very, very mindful indeed, and this is why when one is involved in a centre one has to be so careful and so mindful because new people are coming all the time. They may not say very much or may not even appear to notice very much but an impression is being made on their minds all the time. So the ordinary human being who is around, maybe you're the only ordinary human being who is around at that particular time, so they ask you a question and so much depends upon your answer to that question, not just what you say but how you say it. You know, whether you convey an impression of friendliness and positivity, whether you make them feel a bit welcome or whatever. As soon as you open your mouth, you might say, you become a spiritual friend to that particular person in that sort

of situation. So how careful and how mindful you have to be. So we might even say that ordinary human beings in this sort of way have to be even more careful than Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, in a sense, don't need to be careful, or at least Buddhas don't, because they've transcended all that. But when the time somebody is ready to meet a spiritual friend on a high level of spirituality, it is unlikely that he'll be put off the Dharma or the spiritual life, but the person that you are meeting can be put off it very easily, by just a word spoken by you, even a look can put that person off. So you have to be very, very much more careful. The spiritual friend who is just an ordinary human being, he's got to be the most careful of all, because he is establishing contact with both people who are, as it were, right on the edge, who make up the outermost circle or who are in contact with the outermost circle of the spiritual community: the outermost circle of course being you. So outside your circle there's no spiritual community. You're like right on the frontier, right on

the edge, so you, the ordinary human being or the spiritual friend who is an ordinary human being who is in a position to bring in people from the outside, not so much others. You have to be very, very careful, very, very mindful. (PAUSE)

ALAN ANGE~: Could the people who you have contact with outside be that spiritual friend. I mean, you can see that you are their spiritual friend, but would they be your's?

S: No, they wouldn't be. I mean the ideal of Enlightenment wouldn't be at the back of their minds.

ALAN ANGEL: A spiritual friend doesn't necessarily have to be further up the hierarchy, so to speak.

S: So to speak, yes. Well, sometimes you can read something that someone said which sparks you off or gives you an idea without having any intention, but you yourself see the meaning in it which they themselves don't see.

~~ ~~~: I must tell you .

~~: Sometimes they may say something, maybe unintentionally, not realizing what they're saying, but which sparks you. In that way you live, as it were, through your own spiritual friend. It's you who see the meaning. They may be unconscious of the meaning of what they say. Do you know the sort of thing I mean?

~~~ ~~~: Yes, though not fully.

S: For instance, you may just . . . I can't think of any concrete examples, though there are a few in Buddhist history. For instance, you might be walking down the road and, well, it might not be an ordinary human being, you might even see an animal, you might see a cat watching a mouse-hole, you might think, 'What cat is so

Sm.

He's got something which the new person hasn't, and which he can offer the new person. Sometimes it's a very great thing to be able to act as a go-between, a middleman put someone in touch, you know, maybe you haven't got it yourself but you're in with it, and you can put someone else in touch.

PADMARAJA: What's the difference between being in touch with it and having it?

S: Being in touch means it's available when you want it. It's accessible, but having it means it's within you all the time, you don't need to look elsewhere. You pass it on without having any recourse to others or referring people to others even.

SAGARANATI: Is the guiding-line for what I suppose we might call behaviour at a Centre, especially if you're taking classes, that you are mindful yourself, rather than trying, as

it were, to be 'up' as you think an Order Member should operate.

S: Yes, exactly, yes. Or as you think the ideal Mitra should behave. Yes, I think there's this whole question, now that we're on it, of being oneself is very, very important: being oneself and ultimately of course, being an individual. I don't think you can be or become individual without first of all being yourself: However 'bad' that self may be. But this is where you really have to start from. So you mustn't think in terms of putting on sort of act or pretending in any way. If it was that your current self is so unpleasant and so nasty, you just shouldn't be around the Centre when new people arrive. You must be with your own spiritual friends and have them working on you. (LAUGHTER) You should be sitting in your own room meditating or reading a good book. You shouldn't be around the Centre when newcomers might trip over you, or anything of that sort. But with that proviso, yes, it's the being of yourself

making contact with new people that's very important. Because after all, what are you going to encourage them to do, to be themselves, you know, to be individuals. So how can you possibly encourage them to be themselves if you're not being yourself, yourself? How can you help them to become individuals if you yourself are not being an individual? So that is the main thing. That in your dealings with the new people you are yourself, and let's hope it's a reasonably friendly and positive self. (PAUSE)

When this point comes to be considered: who is going to be involved at the Centre or who is going to do this, that and the other at the Centre, you know it has to be considered also, who are the positive people. You don't want someone around putting on a good act of being positive. You need someone who is positive and who is friendly, who is a bit inspiring or at least a bit intelligent and communicative. And, you know, who isn't simply conveying the right sort of impression but who is the right sort of person, the right sort of individual to be there at that time in that sort of way. So if you feel in a bit of a bad, negative mood, well, just stay out of the class then. (The visitors can corner these new people?) (PAUSE)

All right, let's read on. I think . . . find very much discussion.

(Text p.33) 'As to the primary characteristics of the four types you just know that the Buddha is most perfect in renunciation, because he has torn and discarded the two veils of conflicting emotions and primitive beliefs about reality, and is most perfect ~now! because he possesses the two kinds of omniscience'.

S: All right. Carry straight on.

(Text p33) 'You must understand that in Bodhisattvas living on

a high level of spirituality and acting as spiritual friends

these qualities of renunciation and knowledge are also present

from the first level up to the tenth<sup>1</sup>.

~: Yes. These levels are the stages of the Bodhisattva's career. The ten Bhumis.

(Text p.33) 'Finally, Bodhisattvas living on a higher level of spirituality than the eight, possess ten powers by which to receive sentient beings into their fold. These are power (i) over the length of life, (ii) mind and (iii) necessities, (iv) over Karma, (v) birth, (vi) creative imagination, (vii)

resolution, (viii) miracles, (ix) knowledge, and (x) presentation

S: Then there's an explanation of those. So let's see what the definition is.

(Text p.33-34)(i)'Power over the length of life' means to be able to live as long as one desires,

(ii) 'over mind' to be able to enter a state of meditative

absorption at will, and

(iii) 'over necessities' to be able to shower down a rain of immeasurably valuable necessities on sentient beings. (iv) 'Power over Karma' means to be able to improve the effect of Karma that has to be experienced in some world sphere, continent, form of life, manner of birth or place in life, (v) 'over birth' to be able to be born in the world of sensualit~ without spiritually departing from meditative concentration; and, having taken birth in the world of desires not to be affected by its evil, and (vi) 'over creative imagination' to be able to turn water into earth and to accomplish similar phenomena. (vii) 'Power over res~lation' means to be able to determine to fulfil one's own and others' interests perfectly and also to accomplish this resolution, (viii) 'over miracles' to be able to perform innumerable

miracles in order to instil yearning into sentient beings, and (ix) 'over knowledge' fully to know the Dharma, its purpose, its intrinsic meaning and its implication.

(x) 'Power over presentation' means to be able fully to satisfy the minds of all sentient beings by a single discourse on the Dharma in their respective languages, expounding it as in the Sutras and other works in various words, inflections and group- ing of letters, just giving them what and how much is necessary'.

S: Mmm. So this is an account of the Bodhisattvas living on a higher level of spirituality than the eight, that is Bodhisattvas of the ninth and tenth levels, that is those who are practically Buddhas. So their way of being a spiritual friend is obviously a very, very advance~ one. We need not go into that in detail. It's the primary characteristics of a spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being that concerns us more. So let us go on with that now.

(Text p.34) 'The primary characteristics of a spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being consist of either eight, four or two qualities'.

S: Mmm. This is according to different texts. (Text p.34) 'Of the first the Bodhisattva-bhumi says:

A Bodhisattva is known as a spiritual friend perfect in every way if he is endowed with eight qualities: (i) to possess a Bodhisattva's discipline in ethics and manners, (ii) to be well versed in the Bodhisattvapitaka, (iii) fully to comprehend the ultimately real, (iv) to be full of compassion and love, (v) to possess the four intrepidities, (vi) to have patience, (vii) to have an indefatigable mind and (viii) to use right words'.

S: It seems quite a bit is expected even from the ordinary human being who is a spiritual friend. All right, just look at those~.'

'A Bodhisattva is known as a spiritual friend perfect in every way if he is endowed with eight qualities: (i) to possess a Bodhisattva's discipline in ethics and manners . . . .'

What does this refer to? It refers to the Bodhisattva precepts, especially to the fact that one is observing these precepts, living in a disciplined, ethical and mannerly life for the sake of Enlightenment for oneself and others too. (PAUSE) In other words, to put it very simply, one is living like a Bodhisattva, one is observing the basic precepts, but with the overall altruistic orientation. One is leading the good life for the sake of all, that will be the simplest way of putting it.

And then, ' to be well versed in the Bodhisattvapitaka

What is this Bodhisattvapitaka? What are the pitakas? Have you

heard of the three pitakas? - the collection of the Vinaya, the rules for the monks mainly, then the collection of the Suttas, the Buddha's discourses, then the Abhidharma, so you've got the Vinaya-pitaka, the

Dutta-pitaka, Abhidharma-pitaka. The Bodhisattvapitaka usually means

the pitaka, or collection, of distinctively Mahayana Sutras, which are either considered to be preached to Bodhisattvas or to be about the Bodhisattva ideal. So to be well versed in the Bodhisattvapitaka means that one knows the Mahayana Sutras, but especially that one is acquainted with the Bodhisattva ideal.

Why do you think that a human being who, or the spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being needs to be well versed in the Bodhisattvapitaka, to know the Mahayana Sutras? Why is this necessary, do you think? Or, how necessary is it?

SAGARAI~TI: Well, if he's going to be a spiritual friend, he must have some kind of concern about other human beings.

S: Yes. Why well versed in the Bodhisattvapitaka which

suggests a sort of definite scriptural knowledge? (PAUSE) What is the purpose of that scriptural knowledge?

PADNARAJA: Kind of objective criteria.

S: Yes. Perhaps, for after all, despite the fact that he is described as possessing these primary characteristics, these eight characteristics, he is an ordinary human being and he can't speak altogether from his own experience therefore - his spiritual experience - he has to fall back on the scriptures. Therefore he needs to be versed in the scriptures. I think we can say this.

(End of Tape 2, Side A)

## MEETING SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

Tape 2. Side B. Typed by: Desmond FitzGerald.

S: And then thirdly 'fully to comprehend the ultimately real'. So what is this full comprehension? It can't be complete spiritual realisation because that would make him a Buddha. So it must mean certainly an understanding and insight of what is ultimately real, though falling far, far short of complete realisation. He's got at least some idea of what ultimate Reality is like. He's oriented towards that in a way, yes?

ThQDMAPM~: Could it be like an intellectual insight which has had an emotional impact, or had an impact which is emotional on that person?

S: It could be something like that, though I think the suggestion is something more even than the complete intellectual understanding, because he's later on described as being full of compassion and love which does suggest the emotional sides too. ~o this comprehension is, I think, certainly very far short of realisation, but not just intellectual understanding. You've also got & feeling for it, a sense of it, if you like, of the ultimately Real, that is.

And fourthly it is described as being 'full of compassion and love'. Well, this is a very great thing indeed. If somebody is really full of compassion and love, well, they've gone a very great distance on the Path.

Then to possess the four intrepidities', the four fearlessnesses, and there's a note which tells us what they are, (p.37 (14)). They're a very standard list: 'the certitude that the whole of reality has been understood; that all disturbing and sullyng factors have lost



their power for ever; that those factors which are a hindrance to spiritual development have been pointed out; and that the path out of the misery of Samsara has been shown'.

But he surely can't possess them in full because that would again make him a Buddha, but he's got something of these qualities. I think this raises a very important point. - It's a point which I was trying to get at at the beginning in connection with the discussion about the authority of the Scriptures. And that is that one has certain qualities in some measure. And one has certain skilful qualities in some measure. The fact that one has them in some measure means that one can imagine oneself having them a little more, and a little more, and a little more yet. In this way, you can imagine in a quite real way yourself possessing those qualities completely. So it is much the same when you come into contact with others. If you even have just a little more of a certain positive quality than they have, this is, in a way, enough - at least for the time being. So in one's contact with other people it isn't necessary that you should have as it were all the virtues in their full glory and completeness. If you, at least, can show some measure of them, this is enough. At least you can give those people with whom you come into contact some idea that there are such things and it is possible to experience them, and live them, to a higher degree than they themselves are doing. So this gives them hope because they can imagine that there may be someone beyond you, and then someone even further on, and so on.

So one can even go so far as to say that the presence of an even small virtue, or rather that the presence of a certain virtue to a small degree, almost proves the existence of the virtue in its completeness. You can infer from the incomplete virtue, the perfect virtue. (PAUSE)

So this is why when we are in contact with those who themselves are in contact with the Tradition, we can see back from them to their teachers, and from them to their teachers, at each level, as it were, imagining or feeling that the good, the skilful positive qualities are growing more and more. In this way we can arrive at the idea of these qualities - full and complete and perfect - in the case of the Buddha.

So for the time being even a little skilful quality, on your part, will do, provided it's a bit more than the people who come into contact have. (PAUS~)

So 'to possess the four intrepidities, to have patience, to have an indefatigable mind and to use the right words' Why do you think the spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being needs patience?

PETER COWEN: Because that is the most . . . (JLTNBLED VOICES)

S: It's the most obvious one of all, yes. People can be very, very difficult. And to have an indefatigable mind. Well again, that's pretty obvious too. But to use the right words is a very simple thing but so difficult. What do you think is meant by 'the right words'?

t~ARK BARRAT: Well, the ability to be able to express in a way which the person will understand, will take in the right way.

S: Yes. Not only that, but to avoid the words that will put him off With some people, you just use the word 'religion' and they'll run out of the door.

