

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/Tiratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

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

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

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

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

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

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhithana Dharma Team

The Jewel Ornament of Liberation seminar - Women's seminar held at Padmaloka in June 1980

Chapter 21 Buddha Activity

Day 6 - Tape 1

Those present: Sangharakshita, Dhammadinna, Marichi, Punyavati, Liz Bisson, Michelle Johnson, Joan Graham, Noel Lehane, Janet Martin, Bonnie Quirk, Verne Barret, Kay Roberts, Sue Lawson, Sulocana, Paloma and Marion Monas.

S: All right, what I thought was this: we still have two sessions left so clearly we can't do a long chapter, so I thought we'd go through in these two sessions the shortest chapter which is also the last, which is also, I won't say the most difficult, in principle it's the most difficult, but Gampopa lets us off rather lightly because he explains the subject matter mainly with the aid of beautiful similes. So I thought we'd conclude with that today and tomorrow. The chapter is, of course, 21, Buddha Activity, so this might perhaps refresh one's vision one might say, but we'll see, this is after all the sixth day of the study and we are beginning to draw to an end and certainly in this morning's study group it was evident that people had begun to, what shall I say, it seemed as though they'd begun to assimilate enough for the time being it was becoming clear and this was a bit difficult to assimilate even just mentally, very much more. So we'll take it easily and we won't push it and we'll aim at just getting halfway through this chapter and if we find when we've got halfway through it that it's a little early, well never mind, we'll just have a slightly shorter session today, especially as it is as I said, drawing to an end - the study is drawing to an end, and perhaps we ought to sort of start, I won't say sort of tailing off, but just gently coming down a bit, but meanwhile we are going to stay up quite a bit too with Buddha Activity. So would someone just like to read the title and then the whole of the introductory bit down to the capital I.

Buddha Activity

Liz: " The activity is working for the benefit of others without preconceived [2] ideas. One should adopt an attitude towards enlightenment, then follow the path, and finally aspire to Buddhahood solely to burn up the misery of sentient beings and help them to attain happiness. When a man becomes a Buddha, habit-making thoughts and forced effort cease for him. Therefore whatever is, or is thought to be, necessary for sentient being happens all the time of its own accord, as is the case with Buddhas. How this comes about is indicated in the couplet:

The Body works for sentient beings without habit-making thoughts,
So do Speech and Mind.
These three factors outline Buddha-activity.

The working for the benefit of sentient beings by Body, Speech and Mind

without habit-making thoughts is illustrated by similes in the Utaratantra:

Like Indra, a drum, a cloud, Brahma,
The sun, a jewel,

Like an echo is the Tathagata;
Like sky and earth."

S: All right, let's go into this. "The Activity is working for the benefit of others without preconceived ideas." The activity of course which is being described here is Buddha activities. So a Buddha's activity, an enlightened human being's activity is working for the benefit of others without preconceived ideas and this also suggests that to the extent that you are enlightened you will be working for the benefit of others without preconceived ideas. To the extent that you are on the spiritual path you will be working for the benefit of yourself and others without preconceived ideas. So the emphasis falls on the "without preconceived ideas", or as the verse quoted puts it, "without habit-making thoughts". So what would be another way of expressing this "without preconceived ideas" and why do you think it is so important and so characteristic of Buddha activity as to be without preconceived ideas?

[3]

Dhammadinna: You respond directly and spontaneously.

S: Yes, you respond to the actual need which you actually see. You don't bring any preconceived ideas to the situation, and this is very important. I mean at all levels, a Buddha exhibits it in its perfection, but at every stage, to the extent that one is on the spiritual path at all, to the extent that one is trying to help oneself and help others, one must be without preconceived ideas.

Bonnie: That's the essence of creativity.

Dhammadinna: And of communication.

S: Yes, because if there are preconceived ideas, well, it's all old and stale. There is nothing new, therefore there cannot be any communication without freedom from preconceived ideas, otherwise if you view through preconceived ideas, you don't see the person as they actually are now. You don't hear what they are actually saying to you now, in the present. It's all overlaid with ideas that you're bringing from the past, so you're not open. So openness is a term which would be very appropriate here. To be without preconceived ideas is to be, so to speak, intellectually open.

Bonnie: It would allow vertical communication or cognition also.

S: In the case of a Buddha, obviously there is no vertical communication, but in the case of someone who wasn't a Buddha, this freedom from preconceived ideas would make you open to horizontal communication, whether it was a question of communication with those more developed than you or less developed than you. In all cases, one would be open. But does it mean that one has no principles?

You might say that you communicate with others, say, with preconceived ideas about Going for Refuge, preconceived ideas about the Dharma, the need to meditate, the goodness of meditation. Are those not preconceived ideas? If someone was to raise that objection what would you say? The fact that you call yourself a Buddhist, doesn't that mean you've got preconceived ideas? The fact that you've Gone for Refuge, doesn't it mean you've got preconceived ideas? In other words, what is a preconceived idea?

[4]

Dhammadinna: Doesn't it mean a fixed idea? Whereas those principles are moving as you do.

S: Yes, they are principles, they are not rules. They're not anything to be applied rigidly to the situation.

Marichi: Yes, I mean when you're communicating with someone, you're a Buddhist, you're not demanding they're a Buddhist. You might say that in order to do such and such I'd like you to be a Buddhist. Then our communication could be different.

S: Well its more than that because you know, if you really are a Buddhist, and if you really have gone for refuge and obviously if you really are a Buddha it's something which has been assimilated by your very being, it isn't a question of ideas any longer, ideas as divorced from being, you can't have preconceived ideas, because you don't have ideas. You are just what you are. It need not be labelled, if you have to label it you can say well, yes, I believe in going for refuge, I believe in meditation, but they are not just your ideas, you know, they are you. They are what you are. If in the course of your communication you suggest meditation as possibly beneficial for the person you're talking to, it is not because you have got preconceived ideas, about the usefulness of meditation.

Marichi: You could also be very bourgeois to the core and that could be totally assimilated and that's what you express. There is a difference isn't there?

S: Yes, oh yes, of course, because you are expressing what you are as one who is following the path. Of course, on the level which is the subject matter here. You are a Buddha who is totally at one with the path and the goal.

Marichi: So it's something which is moving.

[5]

S: So in a way when you are without preconceptions as an ordinary person, a person committed to the spiritual life, when you are without preconceptions, without preconceived ideas and dealing with others, you see them as you are ... sorry, you see them as they-are. You see their needs as they are and you respond on the basis of your own true experience and knowledge. Not in accordance with preconceived ideas.

Bonnie: Did you say "you see them as you are?"

S: Yes, as they are.

Bonnie: Yes, you corrected it.

Dhammadinna: So, if you communicate like that you are not trying to mould some body into a preconceived idea of what the person should do.

(S: ?) Yes, because even say as a Buddhist; supposing you communicate with others. If the communication is real communication and reaches a certain point of intensity at that time you are not thinking of yourself as a Buddhist, you're not thinking of Buddhism, in a way you've completely forgotten about them, it's just you. If there is anything of Buddhism around or

anything of Buddhism in you, well it's because you've assimilated it, you've become at one with it. You don't have to think about it. You don't have to have ideas about it. You're just concerned, you know, with the needs of the person in front of you and what ever you are just comes into play, just comes into operation in order to meet the needs of that situation.

Joan: Sometimes in communication it's like I loose an idea of myself and I begin to see what the other person's saying and understand what they're saying, but I end up just being aware of then and what they're saying and how I see they're saying it and it's like I'm left with nothing to say of [6] myself. I just end up nodding and it's like I'm agreeing, but what I'm actually saying is well yes, I see, but then I don't think that that's very good. It's not enough.

S: Well it sounds as though you're not experiencing yourself in the situation. It sounds as though there is an element of alienation even.

Joan: Yes, that you must be in touch with how you feel about what they're saying. You must not have an alienated awareness of them and what they are saying.

Bonnie: Sometimes you tend to become so fascinated by them, it almost becomes like a thing in a play and you become engrossed and lost in the play itself and loose yourself in them.

S: But also what is important is that when one is talking with anybody it's not very desirable that either person should go on talking for too long. Do you know that I mean. I have plenty of experience of this because sometimes people come and talk to me to tell me their troubles, but even if you are telling people your troubles you should be very careful to allow them to say something from time to time because if the communication is too one way, which means it ceases to be communication, a very sort of strange situation can be created in which the person listening to the monologue as it might become has almost to sort of opt out of the situation in self-defence because it has become so one-sided and they are not being given an opportunity to feed anything back into the situation. Do you see what I mean? Have you ever noticed this when someone just goes on talking remorselessly.

Marichi: It's as though they're trying to hypnotize you.

[7]

S: Well that is almost the sort of effect it might seem to have even though they might actually not be trying to do that. Yes.

Paloma: Why does one do that?

S: Just go on talking? Well, you're just sort of so full of yourself and your own problems and you lose sight of the other person, you don't really want to communicate. You just want to disburden yourself. But in a sense also you can't do that because you can only disburden yourself really and truly within the context of communication. If you're just talking at someone not talking to them, not communicating with them, you can't really say anything to them in any meaningful way and so you can't disburden yourself and sometimes people get caught in just a round, they just go on and on and on. And though they're talking., they're getting no relief because they're just going on and on and on and just can't pause to allow you to say something. They can't allow communication to develop.

Dhammadinna: I was thinking sometimes it's a front, a lot of talk. The person doesn't actually say what they really want to say.

S: Yes, they find it difficult to come to the point.

Punyavati: Sometimes they use the person as an object just to empty themselves.

S: Yes. But they don't succeed even in doing that in any real sort of way, because communication hasn't been established. It has to be two way. Of course, you know you can go [on] listening to somebody without saying anything or saying very much and being really in communication with them. But if someone just goes on talking and isn't aware of you, well, in a way you can't even listen to them because they are not talking to you and this can result in a great sense of strain and so on and even alienation. So, one must always be careful talking with people, even if you've got quite a lot to say, not to go on too long to give them [8] an opportunity of responding. In that way energy flows. Otherwise the other person can end up feeling quite exhausted and you can end up feeling quite frustrated. Nothing has been said and nothing has been heard. No communication has taken place.

Marion: Old people seem to do this. Sometimes you can get two old people doing and they're both doing it, they're both mumbling to each other.

S: Yes. Well you occasionally find people sort of talking to each other at the same time, ignoring the fact that the other person is talking.

Noel: I keep thinking that the Jehovah's Witnesses are the complete antithesis of this.

S: The antithesis of communication. They are not really talking to you. They are just saying a piece into thin air. It could just as well be anybody, it could be a door post, it could be the cat. It doesn't make any difference.

Dhammadinna: But they've got preconceived ideas of what they want to achieve. They want you to be converted. They don't see you are you are.

S: So it is important when communicating with other people, if you're trying to communicate about the Dharma, you've got to forget about the Dharma, you've got to just concentrate on them, and if you have assimilated anything of the Dharma and if anything that you have assimilated of the Dharma is relevant to their condition it will come out quite naturally and spontaneously in the course of your communication, even things that you might have forgotten will come out, even things that you did not know that you knew will come out sometimes because they are called for, because they are needed and they are there, you knew it all the time even though you were not conscious of them.

Sue: I find that in beginners' courses it really makes me aware of preconceived ideas, because I feel I must get Buddhism across.

[9]

S: Well if you're to get anything across it's only yourself. I mean that this is what I was emphasizing, I'm not sure if it was in this group or the other one, that when people come to the Centre or a Centre, what do they come for? They come for you. They don't come for some

abstract idea of the Dharma, they don't come for the sake of the Abhidharma analysis of mind, they come because they find positive and inspiring people basically. So they come because of you. The Dharma is only the instrument, the Dharma is only the language. The Dharma is only the raft.

Joan: I sometimes find as well, when I'm feeling positive I radiate a kind of friendliness that a lot of people pick up on, and sometimes people will smile back at me in the street (I hadn't intended to smile at them) and it's really nice. But sometimes I get very confused, perhaps a few people look at me and sometimes with men I think, you know, I think they're getting the wrong idea or something, I get confused and I don't enjoy it very much and then I close up to protect myself and read my book, because I'm spending a lot of time travelling on buses. So there is almost like a preconceived idea of just not being too kind of trusting of the whole situation. You just do your own thing quietly. I get confused by that.

S: I think usually people, I think, know you are just smiling because you're happy. It isn't in a sense especially directed towards them and it has no, as it were, personal significance because after all if you are sitting in a bus and you're just smiling at the other passengers, well it may be a bit unusual but you could hardly be accused of some kind of intentions, you see. Maybe if you passed each other in a lonely lane and you stopped and smiled at the other person, that would be another matter, but if it's on a bus with dozens of people all around and you are just smiling at everybody, well it surely could not be misunderstood.

[10]

Dhammadinna: That's not my experience.

S: Oh, that's sad. Even if it's clear you are smiling at everybody.

Marichi: I've got on tube trains, and perhaps I've been working, I've been down the Centre for a while and then I suddenly I travel on the tube and I find I look at people, I'm quite interested about how they are, and I have to be very careful about how I look at them. I was looking at somebody the other day and she said "Oh, do I know you?" which then reduced me to an embarrassed state.

S: Yes, I've had that experience several times because I've sometimes been travelling round and I've thought that people have looked at me and they have even smiled, and then I've thought well maybe that person attended a lecture and maybe I should I remember them, but I don't and so one doesn't always know whether one should say well, do I know you, or it's just someone who happens to smile because he or she is in a good mood.

Marichi: Sometimes it's just a simple response to moods.

S: But I think if you are at all sensitive or at all aware you can tell whether someone is just smiling at the world and you just happen to get in the way or whether it is meant for you. Sometimes it is meant for you, but then sometimes also one doesn't know quite how to respond because one's maybe not sure what sort of way it is meant for you. There is a sort of ambiguity sometimes.

Joan: I think the confusion happens in me because I've opened up avenues with maybe four people at a time and I don't know what kind of communication is coming back at me, but I

feel in a way that I'm not free any longer, that something has started up.

[11]

S: You've dropped the handkerchief. Do you see what I mean? Metaphorically speaking. It's a sort of social signal which other people can take up if they wish, but there is a possibility of them taking up in several different ways perhaps so to that extent you've sort of opened yourself up to various possibilities. A dear old lady might produce a peppermint and say would you like a peppermint dear? That might be one possible reaction.

Dhammadinna: The problem is dealing with men in that situation. That's when you start to feel, oh dear.

S: Sometimes you don't know your own mind, actually, sometimes at least, your own feelings or intentions are a bit ambiguous.

Dhammadinna: When I taught on the other side of London and did a lot of travelling, I'd feel really good after taking a class and I'd sit and beam, and I was just aware that I was attracting people in some way. Sometimes I could see that if I didn't put my newspaper up or something I might find myself in difficulties or in trouble. I think it's because people aren't used to warmth and they mistake warmth or just a radiation for something else, especially if it comes from a woman and they happen to be men. I don't think I'm feeling that way inclined at those particular instances.

S: I remember some years ago I was travelling on the tube - it was shortly after I came back from India. I was sitting opposite somebody and he kept beaming at me and I hadn't been back very long so I couldn't think well maybe it was someone who came to a lecture and I couldn't understand it because the whole way he was beaming at me in a most sort of deliberate manner and I described this to somebody afterwards and said I was really quite surprised and didn't understand quite what it meant and then they explained from various things I mentioned that he must have been on an acid trip. So I thought oh well maybe [12] that explains it, because I wasn't familiar with those sort of things then, maybe it is the sort of thing that some people at least do when they're on acid trips, they beam at perfect strangers.

Dhammadinna: He probably picked up on a good vibe.

S: Oh yes, well certainly there was a good vibe so to speak from him, quite definitely.

Paloma: Sometimes people react quite aggressively towards you sitting there just feeling, just being happy. Because I always feel, when I go on the tube, I feel very happy and I sit there and I always giggle, I just feel very happy, then I start looking around because I am curious about people, and sometimes you see someone and it's different, you can see someone and look at someone really happily. I had this experience, I looked at someone sitting in front of me and she has this really nice coat on with lots of colours, and you don't see people in England with lots of colours, and I stared at her all the time and finally she came and sat on my side and started talking and it was very interesting and I got to know some people like that. But other people, when you look at them, they get darker and darker and you think you should hide.

S: Well Vajradaka is a good one for sitting on public transport and beaming at people. As far

as I know he has never been misunderstood and he has often got into conversation with people.

Bonnie: He's a young man, or a man, which makes a difference. There's a difference between men and women, women just can't afford to do that as freely and open as men can, that's for sure.

Noel: Although I have found that when I'm feeling quite confident it's in a way a kind of protection. I live in quite a rough area of London and it's not really a very good [13] idea to walk about late at night, one does sometimes encounter people in the street and from personal experience, friends of mine have had rather unpleasant experiences. But it seems to happen now that it is safe for me to walk around the streets when I'm feeling really positive, it's as if, it is in the way that animals sense fear, people pick up those sort of things as well and what you're giving out definitely affects what you get back.

S: So it goes to show in a way that under present social conditions it's very difficult to be open to manifest openness, it's not encouraged.

Marichi: I think it's worst in big cities. I remember coming back from Ireland where everybody said hello to you as you walked down the street, and when I got back to Golders Green I went to say hello to people in the street and they backed away, and I realized that I was in a different society again.

S: Well it isn't the custom in a big city because for obvious reasons there are so many people. One just can't do that, you'd be exhausted after while but it does seem a pity that you can't sit in a bus or a tube train and smile at people if you feel in such a mood without being either misunderstood or resented, or people thinking oh a madwoman, or something like that, let out on licence.

Joan: But I don't always actually smile, I'm just feeling good and people come up and talk to me very easily.

Punyavati: I find I can get away with it because being a foreigner I'm a bit strange anyway.

Paloma: Yes, in many ways you are a bit lucky because if you jump around or do unusual things people have this preconceived idea that you are a foreigner and foreigners are always strange so they don't really count, so in a way you can do more.

S: You have a greater freedom ...

All right, so let's carry on a bit. There's a little summary. "One should adopt an attitude towards enlightenment, then follow the path, and finally aspire to [14] Buddhahood, solely to burn up the misery of sentient beings and help them to attain happiness. "When a man becomes a Buddha, habit-making thoughts and forced efforts cease for him". You see the two things go together, habit-making thoughts or preconceived ideas, repetitions of fixed conceptual patterns and forced effort, willed effort, these two things cease and clearly they're connected. In the case of the enlightened person, there are no preconceived ideas, no habit-making thoughts and no forced effort; whatever effort is made is a free, spontaneous overflow of energy, but don't you notice sometimes if you're talking with someone you need

as it were forced effort to back up preconceived ideas, in a way. If you're really open, if you have no preconceived ideas if you're really trying to communicate your energy flows much more freely.

Kay: It doesn't mean forced effort in a sense to counteract your habit making thoughts? Do you see what I mean? Because if your tendency is to be reactive then in a way you need forced effort as well to counteract that.

S: Yes, that's just effort, you could say, rather than forced effort.

Paloma: Why forced effort?

S: Well, it depends how one chooses to use the word 'forced'. Using the expression forced effort in a negative sense it means that one is making an effort on the basis of preconceived ideas in an alienated way, without taking your total being or the needs of your total being into consideration, and without making any attempt really to tap your sources of energies. A sort of mental effort, or willed effort in that sense is enough, this is what you think, you don't take the dynamics so to speak of your whole psyche, your whole being, into consideration, and try to harness your energies in an intelligent way, you have to think it can just be done by effort of will. [15] That's sort of forced effort. But effort, without being forced, proceeds by taking all those things into consideration, your own resources, how you are out of touch, and what is the best way of doing it and so on. You could say that forced effort is the sort of effort you make without being really in touch with yourself, without being really in touch with your energies.

Bonnie: That's why it's so exhausting.

Dhammadinna: So it's alienated.

S: Yes, forced effort is an alienated effort. It means you're too much in your head. You're headstrong.

Kay: You're alienated ... (laughter.)

S: If you're alienated you can't make a real effort. You've got to undo the alienated state. You could say well what about effort then, because maybe it sounds as though you're in, what shall I say, a double bind sort of situation, but no well this is where your spiritual friends come in.

Marichi: How?

Dhammadinna: To put you back in touch with your emotions.

S: Yes, to put you back in touch with yourself, by themselves being in touch with you. A skilful person can do this. If you are cut off from your own emotions, when someone speaks with you, communicates with you with warmth and genuine feeling, not only do you experience that warmth, that genuine feeling, but it starts putting you back in touch with your own feelings and you feel a sort of warmth in response, you experience genuine feelings, but it may take a long time in some cases.

Bonnie: This is the whole message, but it's not the words.

[16]

S: You may express your being in contact, or you may give expression to your being in contact with the other person to put them in touch with themselves by non-verbal means, you know, just giving them a pat on the back or just giving them a hug, it can work like that too, it doesn't have to be verbal, just sitting with them quietly.

Bonnie: The most skilled way seems to be just sitting with somebody in silence.

S: Well one can't say that any particular way is more skilled than another, it depends on the circumstances, it depends whether it works, you know, sometimes sitting with somebody in silence can be the worst thing to do because they might think that you're ignoring them or you don't want anything to do with them, they may require something more tangible than that. They may want to talk, or to be made to talk or enabled to talk, so there's no particular thing to do which is by definition the most skilled thing it depends on the circumstances - it can be skilful, it can be unskilful. Sometimes it's skilful to talk sometimes skilful to remain silent one has just to see the actual situation. Therefore whatever is or is thought to be necessary for sentient beings happens all the time of its own accord, as is the case with Buddhists. You should not have a preconceived idea, well this is what I'm going to do, that is what I'm going to do, just be in touch, be in communication and whatever is needed will be said, in a sense it's not that you say it, it is said. It's not that you do it, it is done. It's not that you are alienated from your own speech or your own actions, but it's just that they proceed spontaneously according to the needs of the situation, you don't have to force them.

Paloma: It's a really important point that you don't have to communicate the Dharma to people, but you are the Dharma to the extent that you understood it or that [17] you live it, because I haven't understood it very well. Because I remember a situation in the street when I met a ... he was an elderly man, I met him just very spontaneously and he ... we started talking and he wanted to come just where I was going, and I was going to the Centre, so I took him to the Centre and I was sitting so of course he had to sit as well because I was thinking I should be explaining to him what this is all about and when ever he called I didn't want to go to the cinema or anywhere, I just wanted him to come to the Centre, so there was no communication because I wouldn't tread his ... I wouldn't communicate with him in the way that was necessary and that's because of the idea that it's the Dharma, or the thing that I've got somewhere in my head and I told someone else. It's very important. It's probably through your contact and through your way of living and your happiness and your way of seeing things, you attract.

S: Well in a way to communicate the Dharma you must forget about the Dharma, whereas it mustn't be a preconceived idea, it mustn't be a thought or an idea or a concept that you're carrying around in your head. Well, yes you learn through that particular medium certainly and you assimilate as a result of learning, but once you've assimilated you can so speak forget all about it. All that you have to do is to be in touch, be in communication, with other human beings. It doesn't necessarily mean that you have to go along with every suggestion of theirs because communication is a two-way thing, but perhaps you can meet on common ground.

Paloma: You can be skilful, but it's just so wrong, just so that now I've been carrying it with

me in my head.

S: It's true that if there are certain things to be communicated, then the language of the Dharma is usually the traditional language, it is the only language that you can use to communicate what you really want to communicate unless [18] you are very skilled at creating your own medium of communication as you go along. This is possible up to a point, but in most cases sooner or later you will have to fall back upon the traditional language because that has in fact been created specially to communicate certain let us say experiences.

(End of Side A)

So how this comes about is indicated in the couplet, "The body works for sentient beings without habit-making thoughts so do speech and mind these three factors outline Buddha activity." In Buddhism traditionally the human being is divided into body, speech and mind. So in the case of a Buddha also there is Body, there is Speech, there is Mind. Very often it is said in the Mahayana and Vajrayana that what in us is Body in the Buddha is Nirmanakaya what in us is Speech in the Buddha is Sambhogakaya, what in us is Mind in the Buddha is Dharmakaya. So one has the idea of the transformation, the transmutation of the threefold unenlightened individual into the three fold enlightened individual. You are an ordinary unenlightened human being with Body, Speech and Mind, the Buddha is an enlightened human being with the three Kayas. The Nirmanakaya, Sambhogakaya and Dharmakaya. The Nirmanakaya so to speak is Body raised to its highest power in the mathematical sense. Sambhogakaya is Speech raised to its highest power. Dharmakaya is Mind raised to its highest power.

Bonnie: How can a Body be raised to its highest power?

S: What is Body? It isn't just physical Body. Was it in this group that we were talking about Death? and was it in this group that we were talking about being aware, being conscious of people's presence after death? So what are you conscious of? Would you say it was their soul, their spirit? Well, let me give you an example and then that might help me to explain body. Years and years ago I used to go down to Brighton every month. I went down there every month for several years, that was in the days when there was a Brighton Buddhist Society before the FWBO was started [19] up. Some of you may know that the old Brighton Buddhist Society transformed itself some years ago under Buddhadasa's tactful guidance into the Brighton FWBO. Anyway, I was going down, oh, from 1964, right through to about, the early seventies. Going down to the Brighton Buddhist Society every month so naturally got to know the people down there quite well and in particular I got to know well the Secretary and Treasurer of the group who were husband and wife, or rather wife and husband, the wife was the secretary, and I used to stay at their house in Hove overnight and they'd always entertain me, so I got to know both of them - Violet and Carl - I got to know both of them quite well. They were about ... in their early seventies when I got to know them, during the period that I knew them they passed practically through their seventies. So what happened was this - I used to go down - I think it was usually on a Wednesday - I'd catch the train down to Brighton and I'd arrive just in time to take meditation class and sometimes I'd stay overnight and sometimes I'd get straight back. As I got to know them better I got more and more into the habit of staying overnight because they made me very welcome and we became, in fact, quite good friends. One particular Wednesday I wasn't feeling very well, so I phoned Carl or phoned Violet I think it was and said sorry I won't be able to come down so Violet said that she

would take the meditation - as she sometimes did if I wasn't able to make it. So what happened was this, Violet took the meditation class at the centre which was a large room downstairs in their house - they lived upstairs - and she took the meditation class and everything went quite all right - she was perfectly all right - she came upstairs and just sat down in her usual armchair and two minutes later her husband came to ask her if she would like a cup of tea and there she was sitting in the armchair dead - just like that - he told me this himself. So I went down a week later to conduct the [20] funeral there. I must explain this also that whenever I used to arrive from the train I would go upstairs to their flat in the upper part of the house and sit down and Violet would come in and she'd bring a cup of tea and we'd have a little chat and she'd sit in her chair - the one she usually sat in - the one in which she died - so when I arrived for the funeral I sat down as I usually did and in came Violet - yes, in came Violet, sat down in her chair as usual and as it were asked me how I was and after a few minutes she got up and went away. Now, what was it? What was it? Did I see Violet? No, I didn't see Violet. I didn't have a hallucination - I didn't hear Violet, but there she was - she wasn't a disembodied spirit - she had body, but I didn't see her with the physical eye. So what is that? So I've had this sort of experience on a number of occasions. Well, yes, I've had other experiences too. I've come to the conclusion that body isn't just gross physical body, for instance, I've had myself various experiences of being out of the physical body. Some of you know about these, I mentioned about them.

About the experience I had in connection with acupuncture. Do you know about that? Some of you do, but I'll just mention it nonetheless. Shortly after I returned to England some of my friends - I won't tell you all the details, persuaded me to take acupuncture - this must have been at the beginning of 1965 - you know one's friends are always trying to do things for one. Anyway, I am always amenable and don't want to hurt anyone's feelings so I agreed to take acupuncture so the long and the short of it was that I went along to take this acupuncture. The second time I had the big needle - it was just here - just one little prick with the silver needle just in that finger and instantly the needle entered I felt a rush of energy up my arm - it hit me in the brain and knocked me as it were right out of the body - so there was I about 25 - 30 feet out [21] of the body and a little to one side and I was looking down obliquely at my gross physical body - and there was the acupuncturist frantically massaging my legs apparently to bring me back and I afterwards learned from another friend who became a pupil of that acupuncturist that for 35 minutes I was technically dead - my heart stopped beating - I couldn't subsequently myself remember it - I had no sort of consciousness of how long it was - I thought it was about 15 - might have been 20 minutes - may have been longer - but anyway the acupuncturist himself said afterwards 35 minutes. I was sort of in the space, it wasn't that I was disembodied, I still had a body, but it wasn't the gross physical body and it sort of occupied space - it was up there and looking obliquely down on the physical body. Well, I eventually sort of came back and I felt extremely well after that, I went round the corner and had a cup of coffee with the friend who'd accompanied me to the acupuncturist and I hadn't felt so well for a long time. But this and other experiences I've had have convinced me that there is a sort of subtle body which is the same as the physical body in all respects - except that it isn't a gross physical body - one can only describe it as a subtle physical body. So I think that when one has this sort of self-experience - this experience of body - you don't actually experience - it's not really the gross physical body that you experience because when you are in the subtle physical body - lets call it - your subjective experience is exactly the same. Do you see what I mean? So when you die you've still got a body. That's the body, according to the Tibetan teaching, in which you are in the Bardo and have those Bardo experiences. There is no difference - so a Buddha's body one can say in the sense of

Nirmanakaya is the sort of body principle, not the gross physical body, probably not even the subtle physical body, but something even subtler than that - it is a sort of presence which is not limited by space and time, just as the [22] subtle body in another sort of way is - I won't say not limited by space and time - but less limited by them than the gross physical body is. So this is why I sometimes say, as some of you know, that you always have a body, in a sense the body principle is always there. Guenther translates therefore, Nirmanakaya as, what is it, he has a rather individual way of translating this. I forget exactly how he translates it, but it something like concrete existence, it's not a gross physical body in the ordinary sense, not even a subtle physical body, but it is a fact that you are there as it were. You're not a vague sort of abstraction, you're not just a sort of general idea. You're sort of concretely existent, but without existing as anything in particular - if you see what I mean.

Marichi: So it is actually a separate existence?

S: In a manner of speaking, yes.

Dhammadinna: Does that apply to the Arupa-loka? - If you were in that realm?

S: I would say that that would be a subtle body. As in the case of the Buddha, if it isn't a contradiction in terms, one has to speak of a transcendental body, but the general principle is the same.

Marichi: This is where angels and devas and so on come in - the more subtle...

S: Yes, Angels and devas on the more subtle level, as it were, but the body of the Buddha, the Nirmanakaya which is not identical of course with his physical body any more than our subtle body is identical with our gross physical body though they may be as it were fused or confused and the Nirmanakaya of the Buddha is well - I can only say transcendental. We are getting into rather deep waters here.

Bonnie: Would you say the Nirmanakaya is something again other than the subtle body? We all must have a subtle body and at times some of us experience it. I did experience it myself and it was pretty scary because I [23] didn't know what was happening.