MARK: You saw that a bit on the flag day. By mentioning 'yoga', or 'meditation', or 'Buddhism', even worse.

S: Oh! What could you mention? (LAUGHTER)

MARK: But I mean those were just sort of three key words and sometimes 'yoga' people wouldn't mind, and sometimes 'meditation'

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they wouldn't mind

S: Yes, but Buddhism?

MARK: Buddhism

S: It seems to convey all the wrong sort of impressions. Anyone else having any such experience on flag day? (PAUSE)

ALAN ANGEL: Yes. Several. Some people wouldn't mind giving to whatever it was, they'd just put a few bob in but with other people, you'd start off with yoga and then maybe you'd mention 'meditation' and sometimes you'd mention 'Buddhism' and then they'd be right out the door.

S: So the right use of words, to use the right words, which means avoiding the wrong words. But to use the right words, especially nowadays, is very, very difficult. But again, this is expected of the spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being. It looks as though, just by trying to be a spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being you'll get to Buddhahood just that way. (LAUGHTER)

All right, let's look at the second group.

(Text p.34) 'The second group is referred to in the Mahayana- sutralankara:

To be very learned, to dispel doubts,

To be agreeable and to point out reality in two ways -

Are the most perfect instructive qualities

Of Bodhisattvas.'

S: So what does that mean? We'll just go on.

(Text p.34) 'This means that (i) such a man is a great teacher by virtue of his immense learning, (ii) by his profound discriminating awareness he dispels others' doubts,

(iii) by performing the deeds of a virtuous man he is praiseworthy, and (iv) he points out the ultimate real being's characteristics of having defiling and purifying elements'.

S: Mmm.

(Text p. 34) 'The third group .

S: Yes, let's leave that for now. Just this second group. 'To be very learned . . .' - this is quoting from the Sutralankara, that is in the Scriptures for reasons that were mentioned before - '. . . to dispel doubts,'

This is very, very important, this dispelling doubts. Why do you think that is? How does it come to be so important? Because that's the thing that people will always have. Until they get really involved and really committed. Doubts will always be arising. So if you are to be a spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being, you've got to be able to deal with people's doubts. You've got to be skilled in dispelling doubts. Have you ever come up against this sort of thing? You must have done, at least some of you. People get all sorts of doubts and what do you think is meant by 'doubts'? Not just a doubt as to whether the Buddha lived in the 5th Century or the 6th Century B.C. What sort of doubt?

SKARANATI: Like, just a basic lack of trust.

S: In what?

SKARANATI: In you, in a sense.

S: In you, in a sense. In you, in a sense.

THARAJA: Even more in your own experience of life. They seem to have, they doubt life generally.

S: When you say in you, do you mean in oneself, or in the person who is trying to be your spiritual friend?

DAGABAMATI: I mean like, it would be like in me, and then the fact that . .

S: Yes. You find this very often because people have no

confidence in themselves. And this is certainly one of the things that I notice very, very much even within the context of the Friends.

One has to keep bolstering up people's feelings of self-confidence and assuring them that they can do it, that it's all right to do it also. So the spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary

human being needs very, very much to be able to dispel the doubts of others. So how do you dispel people's doubts? What is the real way, do you think?

MIKE THONSEN: By example.

S: By example. By being free from doubt yourself. By being positive and to be able to communicate that properly with them. You can't do it by just dismissing people's doubts - Oh, well, they're silly. I don't feel those sorts of doubts!' (LAVaTITER) You can't do it like that. You've got to be able to deal with their doubts, talk to them, let them have their say, but at the same time really impart your own mood of self-confidence, and make them share that. You've certainly got to be open to their doubts and be patient when they want to go on at great length about their doubts. Doubts are of that nature. People do want to go on at great length about them very often.

MARK BARRET: You've got to be very careful, though, because that could equally answer the thing about somebody rambling on, just sort of burbling out all their problems.

S: Yes. Yes, you have to be very careful of that - yes. Especially as you are still an ordinary human being though you've got the eight primary characteristics and maybe you could be dragged down. You have to be careful. You have to keep the two-way communication going, not be at the receiving end of all that doubt and negativity for too long. I mean there are various skilful ways of breaking into it, even if you just say, 'Well, would you like a cup of tea?' Just to get things on to a slightly different wavelength and to stop the flow of doubts. I think intellectual equipment is very less necessary

than people might think. I mean people may have all sorts of doubts about Nirvana, and so on and so forth, but they're not really doubts about Nirvana. I mean, how can they have doubts about Nirvana? They've not got the slightest idea about Nirvana. (LAUGHTER) It is usually doubts about themselves. So it's faith in themselves that you have to try to build up.

So you can communicate just by feeling positive yourself. But at the same time don't be too positive because that might annoy them. They might feel it jarring. If you're just sort of bouncing and bursting all over the place, full of glee and 'joie de vivre', you know, you may really get them down. (LAUGHTER OBSCUHBS A FFN woADs) So seem a bit like them, you know, a bit dull (LAUGHTER) unfortunately. Veil your natural light.

Anyway, I think we've come to the end of our time. It's practically six o'clock. So let's just look back over what we've done so far and see if there's any point which needs a bit more study. (PAUSE)

VL~\$JSANTARA: What's the Great Preparatory Path? (p.32)

S: Ah.' The Mahayana Path is divided into various stages. The Great Preparatory Path, the (Prayoga?) marga is the path, or rather the stage of the Path, where you practise the Paramitas.

So what are the general impressions you get so far about these spiritual friends, about meeting spiritual friends in general? What impression do you get about the text, or about sGam.po.pa?

PETER COWEN: Very precise man.

S: A very precise man, yes, indeed. It's well set forth, neatly formulated. A tidy mind.

SAGATAMATI: That seems to be quite common amongst Tibetans.

S: It does, doesn't it? (PAUSE)

PADMAPANI: In a way, it's very practical as well.

S: Yes.

PADMAPANI: Very strong sort of feeling

S: I also can't help noticing that though this is a, or it is supposed to be a quite elementary work for relative beginners, there are all sorts of references to Buddhist thought, especially Mahayana thought. Do you notice that? It requires a bit of explanation about the two ~eils, for instance - things like that - or even merits and Wisdom. Does anyone feel that the Chapter is a bit too technical?

?: In places, I think.

S: The technicalities as it were get in the way of the subject matter. Do you feel that?

MARK BARRET: Yes, I thought little bits towards the end. The bit when he was going on about similes and stuff was very straight- forward but near the end, there's a lot of classifications.

PETER COWEN: Lists, it leads to confusions. So many lists. They tend to defeat their own purpose. They're supposed to be clarifying, quite often they have the opposite effect.

S: Yes, right.

MARK: It seems a bit strange, seeing as he's talking about the spiritual friend being somebody who is much nearer to you than a Bodhisattva or a Buddha and yet, lists at quite a length, this bit which we've virtually missed out about Bodhisattvas having . .

S: Right. Those are the Bodhisattvas of a higher level of spirituality.

?: Yes.

PADMAPANI: It seems almost thrown . . . . I think, in a way. Well, maybe not thrown in, but it's like it 'jars' in the passage. You go along and then you get this very lofty .

S: Yes, right After the spiritual friend in the form of an

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ordinary human being has already been introduced.

PADMAPANI (?): Yes, and then he goes back.

S: But there is also the fact that even the spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being seems really very much more than an ordinary human being. I think there is this tendency throughout Mahayana literature to get a bit carried away. Do you know what I mean? That, for instance, I remember when I was writing my little work, as yet unpublished, on the Buddhist Scriptures, I had occasion to write something about the Dasabhumika Sutra which is the Sutra of the Ten Stages of a Bodhisattva's career. One of the difficulties about this Sutra is it's very, very difficult, almost impossible\* to distinguish the ten stages, one from another, because each stage is described in such lavish terms, and they pile it on so much, that stage one becomes indistinguishable from stage two, and stage three is not really distinguishable from stage nine. And every single stage is described so superlatively. So you see the idea, that if you are going step by step, you must go step by step. So it seems almost as though sGam.po.pa himself doesn't quite do that. What if you're describing an ordinary human being\* or spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being, well, please do describe an ordinary human being because this is what the whole point of the whole passage is supposed to be about. But it does seem to me that sGam.po.pa almost doesn't do that. I think you needed really something more realistic, something much more like an ordinary human being and at the same time you needed to show quite vividly just how even an ordinary human being could function as a spiritual friend. Otherwise it all becomes remote and the important thing is to make contact, to make connection with one's own life. That's the whole principle here, that the spiritual friend is one who connects with you and the spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being connects with

you by virtue of his being an ordinary human being in the first place. So you mustn't be allowed, as it were, to go too far beyond that. You mustn't become too Bodhisattva-like, otherwise he becomes less of an ordinary human being and less able to establish contact with you and help you and be a spiritual friend for you. But we do get this tendency in Mahayana literature, as I said, it does sometimes get a bit carried away with itself, and a bit carried away with the ideal, prematurely perhaps. Do you see what I'm getting at?

VE?SM-ARA: I find that section about Bodhisattvas on a higher level of spirituality rather alienating, in a sense.

S: Yes, there is that danger, yes. On the last study retreat we dealt with the Great

Chapter of the Sutta Nipata and a number of those Sutras which the Buddha, according to the Pali tradition, was holding forth, one could say, on the b~'nlightened Man. And it really was quite overwhelming. Some of the people on the retreat started after two or three days of this to feel it quite much and a little bit of a sort of a reaction set in against it, because the idea, or the ideal, was so uncompromisingly presented. It took quite a bit of time to get used to that, even sort of intellectually. It's good to be exposed to this from time to time, but certainly in the case of a completely new person, one must be very, very careful. So perhaps we might say that sGam.po.pa really hasn't quite allowed his spiritual friend who is an ordinary human being or spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being, to be an ordinary human being. He got a bit carried away, wanting to make him better than he need to be in that particular context, in those particular circumstances. It's a sort of forgivable enthusiasm, perhaps.

ALAN ANGEL: I've heard, or read from a couple of sources, that somebody who isn't on the Path isn't really human, on more animal levels.

S: Well, what does one mean by human.

ALAN ANGEL: I see it as quite a sort of developed state really.

S: Well, I've sometimes said that one needs to become a human being before one tries to become a spiritual human being. But of course there is the point that can you really distinguish the two? There is that point, also. Can you have a completely non-spiritual human being?

?: No. S: So what makes you say that?

SAGARAMATI: Well, I mean, the ideal of a human mind is spirit- ual development. If you're a human being . .

S: Well, the ideal, but is it an ideal of beyond the present human life or is it somehow implicit in it?

SAGARAMATI: I think it's implicit in it.

S: Yes. In other words perhaps we shouldn't think dualist- ically about a natural man on to whom the spiritual man is somehow grafted. I mean, we can perhaps look at it a bit in terms of embryology. In the sense that there is this question about abortion. Then you perform an abortion or when you have an abortion, what is really happening? Are you taking the life of a human being? This is the great question, isn't it? Some people, I think most people nowadays, would say no. The foetus, the being that is in form a body is not a human being. But from a ~uddhist point of view could one say that? Well, it becomes a human being. It's able to become a human being, so can one ever really say that it becomes a human being at a certain point in the process, and before that was not a human being? Or is it a human being from the beginning, even thou0h not a developed human being?

GEAHAM \$~TEVEN: It has life from the beginning. It's the spark there in the

beginning.

~. Yes, but is it human life? Is an undeveloped human being a non-human being?

CRAHAM: That doesn't mean it doesn't deserve the right to live.

S: No, that is a quite separate question, that applies to an ant or an eel or anything.

?:

- Spark of human consciousness.

S: It's got the spark of human consciousness.

?: From conception.

S: From conception, yes. Because if you arrested development, it doesn't - well, you haven't got a monkey or a frog, you've still got a human being, though not fully developed. So therefore one could say, or one has to say, from the Buddhist standpoint that if one practises abortion, then one is, in fact, taking human life which is, of course, prohibited in Buddhism, fortunately.

So, in the same way, one can say that there is no such thing as a purely natural human being. A human being, by definition, is a spiritual being. Because the spiritual potential is implicit there in that human being. It's not that literally when he reaches a certain point, well after that he's spiritual, but up till that he's only human. Do you see what I mean. So the idea of your being human up to that point, and only human, but after that point, you become something else. This seems to be a residue of Christian dualistic attitudes, the natural man and the supernatural man, as it were.

PETER COWEN (?): So man is a spiritual being who goes through that human phase, as it were.

S: Pardon.

PETER COWEN (?): So man is a spiritual being who goes through or seemingly goes through a human phase.

5: One could say that but I think one has to be careful, otherwise you imply a sort of spiritual being who sort of falls into a human state and then has to recapture the original spiritual state. Buddhism doesn't say that. I think one does have to be careful of this, as it were, dualistic attitude. Because it often results in, you know, a dualistic attitude towards oneself and certain things in oneself are human things and certain things are spiritual things



whereas there is just you, functioning either this way or that way. Do you see what I mean? We went into this a bit in the Door of Liberation seminar. (PAUSE)

So, in a way, without in any way weakening any of the force of the distinction between the lower evolution and the higher evolution, one can say that one can't really think of a human being who is not at least implicitly a spiritual being.

VESSANTARA: How can we know that the spark of human consciousness is present from the moment of conception?

S: One mustn't think of a spark as a thing that is there. Yes? Like an object in a box. That is only a manner of speaking. But what you mean when you say that the spark is there from the beginning is that the sequence can be completed.

?: Left unto itself

S: In a sense, though guided, encouraged and directed when, of course, spiritual consciousness can be developed so you therefore say the spark of that was present from the beginning but you are not to imagine a definite object like a spark or a seed there. When you say the seed you mean the potentiality, the possibility of the whole process coming to its completion, reaching its destination.