S: I would say that this is a little tentative and only partially based on experience, that there is a whole sort of series of bodies - you know we usually identify ourselves with and operate in or from the gross physical body, less often from the subtle body. But there are bodies subtler than the subtle. You could say again, perhaps in a manner of speaking - that whereas all these bodies are mundane and conditioned - there can be also a transcendental body which you know we can hardly imagine, we can hardly conceive of because it goes completely beyond our experience. Sometimes in the Vajrayana this is called the Vajrakaya.

Marichi: What this role, the transcendental subtlety, not the Nirmanakaya itself?

S: Ah, no, the Vajrakaya, yes you would have to say it is something like the Nirmanakaya, maybe the point of view is somewhat different. Vajrakaya refers as it were to a practice called Vajrakaya, refers to the indestructibility. The Vajra - being indestructible.

Marichi: You mean that's the transcendental aspect of it that's indestructible?

S: Yes, but it does not mean the Dharmakaya is transcendental, the Sambhogakaya is transcendental. So the Nirmanakaya or Varakaya you know is not transcendental in a sense in which they are not. All three are transcendental.

Marichi: Yes, so they could all be called Vajrakaya.

S: But, in that sense, although actually it is not so used. But the point about the Nirmanakaya and presumably therefore, about the Vajrakaya is that it is the determinantly existent in a manner of speaking. That is to say it's not something vague and ghost-like. It's not concretely [24] existent in the sense of existence as opposed to non-existence - its sort of subtler than that. So how did we come to this from Bonnie's question? So raising the body to its highest part means making the ascent from the gross body to the subtle - from the subtle to the more subtle and so on. When you're meditating deeply in the sense of being on a dhyana level - you are so to speak, in a subtle body.

Dhammadinna: We experience it on quite a low level without necessarily being in a dhyanic state - sometimes you feel quite gross and heavy and if your emotional state is different you feel lighter physically too.

S: Yes, but you are still you.

Bonnie: When you saw Violet's subtle body was it your subtle body seeing her subtle body?

S: Yes, I suppose it must have been. It must have been because there was no hallucination. There was nothing physical, but it was a definite presence. It is unmistakably that person with their arms and legs and eyes and hair and all the rest of it even though they are not physically present and it is not a sort of ghost it is not a white sheet floating around or something like that. No.

Bonnie: I had this experience when I went to, not an acupuncturist but a naturopath - and I had problems finding the ground to walk on. I walked through them until he realized, until he saw something then he put the two back together again.

S: This acupuncturist I had was really scared, he thought I'd gone - and he told this friend of mine that it taught him a real lesson because he'd never had that experience before and he wondered why the acupuncture had that sort of effect on me and he came to the conclusion it was because of the meditation I had done. I can't say whether I agree or disagree with that, but that's the conclusion he came to, and he said the lesson he learnt was [25] if people meditated you couldn't give than acupuncture treatment in the same way that you gave it to people who didn't meditate.

Joan: Because your subtle body (is looser than ...)

S: Yes, presumably - in a word, more sensitive.

Bonnie: There are some theorists that think that this is what they are actually working on in acupuncture - the subtle body.

S: Yes, yes, it could be. I don't know, but there is, that possibility. I was just trying to find

whether in the previous chapter there is Guenther's translation of the Dharmakaya. (Pause)
The general Buddhist teaching is that the subtle body persists, even though the physical body is dissolved and it is in this subtle body - or as this subtle body that we experience the Bardo visions and so on.

Bonnie: I had the experience at that time from my grandmother who was long since dead that she was there, really helping me keep it together in a very grand motherly kind of a way.

S: Well the strange thing is your experience of the person in this sort of state is exactly the same as your experience of them when they are 'alive' in the gross physical body. Do you see what I mean? It's not that you experience them differently as though they're a sort of ghost - no it's not like that at all - it is themselves actually and fully present.

Marichi: They're almost as vividly physically present as they were before.

S: Yes, indeed. Well, not even almost - as they are.

Marichi: So if you hadn't known that Violet had died the previous week, would you have felt any different?

S: No, because I would have been quite aware that there was not a corporeal presence. My physical eyes did not see anything.

Marichi: So there is a vivid physical presence that you don't actually see with your physical senses.

[26]

S: Yes, its a vivid experience of body so therefore one concludes that body is not necessarily the gross physical, the subtle is equally body. The Nirmanakaya is equally body. It's the sort of 'determinately existent'.

Bonnie: So the acupuncturist didn't see your subtle body?

S: This I don't know. I think he didn't. From what I remember he was just bent down in front of me - I was sitting in a chair - and just vigorously massaging my legs. I certainly don't remember him looking up and seeing me. No. I can clearly remember looking down and seeing him and I felt completely undisturbed, there was no sort of emotional or any other reaction whatever. This is another thing I've noticed that when one's had these sort of experiences one is completely unmoved.

Marichi: It's as though when you think about them, it sounds as though they're very different and exciting and dangerous and moving things that actually happen, to you, it's quite simple and straight-forward.

S: Yes, you don't think about it at all. It seems completely natural. There is nothing to think about - actually you don't think about it. You just observe and there is no reaction.

Marichi: It's something to do with the quality of reality, isn't it? I think when things feel very real sometimes you don't have lots of reactions, it's just there.

S: Yes, one could say that. I remember when I became as it were identified with the physical consciousness again I found I was covered with a profuse perspiration and there was a lot of heat in the body - hence the perspiration. It was very very hot.

Marichi: In spite of the fact that your heart had not been beating?

S: And felt very well. So it's strange isn't it? But it seems quite straightforward and quite logical.

[27]

Verne: Bhante when you saw Violet did you get any signs or a feeling of actual sort of ...?

S: There was certainly a sense of communication, because she asked: "how are you" just as she usually did. I sort of replied without actually using my vocal chords. "Oh, yes I'm all right, thank you!" - after that I officiated at her Buddhist burial. This was quite interesting, even quite amusing because her husband took it very well - they were not only Buddhists, they were Spiritualists. Perhaps they were more Spiritualist than Buddhist in the way that people were in those days along with the Buddhist movement. There were all sorts of things. I remember that their sons-in-law turned up for the funeral in mourning, Carl sent them back, he said he saw no reason for mourning, he didn't feel out of touch with Violet, he didn't feel she was really dead and he sent them back home to change into ordinary suits; so there were about five or six of us and a few other friends that went to the funeral and Carl and the rest of them were sort of talking and laughing happily and naturally all the way to the funeral and the undertakers men were really a bit surprised at this. But anyway they got used to it and I supposed they realized well it was a very old lady and there really was nothing to feel sad about and Carl survived for many years afterwards and knew Buddhadasa quite well. Anyway, "the body works for sentient beings without habit-making thoughts so do speech and mind. These three factors outline Buddha activity. The working for the benefit of sentient beings by body, speech and mind without habit-making thoughts is illustrated by similes in the Utaratantra, like Indra, a drum, a cloud Brahma, the sun, a jewel, like an echo is the Tathagata; like sky and earth!

So it's perhaps, not [28] without significance that this activity is working for the benefit of others without preconceived ideas, is explained by Gampopa with the help of similes. After all, one is dealing with a level, after all one is dealing with Buddha activity where it is really impossible to get an adequate idea, the only thing that one can do is just to suggest by means of illustrations, similes. So this is what Gampopa does. In some ways I wish Gampopa had done this more throughout the whole work. It isn't that an illustration is just an illustration to make something clear that has already been understood in another way, that is to say rationally - the illustration, the metaphor, the simile, very often gives one a glimpse into things in a way that one couldn't get in any other way, one should rely more on imagination than on rational thought, on imagination, even on poetry than on rational analysis to communicate the vision.

Bonnie: What is imagination? It's not one thing and it's not another.

S: Well, what is the imagination? It is - the image making faculty one could say. It's important to distinguish between imagination and fancy. In English Coleridge was the first person to distinguish between fancy and imagination. According to him fancy was an inferior faculty,

fancy is the more or less arbitrary putting together of different parts of things derived from previous experience to make something new, but something new which does not have any organic significance. This is fancy. But the imagination is the use of images to convey a higher reality.

Bonnie: So imagination is pictures.

S: Yes, imagination is a sort of picture. It's as it were seeing things concretely rather than abstractly and when you see them concretely, well, they give you, so to speak, a better impression, a better feeling, a better experience of reality - what things are really like.

[29]

Bonnie: I've had the experience that some people can read the pictures, one's own pictures and other people's.

S: Well, some people are better at producing pictures, better at producing images. They, as it were, speak in terms of images. They think in terms of images, even - not abstractly.

Dhammadinna: Can you work on developing that faculty?

S: I think you can. I think meditation helps.

Paloma: When you do that metta bhavana, I find that - I never could understand how to do this and I always used to think; "May I be happy, may so and so be happy!" - really I could feel nothing. And then I started imagining people in places I hadn't seen before like sometimes you hear a description of Sukhavati and these jewels and things and if you imagine something like that ...

S: Then you have a concrete object, you have an image and that makes it more real.

Paloma: Yes, it's not just a higher picture, it's a higher feeling a different feeling than usual.

S: Yes, this is true. You have a quite different feeling towards an image than you have towards an abstract thought or concept. So the imagination is that faculty, one could say, which apprehends reality in the form of images; concretely and therefore, which is also - what shall I say? - fused with feeling.

Dhammadinna: It seems that you can, say, create an image, imagine the Pure Land, but then there are also images that come uncalled and they seem to be stronger so other levels of imagination as well.

S: Yes, indeed. They're less put together. I distinguished between Coleridge's distinction between fancy and imagination but you can say, well, there isn't just something called fancy and something called imagination - there are all sorts of intermediate forms - so sometimes the image that comes so to speak, from the unconscious is more truly an image, is more truly the imagination at work in those cases, whereas the images which we put together sort of consciously, are more in the nature of fantasies or fancies. They're much flatter.

Dhammadinna: But in a visualization - you try and build up your visualization - and if you're

lucky it works - and you get the other quality comes through the more immediate quality and it seems you have to - and maybe somebody could always visualize colour ...

[30]

S: You sort of consciously construct the provisional image and this provides a sort of base for the manifestation of the real image.

Bonnie: I always encourage my students to carry an image in their minds, - I say, "Make a picture of the object that you're working on and carry it around with you and bring it up and have a look at it when you want to. This is in order to help you solve the problem of what you should do next - the next stage in developing, when it's developing"- and over a year or two they become quite, more and more - skilled at doing that.

S: Well, just to give an example - supposing someone asks you - "well, what is spiritual life?" Well, you can reply in terms of concepts, you can give an analytical idea, but the spiritual life means developing yourself as an individual, developing awareness, positive emotion etc. etc. You can say that.

Well, you can paint a picture, you can do like Blake did in one of his pictures, a deep blue background, stars in the sky, a spiral and figures at different points in that spiral, - the ones higher up had got wings. You need not say anything, just point to that. That's an image of spiritual life - you use your imagination, not just abstract ideas, not just concepts.

So we've got things like the Wheel of Life and the Spiral. These are images and these sometimes speak to us more powerfully than the abstractions. I remember something that happened years and years ago on one of our very early retreats, the second or the third retreat. I was giving a talk on the Wheel of Life, so I had a little inspiration - maybe everybody seemed a bit dull - so I said, "well, let's draw the Wheel of Life". I hadn't planned this before, so I found a blackboard - because this place was a school - I found a blackboard and I started drawing it and somebody produced some paper - and some pencils and everybody started drawing the Wheel of Life - copying my Wheel of Life and I noticed after an hour how utterly absorbed everybody was - how contented and happy, just with drawing the Wheel of Life. And it was just like a lot of little kids sitting there very absorbed in what they were doing and I thought, "well, yes, this is because one is occupied with Buddhism in a completely different way - have forgotten all about words and concepts". It's images which have their own direct appeal, so the imagination is that faculty which sort of uses images to apprehend reality, truth and to communicate. So imagination is a very powerful thing. In most cases we don't use our imagination, we don't have imagination. [31] They're sort of starved. This is Blake's great point, that reason has taken over from the imagination.

Paloma: The thing is - Dhammadinna said that sometimes images come to you - sometimes you can be somewhere and all of a sudden you have this feeling of all these figures, or you even see quite vividly some strange things and then, well, I wonder is it real or is it...?

S: Well, you could say that of anything - well, are our thoughts real? Are ideas real? Are emotions real?

Dhammadinna: I think when you are in touch with the imaginative realm, you actually experience it as more real, than this when you compare it. It's more vivid. Maybe it's got more

conscious ...

S: As Shelley said, "Forms create he can, form more real than living man; nurslings of immortality - and from these" - that is to say from things he observes - "and from these create he can, forms more real than living man, nursling of immortality". This is Shelley's description of what the poet does. His images are more real than those of real life - so-called real life.

Dhammadinna: Is that because they are not subject to decay in the same way. I mean they come and go, but it's a different kind ...

S: Well through them one comprehends reality. They pertain to - well, imagination is a higher faculty than reason, hmm?

Joan: Is that because it includes emotion?

S: Yes, it is partly that, that it includes emotion.

Marichi: It's subtler than reason. It stretches further.

S: Yes, if one uses that kind of language one can say, yes, it is subtler than reason. Reason is comparatively gross.

Marichi: It's got more dimension.

Paloma: It can be quite frightening. You go into a room - there is nothing in this room and you close the door - in fact you are alone or you think that you are alone. Yes, the fact is there is nothing but you in this room but then there is all this imagination if you want to call it that. I never know whether it is something [32] that you create in your mind or images that come from somewhere else. It's very strange.

S: Well, in a way, you don't need to think because it's within the totality of your experience - there is a subjective pole and an objective pole. That is perhaps all one needs to think.

Joan: Children are quite happy to believe in fairies and Santa Claus and dogs and human beings all in the same (bath) ...

S: But they don't mix up do they? At the same time they keep it separate from, as it were, ordinary life. They might, in the course of their play, have a feast with all kinds of things and they'll enjoy that feast. But they'll come in hungry for their tea. They won't kid themselves that they've eaten, oh no! That's a separate sphere of reality, - they're not in the least confused. You see what I mean?

Paloma: Well, there is a kind of gap between your imagination and what you call real ...

S: Well, yes, because as I said the imagination represents a higher faculty and the gap is between your higher faculties and your lower faculties. You have to live in accordance with your imagination, in accordance with your vision, which of course one usually doesn't.

Bonnie: Do you think the imagination aids the vision?

S: Yes - it is perhaps to some extent a question of terminology. But if one uses this terminology at all, I think one could keep vision for something even more rarefied. Imagination is that same vision in a more accessible form, because imagination enters into the arts, enters into the visual arts, into poetry whereas vision perhaps doesn't always. Vision enters only into the very greatest art, one could say.

Marichi: Isn't imagination the tool for transfiguration? I mean, it's what connects the lower and the higher. It's what connects your vision to actuality.

S: Yes, I think one could say that. Imagination is the link between the transcendental and the mundane almost.

Marichi: Because without it, nothing happens.

S: No. There is no real sort of contact. [33] Speaking of visions and imagination - here comes tea! (Laughter)

Paloma: I think it's what inspires us to write especially poetry and stories. That when you are in touch with this you are quite alive because you can never stop (S. Yes, right!)

(End of Tape One)

S: All right, would someone like to read the first simile (I)?

Punyavati: "The vision of Indra is a simile illustrating the activity of Body for sentient beings.

Indra, king of gods, surrounded by a crowd of goddesses stays in his palace, which is pure and transparent as beryl, and outside it his reflection appears. Men and women living on the earth then see that reflection, perceive his endowments and resolve soon to be like him. To that end they strive for the good and wholesome and when they die are reborn in the heavenly world. The vision of Indra is not premeditated and cannot be shaken. It is the same with us. Having approached the Great Meaning of Reality, developed confidence and seen the Body of the Samyaksambuddha adorned with all attributes; having witnessed how variously he sits, rises, moves and goes out; having listened to the Dharma and concentrated on it, we gain confidence by this vision and long to attain this splendour. We then adopt an attitude towards enlightenment as the cause of the Buddha state and in the end realize Buddhahood. In this vision of the Body there is nothing of premeditation, it is something unshakeable. So also it is said:

Just as the body of the king of the gods
Is reflected on the polished surface of a beryl,
So in the polished mind of sentient beings
The reflection of the Body of the Buddha appears.

In this way the Body works for the benefit of others without premeditation."

S: Do you see the point of the simile? It's as though the comparison has in mind the Buddha,

so to speak, working after his bodily death. It's as though the Buddha isn't dead even though the physical body is no longer there. And when the mind is purified, there is, as it were, a reflection of the body of the Buddha in one's mind. One has, as it were, a vision of the ideal. When you think for instance, of what we call the ideal of human enlightenment, it isn't just that you've framed, on purely rational grounds, an abstract idea, a concept of enlightenment. It's more that, in your purified consciousness there is a sort of reflection of the Buddha himself. It's 'only' a reflection - only in inverted commas - but it is enough to give you a sort of vision towards which you can [34] then work. It's more like that, although when one says purify consciousness, you could also say 'imagination'. Your imagination is able to respond to the image of the Buddha, so to speak. Even in a quite literal sense, as when you see the image of the Buddha seated in the shrine. There are many accounts of people who knew nothing of the Dharma, nothing of Buddhism, had no idea about it - that when they saw for the first time a Buddha image, they were very, very deeply impressed and were even led to enquire about Buddhism or into Buddhism, after seeing that image.

So this, you could say, is the whole idea behind Buddhist art. Why do we have Buddha images? Now if the Buddha image is meant to be a reflection of the ideal of enlightenment, a reflection of the body of the Buddha in terms of wood, or stone, or whatever the medium might be. So this suggests also that the artist or the sculptor has to have in his mind an actual reflection, in accordance with which he works. Despite what may seem to be the traditions to the contrary, he can't just work from a blue print of what a Buddha image should be. He's got to have a vision, an inspiration, an imagination of his own and work from that.

So the ideal of enlightenment which the committed Buddhist has in his mind, is not just an abstract thing. It's as it were, the reflection of the Buddha himself, or the Buddha's own body, in his purified consciousness, in his imagination. But imagination is not as we usually mean it, just imagination, no. It's imagination which enable us to comprehend reality. It's the medium between us as mundane beings and ultimate reality. We comprehend reality more adequately through the imagination than through abstract thought. This is right; for instance, if you read an abstract treatise on philosophy, it usually means very little to you. It's dry. But you can read, for instance, a novel by a great writer and you get quite a lot out of it. It's not just entertainment - you get something much more, because he's got imagination, in his own way he's got insight into reality. Certainly the greatest writers have, the most highly imaginative writers. You get more of religion and philosophy from them sometimes, than you get from an abstract treatise on those subjects.

Bonnie: You seem to need to put a lot of energy into that kind of effort.

S: I was reading recently the autobiography of a great modern, Russian religious thinker - that is Gurdjieff - and he relates how [35] what started him off on philosophy was reading the novels of Dostoyevsky and he considers Dostoyevsky a great philosopher. Not that Dostoyevsky engaged in abstract thought, but that he had an imaginative apprehension, not of reality in the abstract, but of life, of people, of what was happening, of truth - you could say.

So the novel is very often the vehicle of that sort of imaginative apprehension of life and reality. It is certainly in the novel in the hands of the greatest novelists. There's only a handful of them but they do rise to the sort of level. This is one of the reasons why in the FWBO, we do draw upon so to speak, some of the great classics of Western literature and the visual arts because they are embodiments of somebody's imagination and the imagination gives a key,

gives a clue if you like to reality. No doubt that the vision, the imagination, is not all-comprehensive, but we get far more from it than we get from abstract thought, in any case.

I remember when I was in the States, when I was in New York, I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and I saw such a lot of paintings. There were lots of beautiful Rembrandts there too; the important Rembrandts. I don't usually like Rembrandts very much, I'm sorry to say, but anyway, there was one Rembrandt there that I really liked very much, and which meant a great deal to me. This was Rembrandt's painting of Aristotle contemplating the bust of Homer - just a bust - and Homer is looking straight ahead, more or less, at the spectator. Aristotle, a rather seventeenth century sort of Aristotle, rather richly dressed, just looking at Homer. And though Homer's looking straight at us. It's as though Homer's quite conscious of Aristotle looking at him. It's as though he doesn't care, he's not taking any notice. So, it seems to me, and this may be my purely subjective interpretation, that Homer represents the imagination. He's the great poet. He's blind but he can see. Aristotle is the intellect. Aristotle is the great abstract philosopher. He doesn't know quite what to make of the imagination. He's slightly baffled. It alludes him, it escapes him. You can see the profundity of Aristotle's thought - his whole attitude and approach, but it isn't enough. Homer, the imagination is something more. This is what the picture meant to me. Whether it was meant to mean that I don't know. Rembrandt probably didn't even think about it in those terms. He just saw this bust of Homer and he had the idea of painting Aristotle looking at it.

Voice: That's more likely. (Laughter)

[36]

S: So he just painted it. He just felt like painting those two figures in that frame. But that's what it seems to convey to me. And there are lots of paintings like that, which mean so much, or you can get so much meaning out of them. They spark off your creative thinking. Like that famous painting, which many people in the Friends know, which has been reproduced in the Mitrata - a painting which is in the National Gallery, of Tobias and the Angel. This seems to represent at least, Kalyana Mitrata.

Bonnie: Is that in the National Gallery?

S: It is, yes. You can also get a poster of it, actually.

Bonnie: My favourite one is from the triptych of Grunewald - a German. There's a triptych and on one side of it is Christ arisen and it's smashing!

S: It's the one with the ... it's the very Unchristian one. (Laughter) Floating up out of the tomb in a sort of rainbow.

Bonnie: Yes, the beautiful rainbow.

S: He puts the drapery into it.

Bonnie: Yes, that's right. And you can see the mundane reality - just by the soldiers - just waiting for them to get out of the way and get the real things going. And I often look at that when I'm in desperate straits.

S: That's not in the National Gallery?

Bonnie: That's not, no.

S: I think that's in Germany.

Bonnie: That's in Germany - I won't get to see that - But that's my favourite painting.

Joan: That painting of Tobias and the Angel, could that be said to represent a situation of empathy?

S: (Pause) Well, yes, one could give it any meaning one pleases. That's the great advantage of these works of art. They stimulate you. It's not 'this is their meaning' - full stop. It's all cut and dried, this is what the artist wanted to convey - No! Sometimes the artist is completely unconscious of the meanings. If you ask him, he says, "I suppose it could mean that." He's not very interested. His mind doesn't work in that way. That's why he's an artist. If he was a philosopher, he would have written [37] a book about it, but he's not a philosopher, he's an artist. Therefore he's painted a picture! I think what is important to understand is that the imagination is a self-contained and self-subsistent language. Do you know what I mean by that? It doesn't have to be translated into some other language to be intelligible. You have to learn that language itself. It isn't that it doesn't have meaning until it's translated into conceptual language. Meaning is not just conception. So to ask what does it mean? In the sense of 'please give me a translation of its meaning into conceptual terms', in a way, that's meaningless. You're asking for a reduced meaning in a way.

Dhammadinna: You rush into interpret it too quickly.

S: Yes. One should look at it and sort of try to absorb it and feel it and experience it and yes, one can suggest provisional meanings and provisional interpretations, the more the better. But not to take them too seriously and certainly not to quarrel over them. (Laughter)

Voice: Images are really symbols aren't they? They've got innumerable meanings?

S: Yes, yes, indeed. An image is a symbol.

Paloma: In a way you could say that the power of imagination lies in that you can't explain what it really is. I notice that why you get put off in school from so many poems and the observation of paintings, I think, is because they have worked out some kind of interpretation of it and have it written down in a booklet and if you don't come close to it, then you are just wrong. There's no personal - it isn't an object to have a personal feeling of something.

S: Yes. You could say that the conceptual interpretation is related to the work of imagination, in the same way that a small black and white reproduction is related to the full-colour, full-scale original. You know, if you examine a book on art, you suddenly got a tiny black and white photograph of a glorious Technicolor painting. It doesn't give you any idea at all. But this is the sort of relationship, or even more so, between the conceptual interpretation and the imaginative reality. So the imagination is its own language. One has to learn that language, not ask for an interpretation of it into one's more familiar conceptual language, [38] because you miss such a lot then.

Dhammadinna: So you really have to learn to reflect on things, till they spark off images in you rather than descend to (contenting) ...

S: Yes, right. A holder should be a whole cluster of images of one's own clustering around that original image.

Noel: Could we speak of imagination as being akin to feminine (transport as it diffuses)...?

S: We get into the question of terminology now. Feminine principle. The muse is feminine usually, but then Apollo is masculine. I don't know. No, I think it might be safer to think of the imagination as androgynous. - (laughter) But it's sort of reconciling in a way; bridging the gap.

Voice: Wasn't Apollo brought up as a woman?

S: I don't remember. Achilles has sojourned among women according to Sir Thomas Brown.

Dhammadinna: If that realm has (other) dimensions then these are less fixed and in the sense of not needing to fix in terms of polarity - masculine and feminine.

S: Yes, right! It depends on the point of view. It could be either. You don't need to say that it's this or that. These sort of clear cut divisions are the working more of the rational mind.

Dhammadinna: So that in a way, would be a sign if you like, of the imaginative level, is if those distinctions cease to be important.

S: Right. One could say that.

Bonnie: Something about the energy and the power of the image of the imagination needs - I think it's hard enough to have plastic images to bring it about because in its diffused state, its too hazy but you can dwell in that area and just not get anywhere. Not go up and not go down, just float. And it needs energy to make those pictures clearer.

S: To embody them.

Bonnie: So that would be androgynous, wouldn't it? On my understanding of what this new word is. (Laughter)

[39]

S: Well, when you go back to New Zealand or Australia if you're asked what you learned in England, you'll be able to say you learned at least one new word (Laughter) The magic word is ... the key to it all is ... (Laughter) ... And they'll say, 'what has happened to Mrs Quirk's course since she became ... it's most extraordinary! She's become quite quirky! (Loud laughter)

Bonnie: I get enough of that already!

S: Well, it'll be super-quirky then. (Laughter)

(Pause)

Anyway, perhaps that's enough - I was going to say exploring images - but in this chapter we're going to be exploring images all the time : "Just as the body of the king of the gods is reflected on the polished surface of a beryl, so in the polished mind of sentient beings the reflection of the Body of the Buddha appears."

If one wanted to extend this one could say, 'whenever there is a degree of purification of the Mind, especially when it's a question of the imagination, there's a reflection of something, and you could say, well, this is a reflection in the last analysis of the - if not of the body, of the Buddha, at least of a tiny little bit of the Buddha's Mandala. There's a sort of almost Platonic idea. That imagination, in whatever form it takes, however it manifests itself, does reflect just a tiny gleam of reality.

This gives to the Fine Arts a sort of significance. This is the sort of significance the Romantics gave to the Fine Arts, especially to poetry. They didn't just have a social function - they weren't just entertainment. They didn't just convey moral lessons. The significance wasn't purely didactic. They gave one a glimpse into a higher world, and one certainly does feel that with some of the visual work and some of the poetry of people like Blake and Coleridge and Wordsworth and so on.

Anyway, let's, just do one more simile and then we'll leave it there for today. Would someone like to read the whole of II?

Bonnie: "The drum of the gods is a simile illustrating how Speech acts for the benefit of all sentient beings;

The drum 'Holding the Power of the Dharma' appears in the palace of the gods as a result of their good deeds and without premeditation proclaims the transitoriness of all that is created thereby admonishing the care-free gods. As is said:

Through former good deeds
Of gods and goddesses
Without exertion, location, intention
And premeditation
The drum of the gods admonishes
The care-free gods ever and again, [40]
By its voice proclaiming
Transitoriness, misery, non-individuality and peace.

In the same way without effort or discursiveness the Buddha's Voice proclaims the Dharma simply because it is good for those so fortunate as to listen to it. As is stated:

Without exerting itself
The Buddha Voice encompasses
All sentient beings
And teaches the Dharma to the fortunate."

In this manner Speech works for the benefit of others without premeditation."

S: Here, as perhaps in previous sections, there's almost a suggestion as though, one isn't concerned just with the Buddha as a historical figure, but almost with the Buddha as a sort of, in inverted commas - 'cosmic principle'. Do you see what I mean? That the nature of existence is such that when you need the Dharma it is there. You hear it. But in ordinary terms, it just underlines the utter spontaneity of the Buddha's teaching of the Dharma. He doesn't teach it with any preconceived idea.

He's just in contact with sentient beings, in contact with their needs, aware of their needs, sensitive to their needs and what needs to be said is said. Sometimes one does find this on a very much lower level, in one's own experience. If you are intensely and openly in communication with another person and very open to their situation and their needs, you find that the words that need to be spoken are spoken. It's not that you bring any preconceived ideas to that situation. It's like the drum appearing as a result of the good deeds of the gods, and sounding in their abodes. (Pause) So once again it's a question of being open to the actual, existing situation.

Marichi: Sometimes when people are in a situation of great need, they cease to be open. You were saying that the nature of existence is such that when you need to Dharma it's there.

S: Yes. They also have got to be open to you, for you to be able, really, to speak the word that they need to hear. It depends on communication. What you say arises in the context of communication, but communication by its very nature is a two-way process. Sometimes people want help or they ask for help in such a way that they preclude the possibility of help. They're not even open to what you are saying. They're saying 'please help me, please tell me what to do!' but in such a way that they're not open to what you have to say.

[41]

Dhammadinna: Sometimes people have preconceived ideas about what they need and they don't recognize ...

S: Yes, preconceived ideas about what you're going to tell them - the advice that you're going to give. They come to you so that you can give them the certain advice which confirms what they themselves think about the situation and what they think they should do. They just want your OK to go ahead. So there must be mutual ... And sometimes, if you talk something over, it's difficult to say whether the solution or conclusion that emerges comes from you or comes from the ... It seems to be a joint product, as a result of the subject being tossed to and fro between you. (pause)

Sometimes there is some extraordinary coincidence, it's as though there is some sort of principle at work. I got a letter from somebody the other day and it was a letter about his own particular question - I won't say about his problems and difficulties but his own particular situation. He'd written it in a quite open sort of way and he was being quite frank and it was explaining, as he felt them to be, his own needs. And then there was a certain line which sort of summed up his need which was a key to the whole thing. So I sat down to write a reply to the letter and for some reason or other turned on the radio, and there was a song and the line of the song was the very line that he had written. What does that mean, so to speak? Well, it's a bit like the 'synchronicity' that Jung talks about.

Bonnie: What was that word?

S: Synchronicity. Your students are going to have a terrible time! (Laughter) - Synchronicity. According to Jung the Book of Changes, the I Ching, is based upon this. The principle seems to be that there's a sort of pattern. All the things that happen under the synchronicity are interrelated and interconnected, so if you get part of the picture, you can get the rest. So in the way you throw the sticks you get a certain hexagram and all that. Well because it's happened at this time, it reflects, so to speak, the whole of the existing situation and gives you a key, gives you a clue to the understanding of it. Seeing these together - they're there at the same time - the things that are all happening at the same time - it's as though that is also mirrored in the sticks.