THOMAS SANTANA: . . . (UNCLEAR) . . . my Christian condition about having, a soul.

S: No, it's not only that, it's also the structure of the

English language. This is the way we speak, though those two things are connected somehow. But in dependence on that, this arises.

MIKE CHIVERS: We've heard of how the ordinary human being goes to the spiritual friend, and the sort of hierarchy that person

person who he can best be instructed by, but is there ever a situation whereby a spiritual friend goes to the ordinary human being, if you see what I mean?

S: What about?

MIKE: Well, in a way preaching the Dharma.

S: Ah, you mean takes the initiative.

MIKE: Yes.

S: Yes. I think we haven't had much of this so far but I think we should have more and more of it. That this is one of the things I've been thinking about a bit lately. Why should we always wait for people to come to us. 'thy should we, as it were, take whoever happens to come along? I think we should go out and have a look around and so that when we spot someone who looks the right sort of person, just go up and start talking to him. Get into conversation with him. I think we should adopt this sort of attitude, too. It may work, it may not. You may be successful, you may not. But even with people who come to you, you lose lots and lots of them. You lose at least nine out of ten. And you're not taking your pick. They're just ten people who happen to come along. Whereas . .

PETER QOWEN: Windfalls.

S: Windfalls, yes. Whereas if you, the spirit blowing where it listeth, just go out and select the ten people maybe you'll get more than one out of the ten staying, as it were, with you.

~IKE: I was thinking, literature as well.

S: Yes. I'm thinking more of the personal approach. I mean some of our Friends are especially good at this, the personal approach, and it really is a very, very good approach. That you take the initiative, you just - maybe you're somewhere like Trafalgar Square in summer and there's hundreds of people sort of milling around, and maybe you see someone just sitting there on his own, maybe he's come from some foreign country, nothing much to do, maybe he looks a bit bored, but get into conversation. See what happens. You don't have to start by handing him a small pamphlet on Buddhism or saying, 'Have you heard of the Four Noble Truths?' (LAUGHTER) 'I think you'd be (interested?) in our little group.' (LAUGHTER) But just talking for the sake of talking to another human being. If you've got an~thing that is able to come across, well, it will come across. And if he's able to receive it, he'll receive it. If not, well you'll have had a pleasant chat with him and that's the end of the matter. You've not wasted your time, anyway. But maybe some- thing will be communicated. Maybe some contact, some connection will be established. So I think more and more people have to do this. And don't just make a bee-line for the obviously bored and lonely, but think, 'That looks a really sort of healthy, energetic, intelligent, positive sort of chap. That's the sort of chap I'd like to see coming along to the Friends. All right, I'll see if I can make contact with him.' And that should be more the attitude, the outward going, initiative taking attitude. Not just sort of sit there in the Centre waiting for them to come along. Yes? You take the initiative. You're more likely to get the sort of person that you need or the sort of person who can be receptive and who can benefit from what you have to offer, as it were. Because very often people who come along to the Centre come along with all sorts of misunderstandings and misapprehensions, thinking Buddhism is this,

Buddhism is that, meditation is this, meditation is that. They may get disappointed, but if you just carefully observe someone for a little while then you may be in a much better position to assess whether they, whether Buddhism or the Friends is what they need than the person who is just sort of sampling the Centre is in a position to know whether the Centre is

what they need. ~o you stand, I think, a better chance of success that way, or we stand a better chance of success that way. I think we've done far too little of this. And obviously we need more cheerful, friendly and more outward-going Order Members and Friends to do this. If you're a sort of bookish, introspective sort of person, a bit anti-social, well, you're not the best sort of person for doing this kind of work. Maybe you're not the best kind of Buddhist, either.

I think we must do much more of this, adapt much more an outward-going approach and take initiative ourselves, and just a bit catch hold of the people that we see, the sort of people who could really benefit from whatever we have to offer. It doesn't mean trying to apostisize in the Christian sense or ram it down their throats or buttonhole them and talk to them whether they want to be talked to or not. A friendly approach. It seems to me, in this country we've almost forgotten how to do this but it's very natural in other countries. It's very natural in the East. People talk to one another freely and easily, naturally, but in this country we still behave as though we're waiting to be introduced or that it's somehow wrong or rude to start talking to a perfect stranger. You shouldn't do it. But it's just our English conditioning that we've got to get over. Since we have to get over our conditioning anyway, we might as well do it in a way that is useful for the Dharma, and might possibly help other people.

MIKE (?): What about doing it in another indirect way by

commenting on . (daily issues of life?)

S: In what sort of way? What sort of issues?

WM~IKE?: Like the one you just gave on abortion.

S: Yes, this is true.

wMiIKE?: For lots of people, it is a very, very difficult

problem for them. And the only people in the ring at the moment are the Catholic somebody else.

S: Yes. They're the extreme pseudo-liberal people.

MIKE (?): Yes.

S: Yes, and the reactive, or the reactionary orthodox Catholic people.

MIKE (?): If the mode of thought was that that was something where a Buddhist philosophy or approach could be beneficial, would that not be a better way . .

S: Well, it would certainly appeal to some people, and introduce the whole conception of human development and higher evolution. But what was wrong about abortion was that it arrested someone's development as it were.

MIKE(?): Through writing in magazines or newspapers, something like that.

S: Well, certainly one could do that but whoever did it would need to have some knowledge of these things and to be able to put across the Buddhist concept in a convincing way. And lead into a more sort of general view of human development. There are all sorts of misadventures in this field, in the correspondence columns of the papers. (PAUSE)

PAT DUITHOP: I was thinking perhaps of things like plays, writing plays which we term . . .

S: Well, first of all, if one can write a play and if one can inspire people to play, fine. Also of course if you can do it

produced. There's that, too. All these things are possibilities. The mediaeval Buddhists wrote and produced plays on Buddhist themes. It's not without traditional precedence.

Anyway, I think it is really time for a meal. I think we'd better really stop otherwise Radmaraja will be having to revise his programme again

All right. Page 34 of this photo-copy. We've come to the third group of characteristics of the spiritual friend. Can some-

one go on reading, whoever's turn it is?

(Text p.34-35) The third group is mentioned in the Bodhi

caryavatara:

A spiritual friend is always

well versed in the message of the Mahayana,

and not even for the sake of his life

will he give up the excellent behaviour of a Bodhisattva.

In other words a spiritual friend is (i) well versed in the message of the Mahayana and (ii) follows the precepts of a Bodhi-sattva'.

S: So what does one really learn from this, this third group of characteristics.

What is both the quotation and sGam.po.pa's own comment saying? (PAUSE) Disregard the fact that it's more specifically in the terms of the Mahayana. What is being said?

MARK BARRAT: Well, it's the most important thing in his life, just sort of bringing out the noble qualities.

S: The basic point really is that the spiritual friend is versed in the theory and practice of the spiritual life: both theory and practice: 'Well versed in the message of the Mahayana' - that is putting the theory of the spiritual life into Mahayanistic terms - and follows the precepts of a Bodhisattva'. That's the spiritual life

in Mahayanistic terms. In other words, what in Theravada Buddhism is called Vijjacarana, Knowledge and Conduct, Theory and Practice, or Principle of Practice. So the spiritual friend is acquainted with the theory or the doctrine or the teaching or the principle of spiritual life and he also exemplifies that in his own life. He also practises, at least to some extent.

So this third group of characteristics really is the essence of the matter. The spiritual friend is one who understands the underlying principles of the spiritual life, also himself in his own

life, puts those principles into practice.

He can be a spiritual

friend. (LONG PAUSE)

All right, let's carry on, 'The three ways of remaining in touch with a spiritual friendt.

(Text p.35) 'The three ways of remaining in touch with a spiritual friend once you have found him are: (i) by receiving him respectfully and serving him, (ii) by showing him devoted interest and reverence, and (iii) by establishing for yourself the validity of his instruction and acquiring a primary understanding of it'.

S: All right. Let's go through now the explanations of each of those and then consider them in detail.

(text p.35)"(i) Remaining in touch with him by receiving him

respectfully, means to fold your hands and rise quickly in his presence, to bow down before and circumambulate him, to speak at the proper time and out of a loving disposition, to gaze at him ever and again with a mind that cannot be satisfied with one look; as the spiritual friend was respectfully received by the merchant Norbzans. Also in the Gandavyhusutra is written:

Be insatiable to gaze at spiritual friends because it is difficult to behold them, hard for them to appear and not easy to meet them'.

S: Yes. It seems as though sGam.po.pa engages in a little bit of upweaving here, as it were, because he's clearly not referring to the spiritual friend just as an ordinary human being but spiritual friend more in the traditional sense of the Guru. But let's try to understand the general principles behind it all, which is applicable, of course, at many different levels.

Remaining in touch with him by receiving him respectfully', means to fold our hands and rise quickly in his presence to bow down before and circumambulate him, to speak at the proper time and out of a loving disposition

Do what does all this suggest in just very general and ordinary terms? I mean, disregard the particular manner of expression or mode of expression.

(End of Tape 2, Side B)

## MEETING SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

Tape 3. Side A. Typed By: Desmond FitzGerald

MIKE CHIVERS: Demonstrates a respect.

S: Demonstrates a respect.

MIKE: Which you are glad to do.

S: Which you are glad to do.

MIKE: Not a sort of feeble one.

S: The original list says, ' . . . by receiving him respectfully and serving him'. There are those two things. So there's receiving him respectfully and one can show respect in different ways according to different cultural traditions. In India, as you know, you show respect by just greeting someone with folded hands. This is in very general use, likewise a lot of other Indian ways of showing respect. One the one hand it's almost like praying but on the other hand it's almost like shaking hands. If you go into a temple of any kind, whether it's a Buddhist temple or Hindu temple or whatever, you show your respect by bowing before the image with folded hands. If you meet a Guru you bow with folded hands. If you meet some older respected relation, you greet them in the same way, your older brother, for instance, or your great-aunt, you greet in bow with folded hands. And if you just happen to meet your friend in the street, if he's not just a sort of close, intimate friend you bow in the same way. So it just indicates respect, a certain pleasing deference, you may say. No one mustn't take it in too heavy a sort of manner. But again to bow down before and circumambulating here of course sGam.po.pa was thinking very much in terms of the Indian custom with regards to the Guru. We read very often in the lali texts that disciples of the Buddha, on leaving his presence,

passed round, keeping him on the right. And it seems to have been a very ancient Indian tradition, that you keep someone whom you respect or venerate on your right-hand side, that being the more honourable side. You don't bring your left-hand side, as it were, into contact with him. You keep him on your right side so if you have to, if you go on keeping him on your right it means you go right round him: you circumambulate him. And all sort of sacred objects, even now in Tibet for instance, until until recently, were treated in this way. You circumambulate a shrine, a temple or a chorten, a stupa, keeping it on your right. You don't go round anti-clockwise. You go round clockwise. According to some people this has got something to do with . . . symbolism and whatever but be that as it may, this is the custom. But the basic idea is to show respect, to show reverence which means that you recognise the other person, whether it's a Buddha or a Guru or spiritual friend or elder. You recognise them as in some way superior to you. You put yourself into a receptive attitude in relation to them. But the way in which you show that, the way in which you do that may vary according to the cultural tradition of the society in which you live. If you tried to circumambulate your Kalyana Mitra you might get into difficulties. You might just knock against someone else coming in the opposite direction. So the important thing is the feeling of respect, the feeling of reverence and the feeling of receptivity. So don't pay too much attention to, or don't attach too much importance to the particular cultural manifestation of that, or the particular manifestation of that within a specific culture.

So, ' . . . to bow down before and circumambulate him, to speak at the proper time . . . '

What do you think is meant by that: 'to speak at the proper time.'

SAGARAMATI: Being receptive.

S: Being receptive. You're not to interrupt, and to ask a question when appropriate and so on.

' . . . to speak at the proper time and out of a loving disposition...'

Why do you think this is mentioned: 'out of a loving disposition.'? Well, obviously you should speak to anybody with a loving disposition, speak affectionately, you know that's one of the characteristics of perfect speech, but why in this context? Why do you think it's especially mentioned that you should speak to the spiritual friend at the proper time and out of a loving disposition?

PETER COWEN: Well, precisely because he's a friend.

S: Because he's a friend. That's the appropriate sort of way in which you should speak. ' . . . to gaze at him ever and again with a mind that cannot be satisfied by one look.' What do you think about this? Doesn't it seem rather strange?

?: No. (LAUGHTER)

S: Well, what do you think is signified by this? ' . . . to gaze at him ever and again with a mind that cannot be satisfied with one look'.

MARK BARRET (?): Because he's more devout than you.

S: Right. He really recognises, or he already represents the ideal, as it were: just as you sit in front of an image and just

gaze at that. . . (COUGH OBSCURES ONE OF TWO WORDS) . . . image of the Buddha. And here again there is a suggestion of what the Indians call Darsana. I think I've spoken about this before, haven't I? You just go in front of some teacher and you just look. You don't even ask any questions, you just look. Well, this is not staring which is regarded as quite rude in our society. Some people might think that just looking is staring but there is a great deal of

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difference between looking on the one hand and staring on the other. So what do you think happens when you look? I mean, what's the purpose, what's the point of looking? Yes, it's all right for you to see the ideal sitting there in flesh and blood. But what else? Is it just that? I mean, you could look at a photograph.

MARK (?): You take in something from him . . .

S: You take in something from him.

MARK (?): . . . radiates off like light does.

S: \_ Yes. You take in something from him. There is some exchange. There's some communication, as you find when you do the

communication exercises, on a level, in a slightly different way. So this looking is considered very, very important and sGam.po.pa says: ' . . . to gaze at him ever and again with a mind that cannot be satisfied by one look'. Why do you think that is? Why can the mind not be satisfied by one look?