Bonnie: That's like a kind of a timelessness.

[42]

S: Yes, it's a kind of timelessness. Whereas ordinary thought proceeds sort of serially - with one thing after another in time. Serially - well this is as it were, all at the same time, together. It's akin to space rather than to time so that everything is sort of spread out in space, coexisting, and one thing can give you a clue to all the other things - they're all interconnected. They make a total pattern... from one part of the pattern, you can reconstruct the rest of the pattern.

Bonnie: Seems to be the quality that the more we catch and calculate the more we spot it.

S: This is I think is how intuition works to come back to this word which I don't usually like. If you see a pattern, you just see a corner of it, well you know from the nature of that corner, how the rest of the pattern is going to be. So intuition is that faculty which just sees, let's say, a corner of the pattern and instantly it can construct the rest of the picture, or rest of the pattern. It seems to me to work something like that.

If for instance, a person behaves in a certain way, at once you know what the whole situation is from that tiny bit of information.

Voice: I seem to be thinking (inaudible) about making your own personal mandala. Do you think that works in a similar way - it's a sort of symmetrical pattern? The sort of pattern that people build up...

S: Oh yes. Except that they're not usually beautiful balanced Mandalas - they're very often fragmentary and distorted.

Same Voice: But really what one would be aiming for is a balanced mandala... (S: A Mandala by definition is balanced) ...so that it would have this same flavour throughout it... takes a bit to sense what the rest would be like.

S: Even in the case of people's non-mandalas - their distorted bits and pieces, very often if you get one little bit or see one little bit, you can instantaneously reconstruct the rest. That's your intuition, that sort of faculty. You can go to some new place and you just observe a single thing and from that you know the whole situation.

[43]

Bonnie: Interesting that it leaps at one from another angle

S: You could say that intuition is that faculty which is able to leap from the part to the whole simply by seeing the part. That's because the connection between the part and the whole is not arbitrary. The part is the part of the whole which has a certain pattern or at least a certain character, so that if you've grasped one you could grasp the rest. Some people can work it all out step by step, work out the whole from the part, but others can do it, not only rapidly but instantaneously.

Voice: That sort of faculty is developed from meditations? Like all faculties... (inaudible) ...

S: Yes, I think so... There's the supposed case of the gypsy fortune-teller. It's not real intuition, it's very quick thinking. Sometimes it's difficult, to distinguish. Someone comes to see her and she says, "Ah, my dear, you're married but you're not happily married, are you?" And the woman says, what wonderful intuition! But the gypsy's noticed that on the wedding ring finger, there's a slightly white band. In other words, the woman normally wears a wedding ring but she's not wearing it today. Why is that? Why should a woman not wear her wedding ring? Something's gone wrong or she didn't want to pass as married, so there's some disturbance in that area ... So the gypsy can sort of seize this and instantly she twigs the whole situation. So this is such a simple example, it can't be said to be real intuition. But there are some things, much more complex than that which you can see, just work out in an instant. That really is your intuition.

Michelle: Can that be brought up as well, through meditation - that intuitional capacity?

S: Yes, I think you can. Yes. It will clarify your linear type of thinking too. Because that needs to be sustained and for that you need concentration. We can't think adequately in that sort of way because we lack application, we lack concentration, and meditation can certainly build up that particular quality or that particular faculty. So that with the help of meditation you can learn to follow quite lengthy trains of thought, of that linear type.

Verne: Memory must come into it as well, to attain that 'under the surface' vision?

[44]

S: Yes, indeed. (Pause) You notice how Gampopa is not trying to explain anything in an analytical way, he just sort of presents these pictures. At this sort of level, this is all that one can do. Very often at other levels, lower levels, the picture is the most adequate mode of representation, or communication - you can do a lot with pictures.

Sulocana: ... non-individuality - that would be beyond ordinary individuality?

S: Yes, this invites first proclaiming the three characteristics of conditioned existence plus peace, which is Nirvana. So transitoriness, misery or dukkha', suffering, non-individuality, that is the absence of any fixed unchanging individuality and peace which is Nirvana. So, in the same way, without effort or discursiveness the Buddha's Voice proclaims the Dharma simply because it is good for those so fortunate as to listen to it".

I had a strange experience once, looking at it more than once, when I was in a situation of having to give many lectures immediately after Dr Ambedkar's death. I've spoken about that actual situation a number of times, but there's just one thing I've just recollected, that I haven't ever spoken about, which was this. I had to give all these lectures, and clearing having to

function in response to people's needs. I had no time to prepare any lecture. So you could say that I was having to give the lectures without preconceived ideas. On one occasion I was in the midst of one of my lectures usually around an hour long and I realized I was speaking but I was not thinking. I was listening to the words, but there were no thoughts in my mind in accordance with which I was speaking the words. There was no thought at all. So maybe it is something like that. If you're completely spontaneous, really responding to people's needs, in that sort of situation, it's not that you think first and then speak, you don't have any ideas, you produce sounds, you produce words which have meaning, but there's no subjective sense of meaning. You're just uttering vocables. Vocables which are appropriate do the situation. But you're not thinking.

Voice: What are vocables?

S: Sounds made by the voice. So I noted this. I didn't think about it, but I thought about it afterwards when I recalled it, that that was really strange.

[45]

Marichi: It's opening your mouth in response to a situation - you were fluent because you were practised.

S: Yes, because this was a whole lecture, as far as I could see listening to it - it was well-constructed. But I was doing no thinking whatever. I was just opening my mouth and words were coming out, which is quite strange.

Marichi: So you must know your actual feelings more in relation to the people who are listening to you apart from the viewers standing around watching everything going on.

S: Yes. There's just a fragment or a fraction of an observer, just observing noting, without surprise - "Well, that's what's happening".

Voice: Is that because you got quite strongly identified with your words?

S: I was very much in tune with them. In the course of four days I gave 34-35 lectures, and it was an emotionally highly charged situation - a crucial situation. The fact that I was there in Naipur at that time, got around in that way - is having repercussions right down to this very moment. It's very important. So... what can one say:

Voice: And you were not operating in a normal way at all.

S: Yes, I'd never functioned quite in that way before and I think possibly not since. And I noted that when I left for Calcutta, the morning of the fifth day, after having functioned in that sort of way, far from feeling exhausted and tired it was completely the opposite.

Marichi: It must have been a very clear sort of imagery as well.

S: Yes, it was a very clear situation. One saw exactly what had to be done and one just did it. That was that. A completely uncomplicated situation which totally unified all one's energies. I think I can say that never in my life had my energies ever been unified to that extent before. There wasn't a single or to speak of fraction of an ounce of energy which was not totally

involved in that situation. And you don't often get that opportunity. It doesn't depend just upon you. It does depend also on the situation. So it was a little like - there was the situation and there was the drum resounding in the midst of it. It really was like that. I listened to myself without alienation, I think ...

(End of Side A)

[46]

S: ... as I might have listened to another person. Because you listen to someone, you don't have the thoughts first and then hear the voice, you don't hear his thoughts and then hear his voice, you just hear the voice. That's all you're conscious of. In the same way, I was only conscious of my voice. There were no thoughts and ideas in my mind.

Punyavati: How does that differ from - when you speak without tact and you speak from impulse?

S: When you speak from impulse, you're not responding to the needs of the objective situation. You're just blurting out whatever is in you. I think perhaps that's the opposite extreme.

Voice: This is also a situation you had some practice in.

S: Yes, but not to that degree.

Marichi: It's almost as if you'd been prepared and known the situation would be intense and didn't let out. You couldn't say, "I've got them on the beat now" and go on and on. So the channels were prepared...

S: Well, I remember the last day, the fourth day, I started giving my lectures at 8 o'clock in the morning. I think I had 12 or 13 that day. The last one was at 2 o'clock the following morning. And after breakfast I left for Calcutta, and I felt fine. I'd never felt better in my life. I remember this was in 1957. I don't know if I can write my next volume of memoirs. I want to finish with those 4 or 5 days. That was the Buddha's Jyanti year. A lot of things happened for me in that year. But I remember this happening more vividly than any of the others.

Janet: Did it have a sudden strong effect on you ...?

S: That's difficult to say. I think it must have done. I can't say I definitely recollect. But I think it must have done. I think in a way there must have been a permanent gain for me.

Marichi: You must have always been slightly different.

S: Yes, I think so. At least in that one knew one could do that, that one could function in that way. And looking back on that, I was sort of mildly surprised that I'd been able to rise to the occasion like that, though at the time one just doesn't think in that sort of way. You just function and that's that. It's very ordinary. (Break in tape) But you don't have time to think, anyway, and that's one of the advantages of the situation. If you had time to think, well, you would think and if you thought, you'd be lost. (Laughter) [47] But there's certain situations which don't permit you, don't give you time to think. They, give you therefore, your

opportunity, or give some other part of you that doesn't usually have the opportunity to function, an opportunity to function.

Spontaneity is a great thing, you could say. It squeezes out so much. You might remember, those of you who were around when I left London at the end of '72, beginning of '73 and I wrote something in Shabda or the Order newsletter - it was hard to differentiate them in those days - I wrote something for publishing somewhere - that one of the reasons I left London was just to extricate myself from the planned activities, the programmed and to give some scope for some unprogrammed energy. In other words one had to be quite careful not to tie oneself down in such a way that you had no opportunity to be spontaneous. Otherwise you'd just got it all planned for weeks, months, even years ahead, and there's no room no scope for the free play of energy and that isn't a very good situation. There have to be some gaps where the energy can just sort of spurt up, as it were. Or not, as you feel like it. (Laughter)

Marichi: It's that you have a gap, that does allow the energy to circulate a bit. It's when you get back into the things again that the energy gets leaden ...

S: Yes. Ideally, yes, one should be able to stay even in a strictly controlled situation with your energy responding to all those programmed needs. But it usually isn't possible.

Anyway, let's leave it there for today and conclude tomorrow with the rest of these similes.

(End of Tape 2)

[48]

Punyavati: Bhante, I wonder if you could go over the points of yesterday, I feel a bit confused about it.

S: If you're confused that good, because it means that you're not under the delusion that you're understood what Buddha activity is. (Laughter) I remember I was given quite a bit of food for thought some years ago when after one of my lectures a very old lady who was a friend of mine - she must have been 82 or 83 - she came up to me and she said "I really appreciate these lectures so much, but" she said, "there's just one thing I'd like to say", she said, "they are so clear, that they give us the impression that we understand them." (Laughter) So one has to be a little suspicious of one's own clarity of understanding. And if you do feel confused with regard to Buddhist teaching, especially of the Mahayana. But that's a good healthy sign, because you're not kidding yourself that you've understood what it's all about.

Sue: Bhante, how can you tell that you know? Is there ever really a way?

S: How does one know that one knows? I think it has to be confirmed in practice. If, for instance, you think you're really full of Metta, that you really do like other people, whether that is just your subjective feeling or whether that is the way you really are, you can only tell by observing how you behave with, how you treat other people, that's the only way. If you claim to be detached, if you claim to have understood the relativity of the distinction between subject and object or do you really treat others as you treat yourself ... I don't think there's any abstract theoretical criterion as such.

Dhammadinna: So if you really understood Buddha Activity, you are a Buddha really.

S: Yes, one could say that if one was sincerely treading the spiritual path and trying to be an individual, and especially if you develop Insight, probably there's a glimmering of Buddha nature in you. And therefore, just a shadow has reached a Buddha Activity. And then from that, you will at least have an inkling of what Buddha Activity is really like. But until that time it's just words. It's not even ideas, it's just words. One needs the words and one needs the ideas just at least theoretically to orient oneself, so that later on one can maybe know what it is you're supposed [49] to be checking up on ... Now what about those points you wanted ...

Punyavati: I just lost track of it all - I got really confused. Just (?) to use a human image of it.

S: Well, without looking at the text - I haven't looked at it since yesterday - I recall that there were just images, as though Gampopa had given up the hope of being able to explain in conceptual terms what Buddha Activity was like, and had recourse entirely to similes, to images. And the point which seems to come across from these similes, from these images, was that Buddha Activity was a spontaneous outflow of Buddha nature itself and that it did not proceed in accordance with any preconceived ideas and could not be contained within any sort of structure, whether conceptual or whatever in any way. This was the impression that I was getting from what we read. And that to this extent that one is enlightened, and that to the extent that oneself participates in Buddha Activity, one will be uncontainable within any particular framework. One would be spontaneous. One's activity would be just the overflow of what one is; a spontaneous expression of one's being, proceeding in a way that by passes thought. You may be able to correlate it with thought, but it is not dependent on thought, does not proceed in accordance with thought and certainly is not limited by thought.

I think the images and similes that we will be studying this afternoon would convey much the same message within a slightly different context as though it was to reinforce it. So let's go on to III at the bottom of page 272. We've seen the spontaneous working of body. We've seen the spontaneous working of speech. Now we come to the mind of the Buddha. Would someone like to read:

"The cloud is a simile illustrating the unpremeditated working of Mind.

In summer the sky is covered effortlessly with clouds and rain falls without premeditation so that it is said:-

In summer clouds
Are the cause of excellent crops
And rain falls
Effortlessly on the earth.

In the same way the working of Mind without premeditation causes the rain of the Dharma to fall and so brings the crop of the good and wholesome to fullness. As is said:

Out of the cloud of Compassion
The rain of the Doctrine of the Victorious One
Falls without premeditation
As a continuous harvest for all.

[50]

In this manner Mind works for the benefit of others without premeditation."

S: We did really touch upon this yesterday with respect to our own particular level. This is the sort of thing that occurs in a very mundane sort of way, in the course of ordinary human communication; as when you're trying to explain the Dharma - not that you have any preconceived idea about explaining the Dharma, or about the Dharma but when suppose for instance you meet a new person at the centre and you're quite aware of them, you become aware of their needs and you're able to respond. It's not that you've got any fixed ideas that you must explain the Four Noble Truths or explain the Noble Eight-fold Path. You just say what seems to meet their needs spontaneously in your mind and you just speak in accordance with that. That's the sort of thing that Gampopa has in mind here. And this is the way in which the Buddha operates, on the highest possible level. This is what the Dharma is.

It's not when the Buddha arose from beneath the Bodhi tree and he had a preconceived idea of what he was going to teach. He taught in accordance with the needs of living beings and it's in that sense that it is sometimes said in the Mahayana sutras that the Buddha has nothing to teach - that he teaches nothing. He simply responds to the needs of living beings. It's not that he has a preconceived idea or preformulated truth that he wanted to impart. That's how we think of it because we gather up all the things that the Buddha said on different occasions to different people. They say, "that's the Dharma"; in a sense, it is, in a sense it isn't. It's the result of the impact of the Buddha's enlightened personality on the unenlightened personalities that he met. If he'd met people of a different kind it might have been, at least in the details, a different Dharma. It wouldn't have been an essentially different Dharma because there would have still been people, still been sentient beings. Their needs would have been basically the same. So it would have been basically the same Dharma, but for form might have been quite different. Might have been quite different - if instead of meeting intellectually-minded Indians he had met practically-minded Chinese.

Supposing the Buddha had been born in Ancient Egypt and gained Enlightenment there. How would he have expressed himself to the Ancient Egyptians? He wouldn't have spoken in terms of Brahma, if he mentioned anything it would be have been in the sense of Thoth or Osiris. He would have to have made use of whatever language was to hand. He wouldn't have had to say [51] anything about the caste system, certainly not about the Indian caste system. (Fault in tape)

... within the context of human communication. The Buddha being one party, to the communication and unenlightened beings, Gods and Men, the other party to the communication.