VESSANTARA: I think really when you're looking at a person, you're not looking at him just out of some intellectual realisation that he's more developed. You're looking from that loving disposition

S: That you're enjoying them.

VESSANTARA: Yes.

S: It's like the bee alighting on the flower, yes? So you want just to go on looking. The mind cannot be satisfied by one look.

(Text p.35) ' . . . as the spiritual friend was respectfully received by the merchant Nor.bzans. Also in the Gandavyuha



sutra is written:

Be insatiable to gaze at spiritual friends because it is difficult to behold them, hard for them to appear and not easy to meet them'.

So, as I said, sGam.po.pa seems to upgrade the spiritual friend in a sense. But in a sense you can't really upgrade the spiritual

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friend but he seems to consider that the spiritual friend in more formal Guru/disciple sort of situation or context. But as you saw yesterday it isn't quite necessary to do that. You can have a spiritual friend who is just a little bit more experienced, a little bit more insightful than you are without him being an actual Guru, so very much like the Kalyana Mitra in relation to the Mitra. He's much more of a friend, you might say, than a spiritual friend in the sense of a Guru, more like an elder brother: Someone a bit more experienced, knows the ropes a bit more than you do. So how do you think the things that sGam.po.pa has said in this context would work out in the more ordinary context? This receiving respectfully and serving him? How do you think it would work out? That's why if he comes to see you be pleased to see him, make him welcome, invite him in, give him a cup of tea, yes? It's more that sort of thing. Put other things aside so long as he's there. I mean, devote yourself to him, spend time with him. Make it clear that you're happy to see him, entertain him, maybe take him out, etc. Be affectionate in your attitude, be receptive, listen to what he says, take it seriously. It's all these quite apparently simple and ordinary things. (PAUSE)

And, of course, keep looking at him, so don't let your gaze wander sideways or look down on the ground, and overcome your natural shyness and bashfulness. (PAUSE)

All right, carry on then, with 'By serving him'.

(Text p.35) "By serving him' is meant to provide him, regardless of trouble, with proper food, garments, bed-clothes, bedsteads, medicines and other necessities for life such as grain and butter; as the spiritual friend was served by the venerable rTag.tu.nu . . . '

S: Sadaprarudita.

(Text p.35) 'In the . . . '

S: That's in the 'Perfection of Wisdom in 5,000 Lines'.

(Text p.35) ' . . . we read:

The enlightenment of a Buddha is obtained by serving spiritual friends'.

S: So what does this particular paragraph suggest? That you provide the spiritual friend 'regardless of trouble, with proper food, garments, bed-clothes, bedsteads, medicines and other necessities for life such as grain and bimTh-r....' What does this suggest

°5ACARA~ATI: That he's got better things to do than you have.

S: He's got better things to do than you have, so what does that suggest, in turn?

?~AGAR~YAT1: Th)ell, the more people, I think, can get from him . . . for his more mundane affairs.

~. Yes, yes. But it suggests that he is, to use the word, a monk, doesn't it? It suggests that he's the full-timer and you're

not rPbough that isn't necessarily the situation. (r~USE) In

other words sGam.po.pa's thinking, you know, more in terms of the traditional Buddhist situation where the monk is the spiritual friend of the lay person. Yes? But again, transpose that to the more familiar situation, the more familiar context. It means doing things for your Kalyana Mitras so that they can be free to do other things

which perhaps you're not in a pssition to do. Yes? (PAUSE.)

'~ell, one should also perhaps emphasise that in the Buddhist tradition, there's quite an amphasis on doing things personally for someone. Do you know what I mean? That you should personally look after and personally serve him, personally prepare his food or personally bring him a cup of tea or do anything else of that sort. It's not enough to get it do~e by somebody else or to arrange for it to be done or to pay for it to be done, great importance is attached to your doing it yourself. So why do you think that is?

PET?~ CO~~N: More care and more time, and more love into it.

£. Right. Yes. You express your own feeling, your own devotion more directly, therefore you express it better, more effectively. It's better for you and also it brings you into person- al contact with that particular person. You might well pay somebody else to do it, but then he comes into contact with the spiritual friend, not you. ~o great importance is attached to this in the Buddhist tradition, of doing things personally for the spiritual friend as an expression of your affection and devotion and also so as to bring you into closer, personal contact with him, because some- times very relevant, even very subtle teachings can be given in that sort of context, if you have that sort of contact with somebody. You can learn a lot in that way if you're very mindful and very watchful and very aware. (PAUSE) Sometimes it's said to me, if you have that sort of contact with the spiritual friend, well, maybe the spirit- ual friend has only got to raise an eyebrow at something that you do or just raise a finger and you understand instantly what that means and what he's tryin~ to convey to you. But that sort of contact, that sort of communication is possible only within that ort of more personal context. (PAUSE)

So the sutra says: 'The enli~htenment of a Buddha is obtained by serving spiritual friends'.

It's a very strong statement, isn't it? And this is what the sutra says. No doubt there are other factors involved, too, but serviw spiritual friends is given this tremendous importance. So why do you think that is?

iT'j~i%T COiEN: Because it's knocking at our ego, isn't it?

S: It's knocking at your ego. There is that, too. There's quite an important point that nowadays people often think that to serve is degrading, especially personal service - it's somehow degrading. Why do you think that sort of feeling has arisen? (PAU~E)

°~A'?1AftAMATI: Something to do with the class.

S: Perhaps it's that, yes. For instance, supposing someone asked you, 'Well, what sort of work do you do?' and you said, 'I work as a servant'. Well, what do you think their sort of reaction, or their feeling.

?: Very strange.

S: Very strange. There's been a great change in social attitudes in modern times. No one likes to be called a domestic servant now. What do they call them? They've got some quite

Th~~~,TB?. COEN: Au-pairs.

S: (LAUGHTER) Home-helps. It's strange the way in which this idea of service and being a servant to someone or something has been devalued.

SAGA?4MATI: It seems that, it implies that you don't get anything from it.

S: Yes, yes. But why should that be implied?

3AG£~AMATI: It's probably because your time is devoted not to yourself but to someone else.

~. But people are surely familiar with other situations where you devote yourself to somebody else and get a lot out of it, for instance, your children. You play, or you serve your children. You're quite happy to do that. You're quite happy to devote yourself to your children, to looking after them. And you get something out of doing that, so why are we unable to transpose that to other situations?

ALAN ANGrL: You don't like to acknowledge that somebody else shouldn't, or - they should be doing something else instead of somebody else who is, well, as it were, better.

S: Yes. I think it's very much connected with that. So that the collapse of the idea of there being a hierarchy, even a spiritual hierarchy, is probably to do with the whole egalitarian idea. That if you're all equal, why should you do something for somebody else, why shouldn't he do it for you? And that's true. If you are all equal, well why not? Or at least you do it on an exchange basis. Well, I'll do it for you today, you do it for me tomorrow.

PA~~&PM~ Maybe some people see it as some form of defeat, defeat for themselves, they sort of .

S: Well, defeat . . . carry on.

PADMAPANI: . . . a higher position and they haven't reached that, or something.

S: Well, defeat of their idea of themselves as at least equal to that other person. Yes. If you put yourself in the position of serving, you are acknowledging that that person, at least in certain respects, is better than you. And it's just that that people seem very unwilling to do. Unless you do that, you can't be receptive. Unless we are receptive you can't grow. And this is why the text says, 'The enlightenment of a Buddha is obtained by ~in-spiritual-friends~.

Because there are different kinds of spiritual friends, different levels. So you serve your spiritual friend and you grow in that way. When you grow you find that there are other spiritual friends awaiting you even further on, even higher up. You serve them, and when you become like them you find, good heavens, all these Bodhisattvas to serve. Even when you become an advanced Bodhisattva living on a high level of spirituality, you find that the universe is full of Buddhas. (LAU73HTER) And in this way you go on and on and out and out. The principle remains the same, applied to ever higher and higher levels.

There's always someone for you to serve somewhere: if not in your immediate environment, at least somewhere else.

PFISTER COWEN: I suppose when you become a Buddha there's all those human beings to serve.

S: You can look at it in that way, though that's rather different, isn't it? Because the Buddha doesn't literally look up to sentient beings.

~AGK%M4~I: It seems to be tied up with this timeline of values. It's almost like people, they don't have any values in them that brings this respect to something higher up.

S: There is that, too.

SAGAI~]Lt~ATI: I certainly noticed this in the navy, that some officers, say, you respected. You didn't mind them telling you what to do, even say some were you had a, you had a respect for them. But others, you used to really resent it because you felt like, although he had rings on his arm, somehow he shouldn't be telling you what to do.

S: Yes, you couldn't respect him perhaps as a man, even though he was a technically well-qualified officer.

~AGAtM4ATI: Yes, right. (1%~Th~E) It's almost like for us to bring this back into society, we have to change the values of society.

S: That's true. Yes. It's even quite difficult bringing it back within the circle of the J?riends. It's only fairly recently that there has been anything" of this sort around in a healthy, positive way.

I've noticed this myself in the past, sometimes it's happened that there's been two people with me, and say I wanted a cup of tea

and I've been busy, and I've said - well, would someone please make me a cup of tea and neither of them wanted to make it. Not that [90] mind making it for me, but they think - well, why shouldn't the other person do it? So sometimes it's happened that though I was busy, I've ended up making tea for all three of us. (Laughter) This is sometimes what has happened. But I've seen also on such occasions strong resistance in people's mind. I think, in the sense - well, why should I do it rather than someone else? And this is very, very strong: very, very inveterate. And something really to be overcome and quite the opposite of the sort of attitude that sGam.po.pa and the sutras are inculcating.

All right, let's carry on then with No 2.

(Text p.35) "To remain in touch with him by showing him devoted interest and reverence' is to think of a spiritual friend as the Buddha, not to disobey his commands, and to awaken in yourself devoted interest, reverence and confidence; as was done by pandit Naropa".

S: All right. Carry on straight to the end.

(Text p.35) "Also in the Ekaksarimata-nama-sarvatathagata-prajnaparamita..."

S: You've been studying Sanskrit! (Laughter)

(Text p.35) "... it is stated:

You must in earnestness awaken reverence for spiritual friends; you must be bounteous towards them and please them. Further, in your own way and status in life you must know how to act as \a friend, as may be seen from the 'rGyal.po Me'i rnam.thar' "

S: No you've not learnt Tibetan. (Laughter) But " ... to think of a spiritual friend as the Buddha." Now what does this mean? Is this to be taken literally? Can you actually do it, in fact? If you can't, then what are you going to do instead? What do you think this is all about?

?: isn't it to do with the links we were talking about yesterday?

F~: Yes. ~ut it doesn't actually say that.

?: I any aspect of it that, while your spiritual friend may not be a ~uddha, even the small amount that he may be more developed than you, is that important?

S: Yes, it's as though behind him stands his Guru, behind his Guru his Guru, and

actually behind the last Guru of all stands the Buddha, and so you see a little of the Buddha shining through the first Guru, and a little of what shines through that first Guru shining through the second Guru, right down to the present. So one would look at it in that sort of way, that you see something of the original Buddha shining down through all these people who are, as it were, of varying degrees of translucency. We can look at it in that way. But sGam.po.pa, don't forget, belongs primarily to the Tantric tradition. He was a Guru of the Kargyapa school, follower of Milarepa, disciple of Milarepa, he might have intended it to be taken quite literally because in the Vajrayana this is very often the case. So what do you think that means? Is one to do a sort of mental somersault? Is there something more than, other than this question of the lineage?

MARK BARRET: What you were saying just then, is that where they think of the Guru as not so much as a spiritual friend but the Guru as almost like a fourth Jewel?

S: Right. Yes. But it's not exactly a fourth Jewel.

MARK: No, I mean . .

S: So it's more like, it's sometimes referred to as the esoteric aspect of the first Refuge, the first Jewel in the sense that you come in contact with the Guru. You don't come in personal contact with the Buddha. Yes? So within your particular context,

within your particular life situation, the Guru stands for the Buddha, or the Guru is Buddha. In the same way the ( . . yiddam . . ) stands for the Dharma, and the spiritual companion stands for the Sangha. But there is also the fact that one can look at it in this way: that every human being potentially is a Buddha. Yes? So that potentially, or rather actually, every human being is now a Buddha. So if you could only look hard enough, you would see that every human being is in fact a Buddha, whether they realise it or not. So in the case of the spiritual friend, since he's realised it at least to some extent and has become a little bit Buddha-like, it's more easy for you to see in him the fundamental Buddha-nature which all have. So there IS no doubt that aspect to be considered, too.

MARK: And if you see in your spiritual friend, the Buddha, then in a way you have a way to the Buddha.

S: That's true. That is also very much tied up with the whole idea of receptivity. We'll be coming to that, especially that aspect, in a minute. (PAUSE)

So what one is not to think of here is a sort of superimposing upon the spiritual friend who is an ordinary human being the idea of a Buddha in an artificial way, in a way sort of projecting on to him the idea of a Buddha. Do you see what I mean? Or sort of trying to convince yourself that he's a Buddha when in fact your reason tells you that he probably isn't. It doesn't mean having a sort of double attitude.

SAGARIYATI: You mean a double attitude, do you mean sort of you feel something and at the same time you impose a reason on it?

S: Yes. Also, of course, that you don't necessarily regard everything that he does or says as the actual action or word of a Buddha. For instance, just to take rather an extreme example, outside Buddhist tradition you get someone say like Guru Maharaja who's

regarded as God by his followers. They project all that on to him. So it's not that sort of attitude that the Buddhist tradition has in

mind. So therefore it is said that in the case of the spiritual friend, if he does anything wrong, if he does anything unskillful, just ignore that. As it were, pass that over, just direct your attention to the skillful things, and concentrate on those, ignoring the others. But not that you should make the unskillful out to be skillful, or to glorify that or anything of that sort. (Text p.35)

CO: So remain in touch with him by showing him devoted interest and reverence is to think of a spiritual friend as the Buddha, not to disobey his commands.