Liz: Does that mean the Buddha had no ideas or held no views?

S: Yes, very much so. In what, as far as we can tell are the earlier parts of the Pali Canon, this is very strongly emphasized - that Buddha is free from views. He has no fixed opinions. All he has is an enlightened mind and that enlightened mind comes into contact with other unenlightened minds it cannot but help clarify them.

Verne: Does that mean at the end of the Metta Sutta ...

S: What's that?

Verne: I was hoping that you would remember it, about...

S: Coming to earth no more in any womb? That's the last one.

Verne: It's about action. About the Buddha mind being in action.

S: Karaniya Metta Sutta - let's have a look. We've said the end of the Karaniya Metta Sutta. "So shall a man by leaving far behind all wrongful views by walking righteously, attain to Gnostic vision and crush out all lust for sensuous pleasures. Such in truth shall come to birth no more in any womb". Were you thinking of 'leaving behind all wrongful views'?

Verne: I think so, yes. So that one has purely action in their being - not so much their being but ...

S: Because you can use views to communicate a state of being, a state of insight. It's not that you can't make use of them, but they're not ends in themselves, they're only a means to an end. They're only a basis for communication, a framework for communication. They don't have any ultimate validity in themselves, and that's why, if you're really clever, you can talk to people, in a sense about Buddhism without bringing Buddhism in. But of course you must really be able to do that. I mean, it's easy to say that but how would you explain the Four Noble Truths without mentioning the Four Noble Truths? It's not so easily done. But it can be done. And it's the more easily done if you really have assimilated the Four Noble Truths. If you're really assimilated the Four Noble [52] Truths, you don't necessarily have to speak in terms of the Four Noble Truths. It's only when you haven't.

Verne: I sometimes think it's the only thing that one can (doubt?) too. Aniketa was talking to a friend of mine at my home just before she went back and although the conversation was a little bit heavy and the friend of mine said she really felt 'Buddha-bashed' afterwards, But in the course of that conversation, she did actually come up with the fact that suffering or just discomfort or disease was what made her want to grow and change. And she came up with this herself.

S: Ah, yes! That's interesting. She discovered it for herself, so to speak.

You noticed the simile of the cloud. "Out of the cloud of compassion, the rain of the Doctrine of the Victorious One falls without premeditation as a continuous harvest for all". It's as though your whole spiritual experiences gather in the sky of your own mind, just like the clouds massing together. And when the time is right for rainfall, well, the rain falls on the crops that need the rain. You just impart what you 'know' - in inverted commas - to those who need that understand[ing], just of the fullness of your own experience. (Pause)

The watchword here would seem to be 'be natural'. In the sense, though it can be misunderstood - be yourself. If you've assimilated the Dharma to any extent - if you are just yourself - something of the Dharma will come across. You may sometimes know people who quote texts, but anything but the content of the text actually comes across.

Sometimes a Christian preacher tries to convince you that God loves you - it's some religion that loves you - We must be careful not to try to convince anybody about metta. I mean, that's what we were - you mustn't get angry with them. They won't accept your guidance on the

subject of metta (Laughter). Otherwise your actions will be speaking louder than your words to them. You remember Emerson's famous saying, he said, "What you are is speaking so loudly, that I cannot hear what you say'. Anyway let's go on to IV.

Kay: "Just as Brahma, king of gods, without leaving his own world shows himself in all those of the gods, so also the Buddha without moving from his Dharmakaya displays the twelve events in his life and other wondrous manifestations for those who have to be taught. As is stated:

Just as Brahma
Not moving from the Brahma world [53]
Without effort appears
In all spheres of gods,
So without moving away
From the Dharmakaya, The Buddha
Without exertion in all realms
Shows his manifestations to the fortunate."

S: Here, according to the Mahayana point of view, the Buddha, especially the Buddha in his Dharmakaya, is represent[ed] almost as a pre-existent spiritual being. But one need not go so far as that. If one thinks of the Buddha even after his enlightenment, he doesn't move from his experience of enlightenment. He remains seated on the Diamond Throne. Do you see what I mean? Once you're enlightened, you're always enlightened. Whatever you do, whatever you say, is done and said from the standpoint of that enlightenment. You never move from that. You may appear to be doing different things or saying different things, but actually you're just conveying, you're just communicating one message which is the message of enlightenment, whatever you're doing and whatever you're saying. That is there behind, so to speak, all the time. Or whether you're not saying or not doing anything at all. (Pause)

Sometimes you get the feeling, even in the case of ordinary people, that whatever they're doing, whatever they are engaged in, whatever they are saying, they're being themselves and they're recognizable as themselves, despite or through the variety of things they are saying and doing. So it's like that or even more like that in the case of the Buddha.

He's enlightened all the time, to back up whatever he says, whatever he does. Even if he's not talking about the Dharma,; or you could say, putting it the other way around, whatever he says is is Dharma, even if he says, "please put something more in my bowl", it expresses the Dharma.

Noel: Is that what is meant then by seeing all things through other people?

S: It includes that, yes, surely. But when one speaks of being all things to all men, it is not - the other part of that is that you are the same thing to all men. I mean, you are putting across the same message basically, which is yourself, - in the case of the Buddha your enlightened self - in all these different ways; you're saying the same thing. You're being the same thing to all men. It's equally true to say that as to say you're being all things to all men. The 'all things' which we are to all men, refers to the [54] outward mode of expression which can vary. 'The same thing' refers to the inner message, which is uniform throughout. Because in a sense, there's no message in a purely conceptual sense, which your own enlightened being, which

remains constant, despite what you say and what you do. I say, 'despite', but actually what you say and what you do gives expression to that in a variety of ways according to the people that you're in contact with. There's difference in the same thing, of identity. This is why, in the case of the Five so called Wisdoms, Five Awarenesses, Five Dhyanas, there's a Pratya(peksana?) Dhyana which is the knowledge of the awareness of the differences of things and also the Samatha-dhyana - the knowledge of things. They're both there. They both have to be balanced.

Paloma: The other day you said that one is different - with any other person like for instance and the Buddha saw that you are always different according to with which person you are.

S: You're always different, but at the same time you are always the same. It is because you are different that you can be the same. How can you be the same by being the same? (Laughter) Because in order to produce the effect on a different person, you have to be different! If you are 'the' same, then you produce a different effect. It's only by being different that you can produce the same effect! That's obvious! You see what I mean?

Paloma: I haven't quite understood that.

S: Would anyone else like to have a go at it? (Laughter)

Joan: You want to produce the same effect on everyone from your one experience. But everyone you talk to is different, so you're going to be different as you talk to each one of them. But you're not talking about all your differences, you're talking from your one enlightened experience, that will take different forms to different people.

S: They will have to take different forms, because they are different. So in order to communicate your one, let us say, state of being, you'll have to behave differently or speak differently with different people, so you can only be the same to them, that is to say, in the case of the Buddha, an enlightened being, by being different with them, You can only communicate the same thing to everybody by communicating a different thing to everybody... to put it in a slightly paradoxical way. (Laughter)

[55]

Voice: I wonder if that's because everybody's either a (hedgehog) or ... competitive or just a bit different?

S: Everybody's different and everybody's the same. If they were completely different you couldn't communicate anything. If they were completely the same, there would[n't] be any need for communicating.

Paloma: But it's different if only the form changes, whereas if you change because there is - I can understand if you are all the same, but the form or manner in which you communicate is different. That I can understand.

S: I can put it that way, but at the same time the way in which you communicate is also you. It's not that the you is something fixed and static, though the way one speaks may imply that or suggest it.

Voice: You are the same.

Paloma: Well, the you goes through it.

S: You're not just putting on something. It's not an act that you put on for the benefit of a particular person. You are being yourself, even though you are being yourself in a specific way. It's suited to the purposes of your communication with that particular person. You're completely there behind it.

Voice: A bit like a chameleon ... A lizard that changes colour in relation to different situations.

S: It's the same lizard you could say. It's like the Persian Rose that is different at different times of the day. It starts off white, then it becomes yellow then it becomes pink.

Voice: Does it go back to white again?

S: I don't think it does. It only last for one day.

Voice: Is that like a Bodhisattva's skilful means?

S: It's a sort of spontaneous natural adaptation, but he's being it, saying the same thing throughout. (Pause) You can sense that. You can sense that Gampopa's finding it very difficult to explain.

Paloma: You read the note, quote?

S: You can always draw a little picture.

Paloma: I'm doing it (Laughter)

S: There's a nice poetic quote. Would someone like to read V?

[56]

Joan: "Just as the rays of the sun without premeditation simultaneously open the buds of numberless flowers, so the rays of The Buddha's Dharmakaya, without premeditation and effort, open the buds of white lotuses which are the minds of an infinite variety of individuals with different interests and waiting to be taught. As is said:

Just as the sun without premeditation
By the direct spreading of its rays
Opens the lotus flowers
And ripens others,
So the rays of the sun-like Dharma
Of the Tathagata
Enters without premeditation
The minds of beings to be taught.

Or, just as the sun is reflected simultaneously in all clean vessels, so is the Buddha at one and

the same time in all beings to be taught. As is stated:

Therefore in water vessels and
In individuals to be taught,
The reflection of the sun, the Tathagata,
Appears simultaneously in infinite forms."

S: That's very clear. All the different flowers open in their different ways - not just lotus flowers - all open by the warmth and light of the same sun, which is quite spontaneous. The sun doesn't think in terms of any particular effect. They all open, even though they be of different sizes and shapes and colours, different numbers of petals, but the overall effect is the same. That the rays of the sun open them all up.

So it's not just the Buddha's teaching which is - the Buddha effects like that. The Buddha is like the sun. Maybe the Dharma is like the rays of the sun - the sun and its rays being inseparable.

It's not that the Buddha says, "Come on, open up". The Buddha is just there and communicates and the opening up process takes place. You find that with people, don't you? Supposing that someone invites you for a meal - they don't have to talk to you in terms of opening up. The way that they treat you, the way that they give you a cup of tea, or the way that they offer you a meal - the very way that they behave with you, it encourages you to open up, to expand your little petals, to bask in the sunshine, as it were. Don't you find that this is what happens? It's a quite spontaneous, natural kind of thing. Coincidentally the sun is shining, all the little petals open up (Laughter).

It's very significant that almost the Buddha's first utterance was, or perhaps it was his first utterance - related to seeing human beings, seeing sentient beings as lotus flowers, in various [57] stages of development. That's very very significant. That means a lot more, I think, than many more conceptual, analytical teachings or lengthy (elevations?) of teachings.

In a way, we should think in these sort of terms when people come along to the centre. You've got to open them up and you won't do that by grasping hold of their petals and roughly prising them apart which is what some people with the best of intentions do. You've just got to open them up with warmth and happiness. They'll open up fast enough then. You don't have to hit them over the head with the Four Noble Truths or with your Vajra. (Laughter)

Bonnie: It's very inspiring to read, especially in the simile form. It's so easy to just cruise in the beauty of it. But I keep thinking over and over again, we're at the moment on the receiving end but when we go away from here, we're supposed to be at the other end, of offering out.

S: Yes, here you can afford to be little lotus flowers but there you've got to be little suns, with beautiful rays coming out. (Laughter)

Bonnie: That's the hard bit.

S: I'm sure you will be, to some extent. You have to glow and sparkle, you know you can. (Laughter) You just mustn't be inhibited.. You mustn't hide your light under a bushel, in Biblical phrase, which most people do actually.

Bonnie: It really is metta, isn't it?

S: Yes, yes, indeed. (Pause) Carry on with another simile:

Michelle: "Or just as the sun is reflected simultaneously in all clean vessels, so is the Buddha at one and the same time in all beings to be taught. As is stated:

Therefore in water vessels and
In individuals to be taught,
The reflection of the sun, the Tathagata,
Appears simultaneously in infinite forms."

S: There's a slight change in the simile here - do you see that? To begin with, there's the sun shining on the lotus flowers, but now it's the sun shining on and into the water in different vessels. Do you see this? It's as though it carries...

Voice: The pupil are reflecting.

S: Yes. It's as though it isn't simply that the light of the Buddha's rays just shine on you and wake you up. The Buddha [58] himself is reflected in you. It's as though the Buddha himself comes to [give] birth in you, because as you've woken up, you reflect the Buddha, you become more like the Buddha - you are transformed into the Buddha.

That is another way of looking at the opening up process. It's as though when you open up your petals, right there in the middle, hidden before by the fact that the petals were all closed, is a Buddha. It isn't that the sun shines on you and you just open up and you remain a little lotus flower, no. You are transformed into a sun. It's a rather mixture of similes, but do you see what is meant?

Or again - there are other similes. The Buddha is the chicken which has been hatched and you're just the egg or rather you are the little chick inside the egg. And the Buddha goes tap, tap, tap with his beak, "Wake up, wake up", and in that way he wakes you up, and what with you tapping from within and him tapping from without, you break through the shell and you emerge. And you are a chicken or another bird - that's not very poetic -(Laughter) - if I said 'phoenix', along with the Buddha. Not that you remain a somewhat more developed egg. No. You hatch into a bird, just like the Buddha.

So it's not that the Buddha, the sun shines on you, the lotus flower and you just open up and remain a lotus flower, No. You are transformed into a sun. You could say that the Buddha is a sort of thousand-petalled lotus sun shining upon you and you open up and you become also a sort of thousand petalled lotus sun. It's more like that eventually. (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: When you're just a little sun, it seems that some lotuses open to you and some don't. (S.: Yes, that's true) Is that because you haven't developed a rich enough sunlight ...

S: I think it's very few people who can appeal to or make an appeal to absolutely everybody. It does seem that even in someone who is enlightened - I think this is the Theravada Buddhist teaching - that even Buddha's are of different character types, well, just because those who are not Buddhas and it does seem that some people are attracted by a definite type of spiritual

person, a definite type of teacher. It's as though you can't appeal unless you're into every kind of person. Perhaps a Buddha can. Or no, or maybe even a Buddha can't. We know that there were some people who met the Buddha himself and weren't impressed. He didn't succeed in converting them, didn't succeed in winning them. They turned [59] their backs on him, sometimes quite literally.

So every character type, or every particular approach has its limitation. It cannot satisfy or cannot appeal to everybody. So I think one has to accept this. So I think in the early days - I certainly remember this myself - when you are trying to communicate something of Buddhism to others, however sincerely, sometimes you do fail and I think you have to accept the fact of your failure. You may be tempted to think, "if only I could have put it more clearly or more eloquently". Well, perhaps that is so, but nonetheless, it sometimes happens that even though you do your best, and couldn't possibly [have] tried more or done better, you don't succeed, whereas somebody else might. And I think you have to accept this - that personality does play quite an important part. This is one of the reasons why it is good to have in any given area, quite a large number of Order members. If you've just a few Order members, more or less of the same type, that is going to limit the appeal, of the movement.

Verne: At some stage of a person's growth they are more open to a certain type of person and then at a later stage they might ...

S: Indeed, it can change, yes indeed. As they themselves grow and develop, they are or they become more open to a greater number of kinds of people on whatsoever spiritual levels. It's noticeable that there are certain Friends who are definitely attracted to certain Order members; sometimes for valid reasons, sometimes under a definite misapprehension.

This was talked about not so long ago and some Order members - this is with regard to men Order members, I don't know if it works out the same way with the women Order members - but some men Order members came to realize that they were regarded, by quite a lot of Mitras and Friends as the soft option. They were the rather easy-going Order members who could be expected to give Mitras and Friends a pretty easy time. In some cases it might have been so, in other cases not. But they were more attracted by them, and that's the point. They didn't feel, as it were, so afraid of them so they tended to gravitate towards those Order members who were considered as soft options. (Laughter)

Verne: ... spiritual friends who are quite different. So that they can get a ...

[60]

S: That's true too.

Verne: I know at home I felt particularly close to Aniketa and Udaya but for such opposite reasons that they don't ... Udaya is good at sort of kicking you and such and Aniketa's very soft and able to empathize. Those two qualities balance each other out whereas one by itself is either...

S: Either too much or not enough (Laughter)

(End of Side A)

S: (continuation of a joking repartee) Like you Dhammadinna or like...? (Laughter makes replies inaudible) ... It would be in some ways...

Verne: But it should ultimately be a balancing in that person...

S: Right, indeed. It sounds as though you need a different sort of approach and one is quite conscious of this. It's good to know, in the case of Order members, to know that one particular Order member is really pretty tough and if you feel you need tough treatment, you've been backsliding and you really want to be told where it's at, you go along to that person. But if you're feeling rather frail and vulnerable and (Laughter covering up words) then you go along to another kind of Order member. One who is well-known to be warm and sympathetic, who won't tick you off but will just sympathize and so on... (Laughter)

Well, one does have one's different moods, doesn't one? I think when you get to know, speaking from the Mitra's standpoint, different Order members, then you reckon they're all committed people, but they've got their different flavours, their different characteristics. They're as different as chalk from cheese, despite their common commitment and you may be attracted to this sort of Order member and not so attracted towards that Order member even though you know that they're equally committed. Or you may want to spend more time with one on a certain occasion and more time with another one another sort of occasion.

I think it's very important also to recognize the personality factor, and make allowances for it and not give it too much objective importance. It's just a personality difference which may make a difference or play its part in a certain way in a certain context but which is not ultimately of any real validity or importance.

[61]

Bonnie: I think that's a really important point. You just get so many niggles and distractions and become too involved in... personalities.

Verne: In some cases (it's good) to allow people to have their clay feet but not to allow that to prevent you from seeing their vision or commitment.

S: That's rather different, because clay feet is another matter, because clay feet are something that anyone who has them should get rid of them as quickly as possible. That is not just personality types, that is just personal weakness, which is a different thing. You must be quite sure it is a personality weakness and not just a difference of personality. Sometimes one thinks it's a weakness but say, it's just a difference.

Paloma: How do you know when it's a difference or this 'clay feet'?

S: I think just by study, by observation.

Paloma: Does clay feet mean being a bit gross - a bit heavy?

S: No. It means being just weak - not weak in the sense of not being very strong, but it (denotes) a definite defect of character. The image is drawn from the Old Testament, - one of the prophets saw a vision of a great figure, and I think a head of gold and a trunk of glass etc., etc. and then the feet of clay which is the most ignoble material.

Joan: And something that breaks.

S: Yes.

Paloma: I thought it was something heavy.

S: No, it's just weak, as it were.

Verne: I was thinking more in terms of parts that were not integrated...

S: (One could convey that two) But the distinction still holds good that one mustn't confuse the difference of personality with a definite weakness in that person's personality.

Punyavati: This would be quite different from a difference in personalities - it would be quite different from conflict.

S: Yes, well you can get on well, with people of totally different personalities from yourself. Difference does not (imply) conflict at all. In fact, sometimes you find that people with different personalities get on very well with each other. (Pause) All right, let's carry on - six.

[62]

Noel: "Just as a Wish-fulfilling Gem, after being prayed to, without premeditation -grants any wish, so through reliance on The Buddha the Various aspirations of Sravakas and others are fulfilled. As is written:

Just as the Wish-fulfilling Gem
At once and without premeditation
Grants every wish of
Those who live in this world of Karma,
So also in relying on the Wish-fulfilling Gem
(The Buddha), the various aspirations
Are fulfilled without premeditation
By hearing the Dharma."

S: There's a slight variation in the simile here, isn't there? Here, you take the initiative - that is to say, the person who approaches the Wish-fulfilling Gem. So the Wish-fulfilling Gem grants your wish, quite spontaneously. So in the same way, the Buddha gives you whatever you want, whatever spiritual gift you want. What the Buddha gives is measured by your aspiration. If you want individual enlightenment, all right, you get that! If you want universal enlightenment, you get that! You get that, you are given that. In other words, the Buddha is able to give his 'light', so to speak, to the extent that you wish to open your petals. He can't force you to take more than you want to take. He's ready to give you whatever you want to take, whatever you wish to ask, just like a Wish-fulfilling Gem.

So anyway, this simile illustrates the aspect of - so to speak - "knock and it shall be answered". You can't be given more than you already agree to take. The Dharma can't be forced on you. If you don't want to open your petals, all right, there's nothing that the sun can do about it. It just goes on shining. If you don't want to respond to the Dharma, there's nothing that the Buddha can do.

Marichi: Is that why the simile of giving generously is used - it's something more impersonal - I mean something with no particular volition?

S: Yes. It's not that the sun shines and you just have to open up whether you like it or not. It's not an automatic thing, as you say. You, in a sense have to take the initiative or at least to co-operate.

Marichi: And it's not because like the Buddha likes you, it's more like you have a particular aspiration, in a particular direction.

S: Yes, right, yes.

[63]

Voice: I remember when I was typing a puja seminar, it stressed quite strongly that in 'entreaty and supplication', you actually make a move and you ask ...

S: Yes, that's true. That's a good comparison. I mean, the light, so to speak, is pouring out of the sun all the time. You just have to get in the way of it.

Paloma: What was the difference between aspiration and will?

S: Aspiration seems to be much more emotive. It's a lifting up of the heart to something higher. Will is much more general. There is less of emotional connotations. Aspirations can have the suggestion of directing yourself definitely to something higher, whereas 'will' does not have that suggestion.

Paloma: I was just thinking that there is a proverb that says, "If you really want it, then you really can" and I feel it should be an act of (soul). If you really feel, then you really can. If you really feel that there IS ...

S: Well, 'want', does also have some flavour of feeling to it.

Paloma: But that still is different somehow from...

S: Perhaps that depends how you say it.

Verne: Perhaps people want things for the wrong reasons.

S: Yes, of course. You can hardly aspire for the wrong reasons because aspiration is essentially to something higher, but you can 'will' something for the wrong reasons or just want something for the wrong reasons, or just want the wrong things. (Pause)

Would you finish off that, there's still something after the last quotation:

Marichi: "In the same way, the similes of echo, sky and earth are used to illustrate a Buddha's working without premeditation, for the benefit of all sentient beings."

S: The echo just happens. You speak and you get the echo. It's spontaneous. The echo, so to speak, doesn't think. The sky does its duty and the earth supports you without thinking. And

these are all similar in a way, to the spontaneity, the naturalness of Buddha Activity.

Paloma: You were saying that the child is like that?

S: Well, yes and no. In the case of the Buddha Activity, awareness is there and knowledge is there. In the case of the child, yes, there is a free flow of energy, but it is not illumined by [64] by wisdom and compassion. So you can use the spontaneity of the child as an analogy of the spontaneity of the enlightened person but you must be careful in not idealizing the child and suggesting that you've just got to go back to that state in a literal sort of way. You mustn't sentimentalise the child.

Paloma: It's like when you grow older you lose your spontaneity. You get to know more things, but you lose your spontaneity. And the child is spontaneous but ignorant somehow, simple ...

S: Well, the child is ignorant and also lacking wisdom. The adult still lacks wisdom. He may have knowledge but not wisdom. The energy, far from being illuminated by wisdom has been stultified by knowledge. Wisdom will never stultify your energy, but knowledge may. Compassion will never stultify your energy but negative emotions may.

Paloma: What is wisdom?

S: Wisdom is knowledge of reality, one could say. Openness to reality. (Pause) So one should be wary of the sentimental idealization of the child. Yes, the child is a little angel, sometimes, and a little devil too. As you grow older you lose your capacity to be either an angel or a devil. You just become a respectable citizen. (Laughter) ... A hard-working father or a devoted mother.

Kay: In the bit about the Wish-fulfilling Gem, it made me think how important spiritual friends are. In a way to show you there is more to win, more to aspire. Because I know that when I first got in contact with the Friends, I wanted to be happier, but I thought on quite a low level and then you sort of see more and more, that there is more and more to aspire towards.

S: It's like someone giving you the Wish-fulfilling Gem or telling you you can have a wish and you grasp it and say, "I wish I had a box of chocolates". Well, you could have wished a house; you could have wished anything, but you wished for something petty. In the same way, you come along to the centre, or you come in contact with the Dharma and you wish for something petty - just personal happiness. Just to get rid of your problems. That's all! That's all you can think of to ask. You ought to ask for nothing less than enlightenment.

Some people come along just looking for companionship in a gregarious sort of way - security or a bit of peace of mind. That's all right to start with but point out in a tactful way, gradually, that there's more available. The centre's got more to offer. The Dharma's [65] got more to offer. Take more! Don't be satisfied with just solving your problems or enjoying the company of other people or just for your peace of mind. Ask for more than that! It's possible to be given more, to gain more.

Bonnie: Isn't that because until you get a taste of it you don't know the feel, the (inaudible) ...

The unknown. Or seeing it from watching other people doing it.

Dhammadinna: That's why it's so good when other people are being themselves, because if they have experienced more, you just see it. They don't need to tell you. You can actually see it.

S: It's also good if you can see how other people behave with one another. Helps to see others who have been around longer than you have, are more experienced or who have assimilated more of the Dharma. It's interesting to see how they relate with one another. I remember a newcomer being quite impressed a couple of years ago, maybe three years ago - coming to Sukhavati when everybody was working together and really impressed by the way they treated one another, without a word being said about Buddhism. He saw the way that they related, how they treated one another and was very impressed by that. This person said that there was a sort of brotherliness that he'd not seen anywhere else. (Pause)

Bonnie: I feel as though we're circling around at something. And it's like bringing the Buddha into the brickwork.

S: Mmm. Well, where there's a head, I suppose, there always will be a brick wall. (Laughter)
A head and a brick wall seem to me to go together. No head, no brick wall! (Laughter)

Dhammadinna: So that's the answer! (Laughter)

S: Anyway, any further points? Any points that came up in the course of the week that anyone would like to go into a bit more? I'm sure it's not possible that everything is completely clear. But nonetheless, maybe it's not a bad thing to go away with a little bit of confusion. It's not good to have everything clear-cut and dry.

Joan: I'm sure I'll remember things next week.

S: Well, maybe write them down in your little notebook. I think it's important to try not to forget. I don't mean that you should make a conscious effort to remember every thing, but that points that impressed you particularly or that you have felt particularly useful to you, that you could try to apply, then look at your notebooks and refresh your memory from time to time. Because it's [66] amazing how quickly things are forgotten. How quickly they lose their impact. If you've got even just 12 or 14 important points jotted down in your notebook then you can go back to those from time to time.

Dhammadinna: I've found the sessions about communication quite useful. There's been quite a lot of small things

S: Useful in what sort of way?

Dhammadinna: (In appreciating people without preconceived ideas?) I've heard it before, but it opened up ...

S: It's so easy to do - especially preconceived ideas about them. I was talking about this at lunch time with Paloma, that, before I met Paloma, I was given all sorts of reports about her by various people. I was told exactly what she was like... but anyway when I actually met her,

I tried to put aside all that and take a direct look at her. So that one should always try to do that. One does hear so much about people and very often the reports are contradictory. So in the end one can only go by one's own personal impressions, one's own experience of that person. Even if everybody agrees with what they say about a particular person, they're not all necessarily right. (Pause)

Verne: When you were talking about subject and object... it came up - I'm not sure if it was a quote or who said it - that pain of sympathy is pain...

S: That was a quote from Tennyson

Verne: Can you clarify that? Does it mean that, in certain circumstances with other people, you're not over sympathizing?

S: You don't identify with the pain. You don't really feel as they feel. You can't in a way. If you did feel as they felt, that would incapacitate you, that would cripple you. You do sympathize. You even empathize, but you're not as involved and overwhelmed as they are, otherwise you just wouldn't be in a position to help. You don't remain coldly aloof like a doctor performing an operation, but there is an element of positive detachment, at the same time there is a definite feeling of empathy.

Verne: ... with a pained state, maintaining your own clarity, then you're more able to sympathize, empathize with them.

S: You're more able effectively to sympathize. You're not thrown off balance, otherwise you could be so upset by the suffering that you've witnessed that you just collapse and you're not able to [67] do anything.

Bonnie: Sometimes that happens that you feel other people's distress to such a degree that I feel as though I'm catching it like catching the measles or catching a cold.

S: Right. You mustn't catch it. That's the important point.

Bonnie: I find that really, really difficult.

S: Especially if someone comes to you in a very depressed state. It's quite easy for them to make you depressed too, which helps neither you nor them. You must sympathize with the depression, but you mustn't become depressed. You must retain your own emotional positivity. If you feel that they are making you depressed, and you're not able to take away their depression or make them emotionally positive, it's better just to part.

Verne: I find it very hard to get a balance. I can be indifferent or I can be involved. I find it very hard to maintain that sense of being useful without being caught up.

Bonnie: I can never be indifferent. I either get into a rage or I get cold.

Sulocana: Sometimes a person wants you to be upset and you can't really help them if you are.

S: Yes. They don't want to be helped. They just want to be indulged or pitied.

Paloma: And the opposite, when someone is depressed and you must try to make him happy by just making a joke or something, then they think you are not sensitive to their feelings.

S: They will resist your efforts to get them out of their negative state. If they feel that you are succeeding or might succeed, they become annoyed with you. They want to hang on to their negative state and when you detect that, give them up as a bad job. Don't trouble yourself. You can do nothing unless they are willing to be helped. If they are not willing to be helped, you are wasting your time. And then of course, they say, "Oh, you don't care!", "You don't want to help me!". You don't want to be helped, to be quite blunt perhaps.

Dhammadinna: Sometimes that's really hard, to walk away when people are saying that.

[68]

S: They know that! (Laughter) They take advantage of it. Just walk away! In a few minutes they'll be all right, more often than not.

Voice: I walked away from someone who was really doing that to me and then she was really shocked. Came back the next day and she seemed better, her attitude to me was different.

(Inaudible exchange between S. and Paloma)

Marichi: I think it helps if you state your position, so that it's recognized on both sides, because that person is sometimes waiting for you say, "I feel depressed." If you say that, then you've recognized and accepted that and then they can change.

S: If I can see you're depressed, I feel genuinely sorry, but I've no intention of allowing you to make me depressed too. That's not going to help either of us.

Marichi: That's quite straight-forward and direct as communications outside, but if you just sit there and say, "Pull your socks up!", you're not taking them in.

S: You're not feeling.

Marichi: You're not feeling and so I think it's a bad situation.

S: That's the worst thing you can say to anybody, the unfeeling - "Pull your socks up!" "You'll be all right! What's all this nonsense?" That's the other extreme.

Marichi: Yes. I think you could make a little joke like that and it would hurt. It wouldn't help at all.

Verne: That's not feeling the object.

Marichi: No. I think if you were a depressed person and somebody did that to you, it doesn't help. It does help to state the situation.

S: People who are in a really negative state, a negative emotional state, have a tendency to try

to involve you in their own negative emotional state and that you must resist!

Bonnie: Some people can try very hard indeed - often I can stop myself just sliding, sliding in...

Paloma: Why do they do that?

S: I think whatever the negative emotion may be, there is an intense resentment and they want to get at you. They want to make you suffer. They may be whining away and may seem soft and gentle, [69] and helpless and weak but they're not! They're tough as old boots, usually! Talk about steel magnolias! (Laughter) They may not be magnolias but they're certainly steel!