That's rather strange, isn't it? I don't know what the original Tibetan word is, but what does one think of this, not to disobey his commands? Do you think he would command you?

FL: He might if he thought it was in your interest.

S: But what does one mean by command?

?: Eaching.

S: Well, literally command means ordering someone to do something. So do you think that this attitude or action of ordering is compatible with the spiritual relationship? This is what I'm getting at.

GRAHAM: STEVE: Yes, because you're giving yourself wholly to the person.

S: Yes, but it presupposes that, doesn't it? (PAUSE) Who gives to who? When you say you give, do you mean the spiritual friend or the other person?

GRAHAM: One is giving oneself to the spiritual friend.

S: Yes. Right. So therefore from the side, as it were, of the spiritual friend, the order is appropriate, because the person who has the spiritual friend is saying, as it were, tell me what to do. He's completely receptive. So therefore the spiritual friend can say, 'Well, do so and so'. So the attitude of command, of giving the order, is appropriate only when the person who has the spiritual friend, as it were, places himself at the disposal of the spiritual

friend or is open to the spiritual friend in that sort of way. If

there's any sort of resistance, is inappropriate. If you cannot

be ordered, you shouldn't be ordered. Yes? In other words, paradoxically, an order is plies a complete absence of force. You see what I mean? The order is not because the spiritual friend speaks strongly, 'Do this!' or 'Do that!', it becomes an order by reason of your complete receptivity. The spiritual friend might say, 'Well, I think maybe you should do such and such', but for you that is an order because you are completely receptive. So it's your attitude that makes what the spiritual friend says or does an order. He doesn't order you. Do you see the point? He can't order you. It's only you, as it were, can make him order you. He can't orer you. It's &our receptivity that makes, almost creates, the order, not anythin~ else: not anything, as it were, that he does or 5 ys.

2AThAPMff: But in its context it's good that in actual fact one is ordered, would you say?

S: \;ell, ordered in what sense?

PADMAPANI: Ordered in the sense that if one was open to the spiritual friend, receptive to that, then that's very good.

~ Yes, but the point that I'm making- is that it's the recem- tivity, your receptivity, thst constitutes his ordering. If ~ou're not receptive, how can he or(~er ~ ou? fteoause he' got no real power over you. He's not a policeman. (\$:orir' LPU~wffi;~wll) If you oon't wish to scoept his order, well, wh~~t can he do bout it? 0 it's your recettiv~ty, your wiT'&infne~s to &cce~t th orDer t~rt \_&l~S it tossi~ble for him to orDer you at all, and therefore unncoe~~~

so therefore he just expresses 1115 view, his feeling, his oBinion and you convert it, you transform it into an order on tho spot, by virtue of your receptivity. °3ut if the spiritual friend has t~ie feeliw of ordering an other person then he's not really being & spiritual friend, because say hat he thinks is \_ cod for that other person, what he foels is good, but he feels within himself any eletuent of coercion, or wanting to make that other person do that, then he's not really acting as a spiritual friend and no doubt he'll encownter resistance. ~o no force should be felt, no pressure should be exert- ed or can be exerted. It's the receptivity of the other person t'A&t converts or translates what the spiritual friend thinks or b'e~i~ve~ or sees into an order. I mean, ibis is the difference between an order in the spiritual context and an order in the social and legal context. a spiritual order i~ not enforceable. T~he spiritual order which is enforceable against the will of the person who is ordered is a contradiction in terms. %o there's no authority in this sense, in the spiritual life.

MARK: Whereas in the legal situation it's almost the exact oppo~ite because you'd almost certainly not be receptive to what they're trying to tell you.

S: Because the spiritual friend may, as it were, couch what he thinks of in the form of an order - do this or do that - but he may do that because he feels no resistance on your part. He, as it were, anticipates your translation of his view, wish or insi~;ht into an order, so he puts it in the form of an order ready for you so th&t you're not left the trouble of transfonnim it into an order yourself. (LAU'~Y£~YBR)



So there's no resistance encountered. There's complete continuity from his will to yours, as it were, to use the term 'will' in this context: from his power to your receptivity, if you like. Again

using the word 'power' not in its legal or its political form. (PAUSE)

I have used the phrase 'coincidence of wills', it's more like

that. The spiritual friend tells you to do what you want him to tell you to do, and in the best sense, which isn't necessarily what you'd like to do, but it's what you really want to do. He, as it were, reinforces your own real want, against peripheral interests or distractions. So 'not to disobey his commands'. You can't disobey his commands, technically speaking. If you can disobey them, they're not commands in the spiritual sense.

(Text p.35) ' . . . and to awaken in yourself devoted interest, reverence and confidence . .

Let's look at each of these terms in turn. 'Devoted interest'. So devoted interest in what? Well, apparently, in the spiritual friend himself and in what he tells you, his teaching or instruction. 'Reverence', we've dealt with that already, and 'confidence'. Confidence in the sense of faith. . . . as was done by pandit Narota

' Why is he mentioned especially?

VEf~SAM~ARA: Because he was put through incredible trials, or he allowed himself to be put through incredible trials for his development.

?~: Yes. Naropa stands for the ideal disciple. And of course he became one of the greatest of Gurus; in the Kagyupa tradition. Naropa was the Guru of Marpa who was the Guru of Nigamajyoti, and the Guru of Shambhushakar, the author of this text. ~o 'You must in earnestness awaken reverence for spiritual friends'.

Do away with all egalitarian ideas, that you're equal to everybody: everybody's equal to you. You've nothing to learn from anybody and nobody's better than you are. Do away with all these ideas. ' . . . in earnestness awaken reverence for spiritual friends; you must be bounteous towards them and please them'.

Give. Be generous and please them. 'And please them' - why do you think 'please them'? What is meant by pleasing them? Does it mean a sort of egoistic gratification, or rubbing them up the right way? ~hat does it mean? - pleasing them, pleasing spiritual friends. Can they be pleased? ought they to be pleased? Or are they in a state of sublime indifference all the time? (LAUC-HTER) ~ihat is meant by pleasing them?

VEQSM~TAhA: They have your best interests at heart, then when you follow the Path, they'll be pleased for you.

S: Yes. You can please them in that way. But just that? Is there anything more to it than that?

P~TT&R CO';~N: If your friends, it's the nature of friendship that you try to please one another all the time. It works both ways.

S: Right. Yes. So what happens when you please someone?

~AGAR~ATI: ~ympathetic joy.

S: Sympathetic joy. And what happens when there's sympathetic joy?

PADNARAJA: You're seeing them for what they really are, 55 a person.

S: Yes, you're seeing them for what they really are a~ a person, but even more than that.

?: Rewarding.

S: It's rewarding but, in what sort of way?

SAGATH~iATI: Your level of consciousness actually rises.

S: Your level of consciousness actual%T rises, yes. But more than that.

ALAN ~GEL: Basis for equanimity.

S: Maybe, but I wasn't thinking of that. No.

Communication becomes possible. Yes? Communication becomes possible. If you please the spiritual friend and then he pleases you and you are both in a state of, as it were, sympathetic joy, then communication is established and communication flows, you learn from him more. I mean, he is not only willing but more able to give you and you therefore receive more. This is the important point here. That if you please the spiritual friend it makes it more easy for him to co~imunicate with you. Therefore you learn more. You learn 'better. In other words, pleasing one another, p~.easin£. each other, or in this context you're pleasing him, opens the channels of communication. %~here's a very interesting little passage in the Great Chapter of the ~utta Nipata, which '~~re studied some day~ ago where a certain Brahmin is not sure whether the Buddh~ is, in fact, the Buddha, the Enli~:;htened One, or whether he is just a °~'reat man, a superman, a'mahapurisa': so he reflects and he reflect that he has heard that the '?:uddhas reveal their true self, their true nature if they.' are praised. ~o it's a little bit like this. The attitude of praising' is rather like the attitude of plea&..incr~. wrs~is- ing is sort of pleasing in words. So if you praise a Buddha he cs.n- not but show his real nature. So we dwelt upon this c'uite a bit, ~e talked about this quite a bit, we discussed this quite a bit and I made the point, as it were, ths~t even s. Buddha cc'~nnot show his tri~e nature i~nless the situation is riKlft &nd unless the situation 15 D55- itive, ~I.~less it, as it were, allows hi~ to do that.

\$0 it's much the ss.me on maybe another level with the ~~pirtu~m° friend. If you pl~a~e the spiritual friend you, a~ it :ere, ~s~~it him to comtnunicate witb you more effectively. You ~'n&ke it posabile for him to comrnunicate with you more effectively than if you displec%se him. To displease is to set ut a barrier to communication, and to please is

to open the channels of communication. And 'to please'

here is not meant to do anything to satisfy or to gratify in an egoistic way. It must be something on quite a different level, something much more open, much more free, more sincere, more genuine, more warm and so on, and obviously involving genuine metta, involving genuine mudita, too, even genuine equanimity, upeksha. (IAU??)

So if you please somebody, you make them more open to you. And therefore communication flows more freely. If you please a spiritual friend you make it more easy for him to communicate with you, for his nature to come out, as it were, his true nature to come out and you gain in the long run. You are the one who benefits from that.

(End of Tape 3. Side A)

S: This is why sometimes in the East they make offerings to teachers before asking them to teach. The idea is they please them, so if they're pleased in this way, we naturally and easily. The more you give, the more you can receive. If your attitude towards the spiritual friend is positive, as expressed in pleasing and praising, then it just makes it much more easy for him to communicate with you. And as I said, that is to your benefit.

And:

(Text p.35) 'Further, in your own way and status in life must know how to act as a friend, as may be seen from the . . . ' (so and so, and so and so).

So what do you think S.Gam.po.pa's saying here? What is he referring to? . . . in your own way and status in life, you must know how to act as a friend

PETLCOE: Different methods are appropriate to different levels of society.

S: Yes, even in your ordinary social life, even within your family, be a good friend to the people with whom you come in contact. In this way, you will gain an initial experience of the practice of friendliness. Don't think that only the spiritual friend has to be a spiritual friend or a friend, you too in your own way, in the course of your own life, be a friend to other people. If you can't be a spiritual friend, at least be a friend in the quite ordinary, straightforward social sense. (LONG PAUSE)

There's also the point, to go back just a little bit, that whatever one gives or whatever one does with regard to the spiritual

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friend must be disinterested. It mustn't be, as it were, of the nature of a bargain. You

mustn't think, as it were, 'Well, if I do all this for him, if I please him and so on and so on, then he'll have a very positive attitude towards me and I shall get a lot of extra instruction'. It must be really spontaneous and, as it were, for its own sake that you do things for the spiritual friend or try to please the spiritual friend, not with a view to what you may get out of it, even spiritually. You do it for its own sake. You give for the sake of giving. You serve for the sake of serving, just because you enjoy it.

ALAN ANGEL: It seems a bit contradictory then to list it all out, because as a nature of spontaneous . . . .

S: All right. Supposing the spontaneous whatever it is just doesn't come? Supposing it isn't there?

ALAN: Then one tries to . . . .

S: Yes, you've got to make the person aware of the possibility intellectually or in general, by this sort of work, but once he's got the point, well, he can just do it for the sake of doing it, and forget all about doing it for particular reasons. And he may know if you ask him, yes, the result will be such and such, but he's not bothered by that at all. He's doing it for the sake of doing it.

GRAHAM STEVEN: Does sometimes this doing require effort as well?

S: Yes, sometimes it may be because there is one's, as it were, lower nature, you know, all the time in operation. So, yes, especially at first there will be a certain amount of resistance: 'Why should I go along? I can go along tomorrow, why bother to go along today?'. And, 'Well, he won't mind if I don't do it. I know I promised to, but he'll understand, probably'. Sometimes you have to force yourself a bit. You can't be completely spontaneous right

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from the beginning. But if that natural feeling of friendliness is there to begin with, then it's more easy to develop it . . . why do you choose a particular person as your spiritual friend, well, there must be some liking, some attraction, some regard, so you've got that to start with or to start from. It's not as though you're suddenly presented with it, or told that he's going to be your spiritual friend, now you've got to do this, that and the other.  
(PAUSE)

PADMAPANI: Certainly, you know, from the intellectual understanding of how one does things, you know, because one wants to, if one's out of touch with that, through the teachings, through the Dharma, one can establish true contact with one's feelings.

S: Right, yes.

PADMAPANI: Which is the basis for giving.

S: But if you're out of contact with your feelings, well, you can't do anything from your feelings. You have to re-establish contact with your feelings which may involve or

which will involve the understanding intellectually the necessity, or at least the desirability, of re-establishing contact with your feelings and doing things from your feelings more.

PADMAPANI: Well, I meant, in context of what Alan said, about how you understand (truth?)

S: Yes. Right. Well, let's carry on with number three.

(Text p.35-36) "To remain in touch with him by establishing the validity of his instruction~and to acquire a primary understanding of it's means to realise the validity of his words while you come understand his instruction by hearing and thinking about it and by making it a living experience. For by so doing he is extremely pleased. As is declared in the Mahayana- sutralankara:

'He who understands the instruction as it has been given to him

Makes the spiritual friend's mind extremely pleased.

When such a friend is pleased, we attain Buddhahood, as is

related in the 'dPal.'byun.gi rnam.thar':

When spiritual friends are pleased, one attains the enlightenment of all Buddhas'.

S: All right. Let's stop there for the moment. (LONG PAUSE) All right, 'To remain in touch with him by establishing the validity of his instruction'.

What is meant by 'establishing the validity of his instruction' How does one establish the validity of his instruction?

PADMAPANI: By putting it into practice.

S: By putting it into practice, but more than that, even - realising it for oneself. You don't really understand the validity of his instruction, or know the validity of the instruction unless you've realised it for yourself. And how do you do that? You do that, of course, by practising, and sGam.po.pa refers especially to 'by hearing and thinking about it and by making it a living experience'.

This is a very common, even standard sort of sequence of steps which you get repeatedly in the Pali texts, in the form of the three kinds of understanding, the three kinds of knowledge or wisdom, even. Do you remember those? Does anyone know what those are? There's hearing, the understanding or wisdom which comes by hearing - the wisdom or understanding which comes by pondering or reflecting - and then by meditating upon and realising. Have you come across these before? These are very common, indeed. So, you realise the validity of the words of the spiritual friend by practising yourself which means by, first of all, hearing what he says, just hearing, listening, then turning it over in your own mind, understanding it, then putting

it into practice and realising it, especially with the help of meditation. I've spoken about all these things at some length before. I've emphasised that hearing is considered very important, just listening - that's the first stage - just taking in. I've mentioned also that in Pali and in Sanskrit, the word for disciple is 'Savaka' or 'Sravaka' which means 'One who hears, One who listens'. To be able to hear, to be able to listen is quite an art. It's quite an accomplishment. Quite a lot of people just can't hear, they can't listen, they can't take in, they're not receptive. So this is very, very important. You just listen to begin with to what is being said, and really take it in. And then having listened, having taken in, you then turn what has been said over in your mind. You reflect upon it. You meditate upon it, meditate in the sense of 'think about it'. You look at it from different points of view and you penetrate it thoroughly, intellectually. You understand it. This is the wisdom or understanding~which comes by reflection. And then, you start meditating upon it, you make your mind concentrated. You elevate your mind as much as you can, even to a Dhyana level, and then your concentrated, elevated mind you turn to this particular topic which you've heard, this particular instruction which you've heard, on which you've reflected, now with your meditative consciousness you sort of penetrate into it and really realise it. So in this way you have the wisdom that comes by hearing, (pasutamaya?) prajna, the wisdom that comes by thinking, cittamaya prajna and the wisdom which comes by meditative transformation or bhavanamaya prajna.

So these terms come again and again in the Pali and most of the Sanskrit and the Tibetan texts. They are standard Buddhist teaching: to hear, to reflect upon and to meditate on and realise. (PAUSE)

(Text p.35) 'For by so doing he is extremely pleased'.

When you realise the validity of his words in this way by virtue of your own practice, your own listening, reflecting and meditating on and realising, then the spiritual friend is extremely pleased. (Text p.35-36) 'As is declared in the Mahayana-sutralankara

He who understands the instruction as it has been given to him Makes the spiritual friend's mind extremely pleased'. And 'When such a friend is pleased, we attain Buddhahood~ as ~ related in the . . . (such and such)

When spiritual friends are pleased, one attains the enlightenment of all Buddhas'.

Rather like serving spiritual friends. Not only can you serve spiritual friends at ever higher and higher levels, you can please them also at higher and higher levels, by your higher and higher practice and attainment and realisation. So that even can be spoken of as the way to Enlightenment.

PADMAPANI: In fact, isn't that the Way of Enlightenment of the Mahasattva Bodhisattvas, eternally praising the Buddhas - that's their spiritual practice.

S: Yes. One could even say that, that just praising is a spiritual practice in itself. Whereas to praise means to praise certain things: you praise certain positive qualities, certain

spiritual attributes, how can you praise them if you don't see them? How can you see them if you don't have the eyes to see them? How can you see them if you're not a bit like that yourself?

PADNAPANI: Surely you could praise something although you, say you didn't quite know what it was?

S: Ah, didn't quite know, but you must have some idea about it, at least.

PADMAPANI: Yes.

S: So there must be some affinity on your part for that otherwise you couldn't even praise. But among the modern European poets, Rilke attaches great importance to praise. He speaks a bit  
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about this in his poetry. The importance of praising, recognising higher attributes and responding to them positively. He regards, quite rightly, he regards praise as a very great thing. I mean the ability to praise is a very great thing. You often find this. People find it much more easy to criticise than to praise, one might even find it oneself. Do you notice this? (General agreement) Praise is something exceptional. Criticism is something quite common~

PETER COWEN: I think it is a national characteristic of the English.

S: To praise or to criticise?

PETER: To criticise, rather than to praise, so that they don't like particularly being praised, they don't like being praised so consequently they don't like praising.

SAGARAMATI: But isn't that something natural in a way. I mean if higher qualities are rarer, you can only say that praising will be rarer than criticising,

S: But don't you think that there is more scope for praise than people usually think? (LAUGHTER) For instance, if someone has been praised, in our presence, or if we praise someone ourselves, we're usually not content to let it rest there, we say, 'Well, he's got such and such good qualities, yes, it's true. He's very good at this, very good at that, but . . . ' We have to bring in something, as it were, to redress the balance, We can't just leave it at praise. And it also occasionally happens that if someone's being criticised for a very long time somebody may bring in a very small point that, some quite small item that can be said in his favour just to slightly redress the balance. But very often it's quite slightly, and sometimes the criticism may be just left as criticism and no positive point mentioned at all. I think this is a great pity.

MIKE CHIVERS: I think you see it in the quality of workmanship, over years, because we have got this negative atmosphere, it's criticised, the quality of workmanship gets lower and lower; where there are positive good workmanship, crafts, they're praised and they seem to be reinforced.

S: Yes. Because if you praise somebody's work, well, he feels like working well, he feels like working better.

MIKE CHIVERS: Yes.

S: Giving of his best. But if he feels it's not appreciated, why should he bother? People don't know the difference between good work and bad work. You know, why give them good work? Well, they never praise it, and they don't even show that they know the difference.

MIKE CHIVERS: Job satisfaction, this seems to be just the financial gain.

S: Well, very often there's no one to praise. You're working on the assembly line, who's going to praise you? You might have a voice come booming through the loudspeaker, (LAUGHTER) 'Good piece of work, Hand number 3570!' (LAUGHTER) But usually by the time the piece of work reaches the end of the assembly work, well, no one is going to know exactly who did it or who is to be praised. So again you don't get any praise. It reminds me of a story about a well-known opera singer who came off the stage very delighted one night after the opera. She said, 'What do you think? They didn't clap me quite so much tonight.' And she seemed very pleased about it. So one of her friends was quite surprised. 'Why are you so pleased they didn't clap you quite so much?' She says, 'Well, I didn't sing quite so well!' (LAUGHTER) 'They know the difference.' So she appreciated it, since the fact that they clapped her a bit less when she sang just a little bit less than usual meant that when she did sing really well, their appreciation was genuine. They knew that she was singing well. They knew the difference between good and bad singing. They really were in a position to praise or to applaud discriminatingly, and she appreciated that. She felt really appreciated by the fact that they clapped her just a little bit less. So a real workman will feel this, if you say well, 'It's not quite as good as usual, you know,' he'll appreciate that. 'Ah, they know the difference, they know when I do good work.'

MIKE CHIVERS: It's almost encouragement, isn't it?

S: Yes, it's almost an encouragement. Yes. Well, you know, if you just say to someone, 'Well, that's not quite up to your usual standard, is it?' I mean if someone cooks up a meal you say, 'Well, it's not bad but you've done much better, you know'. (LAUGH~R) Or if you behave in a certain way and someone says, 'Well, that wasn't like you at all. You don't usually behave like that. What happened?' So that can be felt as an encouragement. You're indirectly appreciating, appreciating the way the person usually behaves or normally behaves, But if you say nothing, well, they'll think there's no real difference. Or you don't notice any difference so what does it matter if they behave not quite so well? No one seems to notice it or to recognise it, doesn't seem to make any difference, so why bother to behave well, a little bit less well will do apparently.

MIKE(?): How can you sublimate the ego with praise? How can you praise



somebody (at this rate?)

S: It depends very much on the level and the type of praise. It must be sincere. That is important. If your praise is non- egoistic, I think that the tendency will be for the other person to receive it non-egoistically. If you feel self-conscious about giving praise, he'll feel self-conscious about receiving praise. If your praise is obviously spontaneous and natural and genuine, I think almost any person who is reasonably healthy and normal will take it in the right sort of way. It mustn't be effusive or gush- ing or insincere or a bit put on or a bit forced. So it isn't easy to praise.

MIKE(?): Then again we've got to practise it.

S: Yes. Right.

MIKE(?): It's got to be practised.

S: You sometimes make a point of, well if you can't actually praise, well just say, 'That is a good piece of work~, just like that, in a matter-of-fact sort of way. But not give the other person the impression that you're buttering them up, or trying to get round them or that you'll be asking them for something a bit later on: asking them to do something for you a bit later on and you're trying to get them into a good mood so that you can ask. You must really avoid giving that sort of impression. Your praise must be really genuine. It's positive appreciation, expression of your positive appreciation of the other person, or of something that they have done or said. And again, that means there should be metta in the background. How can you really praise without metta? If praise comes easily to your lips it means there is quite a bit of metta in you, towards a particular person or just metta in general.

MIKE(?): It's rejoicing in the merits of . . .

S: It's rejoicing in the merits of other people. (TEXT p.36) 'He who understands the instruction as it has been

given to him

Makes the spiritual friend's mind extremely pleased'.

Just ponder these words as it has been given to him. I'll be back in a minute. (LAUGHTER) How do you know that you've understood the instruction as it has been given to you? How do you know that you've correctly understood? How do you know that the under- standing that you have now is the same as the understanding that the spiritual friend had?

PAI-PANI: Because he's extremely pleased. (LAUGHTER)

S: Yes.

MIKE(?): It's an intuitive feeling.

S: It's an intuitive feeling, yes.

MIKE(?): That you get within yourself which corresponds to the person you got it from.

S: Yes. If you understood as he has understood or as he understands, yes, he'll be very, very pleased. And when you see that sort of pleasure, that flash of pleasure even, then you'll pick up that, yes, you've got what he had, or you've got what he has, that it has been communicated, a genuine communication has taken place. It will be an intuitive feeling of that. (PAUSE) So:

(Text p.36) 'He who understands the instruction as it has been given to him

Makes the spiritual friend's mind extremely pleased'.

If you see that he's extremely pleased, then you know that you have understood the instruction just as it was given to you, without any sort of distortion, any sort of, what shall I say? - not only any distortion - without any diminution and weakening.

Perhaps you remember even from your schooldays, you know, when you've not understood something that your teacher has explained, what sort of expression passes across his face? (LAUGHTER)

Well, he knows that you haven't understood, yes? Even though he's explained it for the tenth time~ You haven't understood.

MARK(?): Sort of blank expression.

MIKE CHIVERS(?): Suicide. (LAUGHTER)

S: It's a sort of weary resignation, yes? It's something like that. He can't be angry with you. He just feels a bit fed up, really, he'll have another go, he'll try and you can see that he thinks you're ~eally stupid. Anyway, he'll try and explain it just once more in very simple terms, you know, words of one syllable, to see if he can possibly get it across to you. But when you have understood, how does he look? (LAUGHTER)

Pleased. You know that you've understood because of his look. (LAUGHTER) So it's much the same on the spiritual level. When you see the smile of extreme pleasure on the face of the spiritual friend, you'll know that yes, you've understood. You can see that he has understood that you've understood. And then you know that you've understood. So you know that your understanding is the same as his understanding. And again, as it says, 'When spiritual friends are pleased, one attains the enlightenment of all Buddhas'.

All right, let's carry on: 'Asking a spiritual friend for the Dharma .

(Text p.36) 'Asking a spiritual friend for the Dharma is done in three ways: (1) the preliminary step, (ii) the actual situati~ and (iii) the consequence.

(i) The preliminary step is to make the request with a mind bent upon enlightenment.'

S: Ah, so what do you think that means? ' . . . to make the request . . .'. 'The preliminary step . . .' in asking the spiritual friend for the Dharma, ' . . . is to make the request with a mind bent upon enlightenment'. So there are two parts here: making the request and making it with a mind bent upon enlightenment. Why do you think making the request is mentioned? What does that signify?

ALAN ANGEL: You've got to make the effort. You've got to do it.

S: You've got to make the effort. You've got to approach the spiritual friend. You've got to be receptive and to give expression to your receptivity by asking. Do you think this is always the case? Do you think you've always got to make a specific request for the Dharma? (PAUSE)

TWO VOICES(?): Yes.

VOICE(?): No.

S: Well, for instance, there are instances in the Pali scriptures which suggest otherwise, for instance, quite often it is related how the Buddha goes to the door of his dwelling, his Vihara, and calls to the monk and the monks come, the monks gather, and then he speaks to them, he teaches them. They haven't made any request. So do you think this contradicts what sGam~po.pa says?

ALAN ANGEL: In a way he picks up an unspoken request.

S: Ah, yes. You would say that the fact that they are leading that sort of life, the fact that they are disciples means that they are in a permanent state of receptivity. They're always asking for the Dharma. They're always asking for the Dharma, so that is understood. That request is always there. So the Buddha is able to speak any time.

PADMAPANI: I was going to say, because the Buddha is an Enlightened Being he would know, in that sense, what their needs are.

S: Ah, but 'request' suggests an expressed need. Yes? The spiritual friend should know what the needs are. Perhaps one can say that asking for the Dharma, making the request for the Dharma is just making more specific, means intensifying that general attitude of receptivity and asking for the Dharma.

PAWAPANI: I think I meant more, not such a lofty plane.