Verne: Usually (there's a lot of strength there ...) that could be pushed or used quite often.

S: Very often they're stronger than you in their negativity.

Joan: But how do you help them? to gain positivity?

Dhammadinna: They have to want to.

S: If they don't want you must stay away! Until they change. (Inaudible due to fault in tape for some seconds)

... if I'm not spiritually developed enough to be compassionate, I'm thinking just of sheer self-preservation! (Laughter)

Marichi: If you can state that, it's much better - it gives that person an alternative.

S: Indeed. (Fault in tape for a few words) (They see the other side) Also they know that they can't really fight on with you. They may be quite angry, but that's not a bad thing, because if they're depressed and they become angry, that's definitely an improvement.

Noel: Sometimes people seem to resent the fact that you've found a way out of all that; it seems extraordinary.

S: Yes. Well, they don't realize that you have found a way, that you have done something . It's as though you've been given something that they haven't been given. They look at it like that.

Bonnie: What is it that makes you pick up their vibes even though they're not saying a single, solitary word. And you can walk into a room and...

S: "Walk into a room?", I've experienced people's vibes penetrating through several thick brick walls! (Laughter) Yes! And I've known that that person is in such and such a state and I should have gone and seen them, because their vibe has gone through the wall, quite literally and when I've gone to see them, that's how they've been. You needn't go into the room. It's worse than that, usually, sometimes.

Bonnie: How can we guard against it?

S: Well, if you deal with it, OK deal with it, but if they are not going to co-operate you must leave them alone, till they come around. If they are, say, a community member, you really have to [70] get on to them and say, "if you behave like this, you can't be a member of the community." You have to be really strict with them, even heartless. It doesn't matter what weaknesses or difficulties people have got, if they're willing to be helped, if they can't help themselves, at least they will co-operate with your effort to help them, then never mind, let them be a member of the community. If they won't co-operate, if they insist on remaining in their negative state, and trying to drag others down into it, the only thing you can do is to show them the door.

It's better to throw away one rotten apple rather than letting it infect the whole barrel, as sometimes such people can do. You must be reasonable, to give them a little bit of them, but only a reasonable amount of time.

Paloma: It must be difficult to throw someone out, because you don't live in a community on the basis of authority. When you throw someone out, you actually use your authority.

S: Yes. I think you have to because they're not functioning on the level of an individual. That's all you can do. You have to treat them on the level of the group. They don't give you a handle to take hold of, as it were, on the level of an individual. If you all feel that you're sufficiently Bodhisattva-like to be able to cope and give them a further chance, OK., fair enough! But if you don't feel that you are able to do that - you're all being affected by that person more and more, you just have to ask them to leave.

Bonnie: The strength of your Bodhisattva-strength or whatever will determine your ability to repulse their vibes and encourage you yourself to withstand harm.

S: Yes, indeed.

Marichi: If you're that open to negative vibes, you're equally open to positive vibes, aren't you?

S: Yes, indeed. All the more open to positive vibes.

Marichi: It's not a matter of closing off, but learning to protect yourself with metta.

S: Yes. You don't protect yourself by becoming cold and distant. You protect yourself with positive emotion.

Marichi: Because otherwise you're going to shut off everything, good and bad.

S: Yes, indeed. And if you are weak, and you may sometimes have to recognize that, it may be that to shut off is, - in particular [71] circumstances - is the best thing that you can do. But it's sad sometimes to have to be like that. You have to recognize you're not strong enough to be able to contest somebody's very negative vibes and you're not able to generate positive vibes of sufficient strength to be able to counteract those negative vibes. So all you can do is just shut off and cut off connection with the person or just be a bit distant.

Paloma: But then people say that you aren't communicating, - is it that you aren't

communicating?

S: Let people say what they like. You can't - if they play those sorts of games, there's nothing you can do. You can say, "I know what I'm doing, I know my own mind". It's just a waste of time to argue with them.

Paloma: Is it all right to be angry?

S: I was relating a little story to people this morning. I have a little magazine which comes every now and then - it's edited by a lady called (Mary Barcus?) who was a disciple once of Zen (Zaqui?) who was a Japanese Roshi. She writes little bits and pieces and this is one of the things she writes: "When Paul Sullivan's husband came home at midnight, petulant and drunk for the third time, in as many weeks, and hovered menacingly over her, her 5 ft. 2 in. 67 year old woman, got out of bed, picked up the 200 lb. man and threw him out of the their second story bay window. Two hours later, when I talked with her at the hospital where her sober husband was being put back together again, I asked her why she'd done it and how on earth she had managed the incredible feat. She sat there in a cotton housedress, her hands folded in her lap and smiled gently at me: "That's easy", she said, "I got angry"" And then the editor comments: "Anger has fallen into disfavour with many psychologists. We are taught to channel our aggressive tendencies more productively, for the anger is corrosive and futile; that it needs to be sublimated or siphoned off through rigorous exercise. I am not so sure. Anger shakes the complacent. Anger gets things done,"

Paloma: Thank you. (laughter)

S: I think we've gone into the distinction between anger and hatred. In anger there is no deliberate intention of doing anybody any harm, It's just an explosion of pent-up energy, that's trying to remove obstacles. But in the case of hatred, you actually wish to harm, to injure the other person.

[72]

Dhammadinna: She did actually harm him by throwing him out the window. (Laughter)

S: Yes, that was in the spirit of the thing. But he was being put together again. (Laughter) So anyway, take the spirit of the thing and don't take it too literally. This morning in the group I warned all the married ladies, it wasn't an excuse for going home and throwing their husbands out of second-story windows. Then I'd have to give refuge at Padmaloka to battered husbands or even battered boyfriends. (Laughter) But you can see that anger in a sense, does have its positive side. It's a form of spontaneity.

Bonnie: It's a form of breaking out.

S: And look at the energy that was there. She was a little frail old lady and she pitched her 200 lb. husband out of the widow, bodily. So you can guess how fed-up she must have been. What a lot of energy was pent up in her anger. She'd just had enough. So throw him metaphorically out of the window, but please, think very carefully before doing it literally.

Paloma: In a way, anger isn't planned. Hatred is cool and planned - anger is hot.

S: It is spontaneous, yes. It's hot rather than cold. It's not premeditated. (Hatred) and especially malice, can be premeditated. Anger isn't.

Marichi: And if she hadn't done it then and then the fourth time - she'd done it, it would have been hatred, wouldn't it'.

S: She might have poisoned him. She might have put arsenic in his tea or ear or whatever. (Laughter) You seem to rather like that story!

Paloma: I feel guilty that I'm not behaving very nicely.

S: Well, one isn't. (Paloma: I know!)

Even before becoming very angry one is not being very nice. You can feel very guilty after an outburst of anger if you have had a sort of fixed idea of yourself - 'I'm the patient person; I never get angry... I'm always kind and gentle.' You can have that sort of fixed idea about yourself and then you have an outburst of anger - well, it shatters your idea of yourself and you can feel very bad about that. That's usually all that the guilt amounts to. You've shattered your own image of yourself. All the better! To accept that, yes, you do have a potential for anger. You're not as meek and gentle as you thought. So that you have to modify your idea of yourself.

[73]

In a way, you become more integrated. That energy is acknowledged to have a place in your total character.

Paloma: It's more the type of people we've been talking about. Maybe that want to pull you in their negativity. Sometimes when you get to know such ...

(End of tape 3)

Paloma: ... if you don't get the right point; if you don't notice when to leave and when to stop ...

S: Right. Sometimes you should be more impatient with them. Under some circumstances, patience is not a virtue, it's almost a vice. You're not being patient, you're just being weak.

Paloma: That's true. You're too weak to get away.

Noel: You end up where when things sort of build up and you have to be able to...

S: And then it's uncontrollable and that's not so good.

Marichi: I was once in a situation where I nearly threw a man out of a window in great - similar circumstances, partly out of fear of the particular situation and partly because I'd felt I'd created that situation, therefore chucking him out of the window wouldn't actually improve it. Well, maybe it would... I think that's the point where you feel perhaps you should have been more patient (unclear sentence) ... eventually you end the situation, but not necessarily by chucking people out of the window.

S: Perhaps you shouldn't allow the situation to come to that point. Even in the case of this particular woman, perhaps she shouldn't have stood that sort of behaviour. She was 67 then, It might have been going on for 30 or 40 years, that sort of behaviour.

Marichi: It wouldn't have been very useful would it, finally to have done nothing.

S: I'm sure her husband never did that sort of thing again... It's just Zen notes. It just comes from a little Zen group in the States. It contains quite amusing little items sometimes. This is a reminiscence of the editor who you may remember is a Lady. She says, "When I had just turned 35" - just remember that 35 - [75 (no page 74)] "my father died. I went to Hassick for the funeral and planned to return to New York that night. It was late, perhaps shortly before midnight, and I was waiting in the train station for the last train. The station looked a lot like the toilets on 14th St. I was there alone for a while until a burly Irish policeman arrived as part of his beat. He saw me reading and with a strong look came over. 'What are you doing!' he said. 'I'm waiting for the train', I replied. 'Where are you going?', 'New York', said she. He pressed further. 'Where in New York?' 'I don't think that is any of your business. But why do you ask?' Taking in my sex, appearance, society of the time with a glare, he said - 'Are you sure you are not running away from home?'" (Laughter)

She seemed to think that funny and it seems you do too.

Paloma: She was 35, wasn't she?

Bonnie: He could have well-thought that she was running away from her husband.

S: Well, what do women look like when they run away from their husbands? Do they sit in railway stations reading books at 12 O'clock at night?

Paloma: Is this something that actually happened to her?

S: Yes.

Dhammadinna: It's something to do with seeing someone in an odd situation, because sometimes if I hitchhike, which I do very often, people will ask me if I'm a student? They don't [look] closely at the wrinkles I've got under my eyes.

S: They've got this preconceived idea that only students hitch-hike.

Dhammadinna: It's curious though. Do they really think I'm 21 or something?

S: It must be the spectacles. Gives you a bookish look. (Laughter)

Noel: I get that sort of thing when I hitch around with Saffron especially when she was a little baby. It was within about 5 minutes "Left your husband behind, have you?" "What does he think of you doing this?"

S: It's strange, if you see a man travelling around on his own, you don't usually assume that he's left his wife and kids. (Laughter,)

Noel: It's more likely the case!

[76]

Paloma: It's even worse if you aren't a student. If you say, "No, I'm not a student", then they say, "What are you doing?". "Oh, just hitchhiking." Then they tell you what you're supposed to be doing. You should be working, you should have money, you should like in a place. Maybe even marry and have children...

Joan: They never tell me that.

Paloma: Oh yes... I shouldn't waste my time. "When you're young you should learn and when you are old you should settle down. Hitchhiking is dangerous anyway."

S: Some of our friends who regularly hitchhike say that there are certain people who seem regularly to pick up hitch-hikers and who want to talk, especially travelling salesmen who get a bit fed up with all the driving they do and just pick up someone for company and just a chat. And if they learn that you're a bit unusual, or a bit interesting, they're quite pleased - at least it whiles away the time.

Bonnie: In my youth, when I used to hitch-hike, I felt people used to pick you up more often than not to give you a moral dissertation on the evils of hitchhiking. (Laughter)

Marichi: Sometimes people picked me up because they felt it was a bit dangerous for women on their own beside the road so they'd pick me up to protect me from these people who would pick me up. (Laughter)

Sulocana: I was once sleeping by the roadside - I had just hitch-hiked - and all of a sudden this police car stopped and this policeman got out and I woke up with this sort of large head looking at me and I thought, "Oh good, someone's going to give me a lift". So he began to ask me where I'd come from and where I was going and I got up, waiting for him to open the door, and so I said, "Can you give me a lift to the nearest... ?" "Oh no! We can't give you a lift!" and left me there. It was quite a long way to walk.

S: It might have been better to have left you quietly sleeping.

Bonnie: Having been brought up in the sticks, hitchhiking is considered OK. But something I've often thought about, and that is the thing of confession. In the Movement, the Buddhist Movement, the Sangha on its wider scale, or personal confession. It seems to be a kind of a cleansing thing to do. And I felt during this week, in conversations where I realized I was actually [77] confessing about something whereas the other person wasn't. I was being open about something - whereas in other circumstances - perhaps in my own country, I wouldn't have been so open.

S: I think people often find that the opportunity to confess brings them great relief.

Paloma: It's always hard.

S: Also very often it restores a sense of proportion. Because you may have had that particular thing that you wanted to confess on your mind for a long time and you might have built it up

in your mind and give it importance that it didn't really possess, just because you hadn't been able to discharge it so to speak, by talking about it to anybody.

I remember in this connection, years and years ago, one of the Friends - for a couple of years he was hinting that there was something really awful that he had on his mind. And eventually he got around to saying, it was so awful and if I knew what it was, I'd never want to speak to him again. But anyway, some time or other it came out, and it had taken him a couple of years to get around to telling me about it. I'm afraid, as soon as he told me about it I burst out laughing, "Is that all?" And he was really relieved because he had blown it up in his own mind to such an extent, it was out of all proportion. It was just a silly little fantasy of his that he'd been having and that was all.

But he felt so guilty and so ashamed about it and he was quite convinced at the beginning that if I knew about this, knew what his thoughts actually were, I'd never want to speak to him again. I'd consider him such a despicable person, not fit to associate with decent people. But it was nothing.

Bonnie: Yes. That's the funny thing about confessions, that the other person doesn't even notice ...

S: Yes, but sometimes it is something very important and momentous, but very often it isn't. Very often you have given it an exaggerated importance just because you haven't been able to confess it for such a long time.

I read about instances in which people were really weighed down thinking or remembering, for instance, an occasion in which as a child they'd stolen tuppence from their mother. They took tuppence out of their mother's purse and they felt really bad about that for years, right into adult life and when they'd been able to confess to somebody, maybe a psychoanalyst as an adult: "When I was five, I stole tuppence from my mother's purse", it's been [78] a tremendous relief.

Bonnie: Is confession something different from brooding about things? Whinging about something?

S: Oh yes, indeed.

Bonnie: We see confession as though we accept responsibility for something.

S: For what you've done, yes. No doubt you're familiar with the lecture on Confession in the Sutra of Golden Light series. I remember when I gave that whole series, I think that was the lecture, - if I remember rightly - that produced the strongest effect on people. People were having dreams in some cases after that.

Bonnie: Oh yes. That was the one about vomiting it up.

S: That's right. The vomiting it up bit really stuck in the minds of quite a lot of people.

Voice: There was a lady that got up and left.

S: Sometimes I'm afraid people do get up and leave during my lectures for various reasons.
(Laughter)

Bonnie: Yes, I found that really strong. It was something of a shock when I first heard it.

S: But it is really a relief when you know somebody and you know them at the same time, well enough to be able to say absolutely anything to them. Whatever you think, whatever you feel, you can share it. They're going to accept it. Well, not even a question of acceptance - doesn't arise. They just let you say it. It doesn't affect your relationship with them; it doesn't affect your friendship, whatever you happen to say.

And if you look around , you may find that there aren't many people that you feel that way towards. Not many people in whom you have that sort of confidence - that you can say anything - you can just blurt it out. You don't have to edit it in any way. You can just let it come out in its raw, unpremeditated form, exactly as it occurs to you in your own way. You don't have to check. You don't have to censor. That's how it should be within the spiritual community with everybody.

Bonnie: Even thinking about it - were only talking about it. We're not going to do any confessions, but even just thinking about it is liberating.

S: Yes, indeed (Pause) That's a good note on which to close.

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira January 1999