S: And making it 'with a mind bent upon enlightenment'. This emphasises the purpose with which you make the request, the intention with which you make the request, not for the sake of making conversation, not for the sake of intellectual interest, but you ask for the Dharma, you make the request for the Dharma for purely spiritual reasons, to help you in your attainment of Enlightenment. This is your sole reason. Not just for the sake of information. But really you can't ask for the Dharma in any other way, if you're asking, say, for historical information, for literary information, you're not asking for the Dharma. If you're asking for the sake of intellectual curiosity, you're not asking for the Dharma. You can only ask for the Dharma if your mind is bent upon enlightenment. If your mind is not bent upon

enlightenment, you're asking for something else. You're asking for information or you're asking that your curiosity should be satisfied, you're not asking for the iharma.

GRAHAN STEVEN: Is it not very difficult here in the West, to put that request forward as there's no monastic set-up as yet?

S: Well, no spiritual friends. The monastic set-up, this is a relatively formal point, but no spiritual friends. You can't go to a scholar in Pali or Sanskrit, even a scholar in Buddhism, who isn't even himself a Buddhist, and make a request to him for the iharma, you can't do that. He hasn't got the iharma to give. He's only got the words of the iharma which is quite a different matter. So he might be able to explain to you about the words of the iharma, and tell you what they mean or what he thinks that they mean, but he can't give you the iharma and you can't ask him for the ~harma~ (PAUSE)

And you can only ask for the Dharma if you yourself want enlightenment and he can only give you the Dharma if he himself either has gained enlightenment or is more on the way to that~than you are. So unless both of you have this common orientation in the direction of enlightenment, no requesting of the Dharma and no giving of the Dharma\* no communication of the Dharma is possible.

That is possible only within a situation within which both of you accept the ideal of enlightenment. And at least one of you embodies it to some degree. Otherwise no communication of the Dharma, only sharing of information about Buddhism, which is quite

a different thing. 30 communicating the Dharma is an essentially

spiritual matter. It's a sparking off that's not just a conveying of information whether about the history of Buddhism or the doctrines of Buddhism, or the practices of Buddhism.

Of course, you may get something i~ he reproduces the words, quite faithfully, then the words themselves do mean something. They were originally spoken by the Buddha or a great teacher. You may get something despite the person who is conveying the words to you almost. But he's not giving you the Dharma, the Dharma is being given to you through him without his knowledge. He thinks he's just telling you about Buddhism. But actually ~, on account of your greater receptivity, are getting through Buddhism, the Dharma, or through history, you're reaching out to enlightenment. (PAUSE)

Sometimes I've found in the past, especially in my younger days Iwhen there weren't all that many books about Buddhism, sometimes I've got great inspiration from~books written by people who were opposed to Buddhism, because by seeing what they were opposed to I could see what Buddhism was and I was getting inspiration from that (LAUGHTER) which wasn't their intention at all. They, for instance, would write you know, Buddhism is a really strange and mysterious and difficult to understand sort of teaching, and a bit reprehensible, too, not very reliable. Why? Well, it doesn't believe in God. I thought, 'Well, that's wonderful, Buddhism doesn't, believe in God'. I responded to this quite positively. (LAUGHTER)

So I read white where they intended black, and vice versa. So sometimes you can pick up something of the true nature of the Dharma and respond to it, even in the midst of, or even despite of, quite serious distortions and negative reactions on people's parts. But still, I wouldn't advise anyone to try to do that. It's no longer necessary, anyway.

- (Text~p~;36)~ 'h~° ~r-tlimentary step is to make the request'(for the Dharma) 'with a mind bent upon enlightenment'.

(ii) The actual situation is to ask as if you were ill, to

regard the Dharma as the medicine and the spiritual friend as

the physician and to follow the Dharma as the cure of the

disease'. (PAUS~)

S: 'The actual situation is to ask as if you were ill . . .' Suppose you are quite seriously ill. Suppose you're in great pain. Suppose that you're suffering. Supposing you really want to get well. In what sort of way, in what sort of spirit would you ask for the medicine. treatment? You must feel like this when you ask for the Dharma. Something which you really need, something which will really allay your suffering, otherwise you can't really ask, it's just a matter of words. I quoted on the last seminar I gave, something which someone once said to the effect that if someone asks you a question about the Dharma, don't answer him for half an hour. Just see whether he makes, asks the same question again. The person said that in nine cases out of ten they don't even remember. They'll just forget to ask again. So how urgent was the question? If they don't get their answer immediately, they forget all about their question. So how urgent was the question? It couldn't have been very urgent at all. But if you're ill, if you're in pain and suffering and you ask for medicine you'll go on asking until you get it. If the doctor doesn't say anything the first time, you'll go to him again and again because you are in pain. It's much like that asking for the Dharma. If you really want~t, you'll go on asking and asking and asking until you get it. You won't be put off because you're in pain, you're suffering. You need it. It's not a luxury, it's a necessity. So 'The actual situation is to ask as if you were ill, to regard the Dharma as the medicine

The Dharma is something really precious, something really necessary 1 . . . and the spiritual friend as the physician and to follow the Dharma as the cure of the disease . . . I

There's a bit of a parallel here clearly with the Four Noble Truths. Do you see this? The truth of Dukkha, that's being ill - the Dharma as the medicine, that is following the Eight-fold Path, etc The state of being ill, the cause of the illness, the cessation of the illness or state of health and the way leading to that, the sort of medical analogue of the Four Noble Truths.

You really do find this, though, that very often people ask questions, especially relatively new people, in a very sort of tired, weary sort of way as though they weren't really interested at all, and didn't really care whether you answered them or not. I used to get quite a bit of this when I was around in London in the old days. Anybody else come across this? People won't really ask questions as though they wanted to know the answer, or very often they don't. Maybe it's part of this famous attitude of being very cool about it all and not

wanting to give an impression that you really care, really need anything.

MARK BARRET(?): Sometimes I've even seen somebody who asks you a question and it's as if they don't particularly want to know the answer to the question, they just want to let you know that they've got an interest in it.

S: Right. Or that they've read certain books.

wjARK?: They know the right words.

S: Yes, right.

MIII OHIVERS: They ask another question before you've even finished the first one.

S: Yes. Oh, yes. (JUMBLED VOICES) . . . certain people. Sometimes, of course, in the guise of asking you a question, people will be telling you something, or trying to tell you something. So this is quite important. 'The actual situation is to ask as if you were ill, to regard the Dharma as the medicine and the spiritual friend as the physician . . . ' So obviously you'd be very grateful to the spiritual friend for giving you the medicine and curing the disease, ' . . . and to follow the Dharma as the cure of the disease'.

'(iii) As a consequence the defects of being like a pot turned upside down, with a leaky bottom or filled with poison, are eliminated'.

So what does this mean? This goes back to a discourse of the Buddha where he says, there are four kinds of disciple. The first kind of disciple is like a pot turned upside down. He's completely non-receptive. You can pour your water into the pot but it won't

go in. Why? The pot is turned upside down. It can't receive any water, can't contain any water: totally non-receptive, so presumably the worst kind of disciple. Then there's the disciple who's like the pot with a leaky bottom or with holes in the bottom. Yes, it receives the water, but then it all leaks away. (LAUGHTER) What sort of disciple is this? He hears, he receives, but he can't retain it. It goes in one ear and out the other, as we say. So that's the disciple who's like a pot with a leaky bottom. ' . . . or filled with poison . . . . What is meant by the poison? What does the poison represent to you?

NIKE THOMSE~: False views.

S: False views, yes.

VOICE(?): Conditioned views.

S: Conditioned views.

VOICE(?): Pre-conceived ideas.

S: Yes, but even more

MIKE CHIVERS: Misunderstanding.

S: Misunderstanding, but not necessarily anything intellectual. Mainly it is just negative emotions. The poisons of the negative emotions like craving, anger, fear. If you're in that sort of mental state, how can you receive? That's quite important. If someone wants to tell you something or explain something to you or give you a certain instruction, when you're in that sort of mental state, a sort of state of negative emotion, you just won't be receptive. You just won't hear anything about it. So if someone starts telling you all about metta when you're feeling really angry and annoyed and upset, well, how would you feel about that? You'd get more angry still, probably. Really irritated, fancy talking about metta, a subject like that, (LAUGHTER) . . . metta, etc., etc. Or if you're in a state of anxiety or worry or fear, you can't receive the teaching. So you must eliminate the effects of being like a pot turned upside down, a pot with a leaky bottom or a pot filled with poison. You must be a very nice, smooth, round pot, freshly baked, open with nothing inside, not leaky: one just receives

All right\* carry on then.

(End of Tape 3. Side B)

## MEETING SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

Tape 4. Side ~. Transcribed/Typed: Desmond Fitzgerald

(Text p.36) 'Oh son of a good family, Bodhisattvas to whom spiritual friends are closely attached, will not fall into lower forms of life. Bodhisattvu who are well guarded by them will not fall into the hands of evil individuals. Bodhisattvas who are well purified by them will not turn away from the Mahāna way of life. Bodhisattvas who are well supported by them go beyond the spiritual level of ordinary human beings.'

S: So there are four things mentioned here. 'Bodhisattvu

to whom spiritual friends are closely attached' - Bodhisattvu meaning the spiritual aspirant in a very general sense - 'will not fall into lower forms of life.' If you associate with spiritual friends you can only progress, not only during this life itself, but after death you will not fall into lower forms of life. You can only go higher, you can only go further so that's a very important point. Those to whom spiritual friends are closely attached cannot deteriorate, they can only make progress. Then 'Bodhisattvu who are well guarded by them will not fall into the hands of evil individuals.' If you're protected by your spiritual friends, if you

associate with your spiritual friends, well, you've no time then to associate with others. You'll get a taste, as it were, for associating with spiritual friends. You won't want to associate with other people. Even if you show any tendency in that direction your spiritual friends will guard against it. (PAUSE)

'boddhisattvas who are well purified by the spiritual friends will not t~r~ away from the Xahayana, way of Uf~.' - that is to say, not turn away from the spiritual life itself - 'floodhisattvas who are well supported by them go beyond the spiritual level of ordinary human beings~' Sooner or later you will attain to the transcen- dental path, the path that leads directly to ~nlightenment, or Buddhahood. So these are the four great benefits of associating with spiritual friends~ You'll al~ways ~. progress, you will not fall into the hands of those who are not spirit1~ai friends, you~ll continue to follow the spiritual path and the spiritual life your- self and you'll rise ever higher and higher, even to the purely transcendental level. (PAUS~) And again a quotation:

(Text p. 36) '1 Boddhisattva Nanasattva to whom spiritual friends are weIW attahed~ quickly attains n~;urpassable, fully perf~cte~ ~miighteni'°~t.'

So this is the third chapter dealing with meeting spiritual friends from the 'Jewel~ Ornament of Liberation'. So that's the end of the chapter, so just go through now, go through the whole chapter. Just look through it to see if there's any further points on which you require clarification. (PAU5~) And perhaps we caA gradually move from that into the more general considerations of this whole subject of me.ting spiritual friends in the spiritual life. (LONG PAUSE)

Well, is there any points you think °Gam.po.pa hasn't mentioned which should have been mentioned, or at least should be mentioned nowadays? (PAUSE) Do you think what sGam.po.pa says is still quiterelvant, or is any of it not relevant? Or what sort of general impression does it leave you with, this chapter? (PAUSE) Apart from, of course, a general impression of the importance of meeting spiritual friends.

ALAN ANGEL (?): I feel that his criteria goes from the point of ordinary human beings right up to Boddhisattva ?(ahasattvas.

S: Yes. Oriteria in what sense, criteria of the spiritual

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friend?

ALAN ANGEL (?): Yes.

S: So the spiritual friend can, you know, exist on so many different levels. But, obviously, the spiritual friend in the form of an ordinary human being is most accessible to us, but even that kind of spiritual friend seems to have been upgraded a bit by sGam.po.pa to be not quite an ordinary human being, in our sense, at least.

VOICE (?): Taking what Alan's just said, maybe if it was being written specifically for the West today, then it would probably be better to write it in the context of people who just come in contact with the Dharma.



S: Coming in contact with what sort of person - what sort of spiritual friend? Is it those who have been around a Centre, say, for a couple of years?

VOICE (?): Yes. (PAUSE)

S: And this chapter seems almost to have been written for those who've been good, practising Buddhists for quite a long time, and maybe have even lived in a Monastery for a few years.

VOICE (?): If from that point of view it seems a bit funny that he talks about the absolute importance of spiritual friends, and yet, you know, talking to people who may have been practising . . . .

S: Yes. In other words, he is considering the whole matter at a somewhat higher level than is possible for us to consider it at present, in our context, in our circumstances. Apart from just a few individual cases, maybe.

GRAHAM STEVEN (?): Maybe it's a case of just being healthy, happy and human initially, and . . . .

S: Yes, there is that. I mean, leaving aside the question  
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of a spiritual friend, quite a lot of people who come along to the different Centres of the Friends or who come in contact with us individually, yes, are just looking for someone healthy and happy and human whom they can be in contact with and who'll have, you know, a somewhat more positive effect on them than people generally have. Very often they're just looking for that, and that's the level on which they're operating. In a sense, outside the spiritual context altogether. They just want, you know, a bit of positive company -

truly positive. For many, that's the first step, that's the first

point of contact. Just to meet someone who seems a bit happier, a bit more cheerful, a bit more positive, a bit more creative than they are.

VOICE (?): What you were saying yesterday about . . . (BLURRED) SPEECH) . . . people could go out and make contact with people. That really shows the positive aspect, the way they're going out and making contact.

S: Yes, yes.

VOICE (?): But in a way doesn't that contradict what it says about the friend has to ask for the Dharma?

S: In a sense, it does. But what does 'asking for the Dharma' mean? But you don't go out with the idea of giving the Dharma, you just go out to meet people.

VOICE (?): Right.

S: And you can establish contact with them on any level you like, provided it's real contact and they can respond on that level, and then maybe you can, well, quite naturally the level of communication will rise. Not that you should sort of go along down to Trafalgar Square and just start talking to someone about Buddhism, just like that. Just get cracking, just get talking. If you start having a friendly flow and a real exchange, well, sooner or later the

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question of Buddhism will come up, you know, you won't be able to help it and something will be communicated - maybe they'll be receptive to it, maybe they'll respond.

What were you going to say?

VOICE (?): I felt that a lot of the things that's said in here were self-evident, particularly things about showing respect and listening to instruction. I mean, if somebody has got to the stage of reading this, then presumably they want to do those things (better?).

S: Perhaps. I wouldn't be too sure of that. These things are self-evident maybe to us, but within this context. But things like the, you know, need for respect and reverence are far from being self-evident to lots of people. If you consider the way students often behave towards their teachers. I've noticed this even going to Universities to give lectures. Sometimes the behaviour of students, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is extremely rude. This seems to be the done thing, or was a few years ago.

VOICE (?): Do you think people with that attitude would be susceptible to this kind of advice, to being changed by it?

S: I think you'd probably have to convince them intellectually first that reverence and the showing of reverence was justified, and that there was a difference in level, as it were, between people and it was appropriate for those on the lower level, as it were, to show respect and reverence for those who were, as it were, on the higher level. I think you'd probably have to convince them intellectually about that first because they've got out of touch with that feeling

of reverence. (LONG PAUSE)

Some years ago there was quite a thing at Universities of being rude to visiting speakers I do any of you remember about that? But whoever they were - usually because it was political speakers - but whoever they were, they were heckled or treated rudely, or asked questions in an aggressive manner.

SAGARAMATI (?): I always see this sort of thing as almost a necessary phase to sort of re-establish what is there . . . (BLURRED)

like the old values . . . (BLURRED) . . . completely forgotten.

S: I think the University context though is very difficult in this connection. They got so habituated to, well, to disregard- ing and disrespecting values in general, in a sense

they no longer recognised any values at all.

SAGARAMATI (?): That's usually because they get everything done for them.

S: Yes - that's a rather old fashioned view.' (LAUGHTER)

VOICE (?): . . (BLURRED) . . there's a disparity usually between the values and the people who are putting those values over,

SAGARAMATI (?): . . (BLURRED) . . that's somebody who actually knows more than you do and there should be, at least, respect for that.

S: Even if you just confine it to the intellectual level. And some people really do know their stuff, at least intellectually, and can teach. But it seems as though this decay of reverence started quite a long time ago because Gurther (?) complains about it, Coleridge complains about it, and they both stress the need for reverence so it was dying away even in their time, so it's not just a phenomenon of this century by any means.

VOICE (?): I sometimes wonder if it's not a complaint of all ages.

S: Well, I can certainly say that among the Tibetans one sees, or one did see so much of reverence, very spontaneous, very natural, very unaffected on the part of everybody. You just don't see that sort of thing in the West, or even in religious circles. Well, even in religious circles - I don't know why I say ~e~efl~ (LAUGHTER) . . . perhaps you see it least of all there'. You see quite a different sort of thing, not that healthy, natural, you know, really spiritual sort of reverence, . . (BLURRED) . . a rather ecclesiastical (bromine ?) . . (LAUGHTER) . . or monastic~ self denigration. (PAUSE)

And talking about spiritual friendship: I'm not even so sure that friendship is all that highly regarded nowadays, is it? People don't make so much of an ideal of it as they used to - to be a good friend to somebody. Perhaps it's because of people's excessive mobility, you know, you don't stay long enough in any one place to become real friends with someone.

SAGARAMATI (?): I think there's another thing, as well. People have got more possessions and more security, there's less need of spiritual friends, I mean . .

S: Spiritual friends, or friends in general?

SAGARAMATI (?): Friends in general, I mean. Because they don't need their support. It's like families. Families used to be very close together because they needed each other's support. Well, it's like that with friends, I think. You don't need a friend because you're perfectly capable of looking after yourself if anything happens, you lose your job or anything there's the Social Security and the Welfare to go on to. You don't need a friend to support you in times of emergency.

S: The~ is certainly that aspect of friendship, but I think there is a sort of higher aspect which is simply, I mean, liking somebody's company and liking, you know, going around with them. I think we don't see so much of that also nowadays as we used to.

VOICE (?): We also put more emphasis on the role people are required to play these days, like schoolboy, father, mother, worker, professional person .

S: Also, of course, a lot of time is spent in front of a T.V. set which is rather destructive of social life generally. (PAUSE)

Well, any further points about 'Meeting Spiritual Friends'? Any thoughts or contributions of one's own? Does anyone disagree with sGam.po.pa about anything? Anyone not quite happy with him, or want to add anything to what he says? (PAUSE) The only general point is that we probably need for our own practical purposes to scale down a bit what he says. Do you see what I mean?

VOICE (?): Bit too rich.

S: Bit too rich, yes.

VOICE (?): As we said earlier, it seems to be inclined to people in monasteries, or anyone 100~ on the path rather than

S: Looking for a spiritual guide.

VOICE (?): . . (BLURRED) . . helping to become human beings, working out problems . .

S: This seems a very great thing, I think, you can't help doing this initially, you have to do this initially, help people to become human. I mean, it's only fairly recently within the Friends, that people started coming along who were already human beings. At the beginning we had to take whatever raw material we got, whatever came along, or whoever came along, perhaps I should say. (LAUGHTER) And do our best to turn them into human beings and then, as it were, talk about Buddhism. But, you know, it got really complicated because we had to sort of talk about Buddhism from the beginning because that, at least, was the word that brought them along. But actually one could see that they weren't ready for that. They had to be made into human beings first. But now ready-made human beings are actually coming along which is wonderful, you know. (LAUGHTER) But this is a comparatively recent development.

VOICE (?): Do you see that in the sense that the older members because they are human, they attract likewise to the movement?

S: I think like does attract like. And the more healthy, the more happy and the more human you become the more you will tend to attract not only people who want to become healthy, happy and human, but who already are healthy, happy and human and just want to rejoice, you know, with you and you with them.

VOICE (?): Yes, because outside that environment you get terribly drained of any . . ~BLURRED). . energy you have.

S: Yes, indeed.

VOICE (?): And here one can, at least, contribute and get the spark going.

S: Right. . . and exchange.

VOICE (?): In other environments, it's drainage all the time.

S: Yes.

VOICE (?): Too, it seems in that sense that some of the older Order Members seem to be becoming younger in one sense, and attracting like.

S: That's true. (PAUSE) At least I hope it is.' It is rather interesting to observe that younger and younger people are coming along, yes? Even though, you know, those who have been at it for some time are obviously getting older but they're not attracting people of their own age, but people who are younger than they are which is a very good sign. The naturally and healthily young are attracted by the naturally and healthily more mature because they'd like to be like that and, you know, the naturally and healthily mature are not too different from them. They're of the same order, as it were, but just a different degree of development or different stage of development, and you can feel within yourself: 'Well, I'd like to be like that, it's not all that difficult, it's not all that remote' and you feel a definite affinity, a definite kinship, and you feel yes, you can do that. That you can be just as confident, just as capable, just as aware, just as emotionally positive if you just try a bit and keep up a regular effort. And that should be, you know, on its own level, the natural attitude of the young towards the old, or older. Unfortunately, it isn't nowadays. Something's gone wrong.

VOICE (?): I see the spiritual friend in the context of an example you use quite a lot. I've heard it quite a lot recently in your taped lectures about the pull of gravity of Samsara and Nirvana.

S: That is very important.

VOICE (?): If the spiritual friends are in one group making a real, sincere aim for . . (BLURRED) . . then you're backing the right horse. (LAUGHTER)

S: Well, why not? - called 'Windhorse'.

VOICE (?): That's what I meant.' It must be . . (BLURRED) way and more powerful.

S: Yes, because there's not only the individual spiritual friends, there is the community of spiritual friends and, you know, they can act as a really powerful sort of focal point, centre of attraction. And two spiritual friends together are not just twice as more - twice as more, you know, powerful as one. It's more than that. (PAUSE)

VOICE (?): Yes. I think the most important point which I find is where I ebb then there's persons around who carry me to . (BLURRED) . . .

S: And this means that very often the spiritual friend doesn't need to do anything in particular, or say anything in particular, just go on being himself. He's just more happy, more positive, more alive than you are. So just being around him for a while and, you know, interacting with him, you'll just get more and more like that. It's not just a question of imparting formal instruction or, you know, going through a Sutra with you or whatever, or even sitting and meditating with you, though all these things may come in as and when appropriate. But it's just a question of your being around him, or your being around together and you're getting sparked off and being more alive, more vital, more happy, more emotionally positive and more aware and more mindful. It's all those things. Meeting spiritual friends means that. And meeting those who are more alive than you are, that's the simplest way of putting it. Alive as human beings and, if possible, spiritually alive - but at least alive as human beings. If you're not alive as a human being, how can you be spiritually alive - it's not possible. (LONG PAUSE)

VOICE (?): Could you say a bit more about that, Bhante. Alive as human beings . .

S: Prod me a bit~

VOICE (?): Eh, yes?

S: Prod me a bit'.

VOICE (?): Well, alive as human beings as opposed to people who might be coming along who are not human beings yet. They would see them on a different level.

S: I'm not quite sure that I follow you, who would see who? I've got a bit lost.

VOICE (?): . . (BLURRED) . . rather graphic terms. (LAUGHTER) Say that was the spiritual friend, the person who is coming say, along to the Centre.

S: Right!

VOICE (?): Well, supposing this person wasn't quite a human being, say that the spiritual friend was a human being. This person wouldn't see - maybe not see that person as being alive and happy, but that person might be very, very positive and alive but this person on a lower level might not see that. He might be alive.

S: He might not see him at all! Because usually, you know, people - though we must at the same time be careful not to automatically regard all those who come along as, you know, sub-human, as it were. We must watch that.

VOICE (?): Oh, no.1 That's only a general . .

S: Not that I'd . . (LAUGHTER DROWNS VOICE) We must just be a bit careful even how we put it. But, you know, one of the characteristics of people who aren't sort of really human is they just don't see other people. They are unaware. So you can take it that people who come along in that sort of state would not see your healthy, happy and human Order Member or Mitra or even ordinary Friend. It's up to that person to establish contact and, in a way - that is, establish real contact - make himself or herself known. Do you

see what I mean?

VOICE (?): Yes.

S: And in the same way if somebody comes along with a very negative idea, you know, about Buddhism or about Order Members or about Buddhists, then also there's something to be broken through or to be dissolved which gets in the way of communication. They might come along having read a bit about Buddhism and expecting you to make zany Zen-like remarks and feel quite . . (mystified ?) . when you don't. Or they might have read Pali texts and be expecting you to be very staid, very sober, very mindful and very well behaved, you know, and then find that you're not, and be very disappointed, yes?

Someone who joined Sukhavati recently told me that he was a wee bit disappointed after joining. He thought it was going to be much stricter. He was a bit surprised at the absence of discipline. in the more obvious sense. But anyway I pointed out, you know, that there was discipline there really, and he appeared to reconcile himself to that. (LAUGHTER) I mean to the fact that discipline was, you know, there. So you may take it that the average person who comes along, sometimes for no reason of their own and without it being due to any personal deficiency, just may not see you as a healthy, happy human, etc. They may project a lot on to you, they may expect far too much from you. Or they may see you quite differently from what you really are. They may come along expecting to find a very ascetic, severe sort of person who never laughed.

I remember when I came back to England originally from India when I started giving lectures at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara. Some of the good Theravadin Buddhists who had - you know, were in the habit of Coming there were really shocked that I made jokes in the course of lectures. (LAUGHTER) They couldn't believe their ears, at first. Had they misheard . . (LAUGHTER) . . or did Bhante make a joke . . (BLURRED/LAUGHTER) . . because people are not supposed to make jokes in the course of lectures on Buddhism - Buddhism is a serious subject. And they were quite puzzled why I made the joke but, of course, eventually it dawned on them that it did have some- thing to do with what I was saying. (LAUGHTER) It wasn't just a sudden lapse on my part. But they thought making a joke - even a Buddhistic joke to illustrate a Buddhistic point - was, you know, quite incompatible with a serious approach to the Dharma.

Or people may come along expecting you to be very happy, vibrant, spontaneous and able to sort of, you know, spark them off at a glance or a touch and just not find it. You might be in a rather quiet, serious mood that evening . . (LAUGHTER) . . and quite

a disappointment, you see. Or they might have come along thinking: 'Oh, yes, it's a very spiritual place, and very quiet and very peaceful', and they come there and the phone rings and then someone rushes in and rushes out, and then someone says: 'Have you paid your subscription?' . . (LAUGHIER DROWNS VOICE) . . 'I thought we were coming to a spiritual place - is this what Buddhism is all about' you know. So there are many obstacles . . (BLURRED) . . in communication.

VOICE (?): It's quite difficult . . (BLURRED) . . with a lot of newcomers and there are twenty people there and some of them are there to hear a few zany and bright remarks, and others sit there with an attitude all austere and quiet and obviously pointing their projections at you. And it's very easy to slip into trying to live up to one or another of them.

S: Well, you can only be your own inimitable self. Like George Bernard Shaw said about - who was it? - Frank Harris. Someone said: 'Frank Harris is a third rate writer'. So George Bernard Shaw said: 'He's not third rate, he's not fourth rate, he's not fifth rate, he's not even tenth rate. He's just his own unique, horrible self.' (LAUGHTER) So just be that! Well, they'll love you for it in the long run - if they stay around long enough.' (LAUGHTER)

So let's leave the spiritual friends there.

(End of Tape 4. Side A)

(END OF TRANSCRIPTION)